



the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The pioneer

The state government has prepared a plan with an outlay of Rs 5,500 crore to clean the Musi River. The people of Hyderabad are observing the conspiracies of opposition parties. BRS leaders did nothing but say big words for 10 years when the BRS was in power. However, the same BRS leaders are now inciting hatred where the Congress government is functioning. We did not touch the Musi buffer zone and FTL areas. For houses located on the Musi Riverbed, a survey has been going on and the government will rehabilitate them

— Ponnam Prabhakar, Minister, Telangana

P4

Lokayukta Police register FIR against K'taka CM

TELECOM MANUFACTURING ZONES TO BE SET UP: SCINDIA

Jr NTR's open letter to HIS FANS

DON'T MISS...

Woman delivers baby in PHC...

In a distressing incident, a pregnant woman gave birth in the corridor of the Primary Health Centre (PHC) after medical staff denied her entry, advising her to go to the Government General Hospital (GGH) instead. This incident occurred at Bramaramba Chenchugudem village in Kothapalli mandal on Friday. Family members reported that Raya Eedamma was taken to the hospital in the morning as she began experiencing labour pains. Upon arrival, the medical staff insisted that her family take her to GGH in Kurnool...

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Soren seeks Centre's help for...

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday said he has written to the Centre, seeking assistance for a detailed investigation into the deaths of aspirants who were appearing for physical tests as part of a recruitment drive to appoint excise personnel. Fifteen aspirants lost their lives while undertaking physical tests during the drive recently. The BJP has been attacking Soren's government over the deaths, alleging they were victims of the administration's mismanagement...

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'Fiscal profligacy by poll-bound states...

Fiscal profligacy by poll-bound states needs to be watched closely, as higher spending on welfare measures will impact capital expenditure over the coming years, a Swiss brokerage said on Friday. A total of 11 states have gone to polls or are likely to have elections soon, the report by UBS Securities said, adding that four of them -- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha -- have increased their fiscal deficit targets. "The recent fiscal profligacy seen in poll-bound states should be watched closely," the...

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Akash Deep, Ashwin keep...

Pacer Akash Deep was impressive in a probing opening spell while Ravichandran Ashwin removed the dangerous Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto before rain halted India's progress in the second Test on the opening day, here Friday. Given the forecast, it was expected to be a weather-hit contest from the beginning. Only 35 overs could be bowled after Rohit Sharma invited Bangladesh to bat in overcast conditions as visitors struggled to 107 for three after a brief resistance through Shanto (31). Mominul...

-SPORTS

Jagan defers Tirumala tour

NO ONE STOPPED YSRCP CHIEF FROM HIS VISIT, SAYS CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A political storm has erupted over the Tirumala temple visit, with YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy postponing his trip to focus public attention on the alleged wrongdoings of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. Jagan asserted that his commitment to humanity transcends religious rituals, declaring that his 'religion is humanity'.

During a press conference at the YSRCP central office in Vijayawada, Jagan expressed concern that CM Naidu was attempting to divert attention from pressing issues by instigating unnecessary debates about religious declarations instead of addressing real problems. He

Naidu appeals to TTD pilgrims to honour traditions

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, on Friday, emphasised the importance of Tirumala temple, describing it as the largest Hindu shrine in the world and a divine blessing for the people of Andhra Pradesh. "Our government gives the highest priority to safeguarding the sanctity of

the Lord of the Seven Hills and preserving the sentiments of devotees. Every pilgrim who visits Tirumala for the 'Darshan' of the Lord takes utmost care to adhere to the traditions and conventions in offering prayers," the Chief Minister said in a press release. He further stated that each pilgrim has

a responsibility to protect the sanctity of this globally renowned pilgrimage site. Naidu appealed to all devotees to strictly follow the temple norms, the traditions of 'Agama Sastra', and the guidelines of the TTD. "I earnestly request that no pilgrim acts in a manner that contradicts the sentiments and rituals of the temple," he added.

revealed that conspiracies were afoot to obstruct his visit, highlighting reports of YSRCP leaders being placed under house arrest while BJP workers from neighbouring states were being brought in. He noted that

thousands of police officers had been deployed, creating an unwarranted law and order situation.

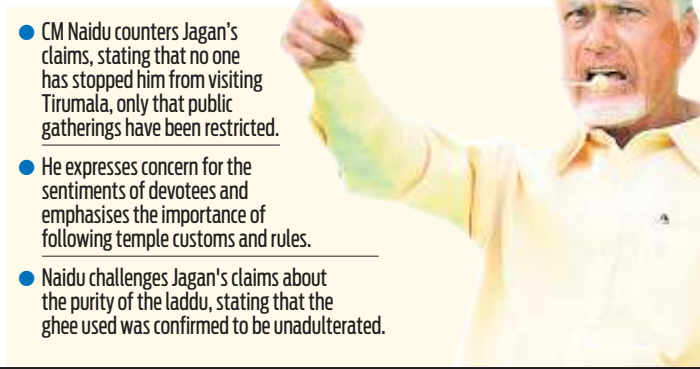
Jagan emphasised that both he and his late father, YS Rajasekhara Reddy, respected traditions as Chief Ministers, includ-

ing the offering of silk robes to the deity. He questioned the necessity of a religious declaration now, stating that he had visited the temple many times before his tenure.

Continued on Page 2



- Jagan declares his religion is humanity, asserting that this commitment takes precedence over religious rituals.
- YSRCP chief highlights that both he and his late father had respected traditions while in office and questioned the necessity of a religious declaration at this time.
- Jagan calls upon YSRCP supporters and the public to perform pujas in their towns to prevent any negative consequences from Naidu's actions.



- CM Naidu counters Jagan's claims, stating that no one has stopped him from visiting Tirumala, only that public gatherings have been restricted.
- He expresses concern for the sentiments of devotees and emphasises the importance of following temple customs and rules.
- Naidu challenges Jagan's claims about the purity of the laddu, stating that the ghee used was confirmed to be unadulterated.



AP Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar B Handre and officials of both states show the MoU on the protection of forest reserves, in Vijayawada on Friday. Pic by Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar

AP, Karnataka sign MoU on protection of forest reserves

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a pioneering initiative, a rare Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between AP and its neighbouring state of Karnataka regarding the protection of forest reserves during an inter-state coordination meeting here on Friday.

The MoU was signed by AP Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and the Karnataka Forest Minister Ishwar B. Khandre.

On this occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister stated that Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka will collaborate in the future to safeguard forests and forest reserves. He described the MoU as historic, emphasising that the forest departments of both states are committed to advancing through comprehensive studies, knowledge sharing,

and cooperation. The agreement covers critical issues such as forest conservation, wildlife preservation, tribal training, information exchange, elephant management, and eco-tourism—marking an unprecedented collaboration in the country. This coordination will focus on six key areas. Pawan Kalyan expressed concern about the ongoing issues with elephants in the border districts. "The problem of elephants in these areas has become serious over the past few years

Local residents have raised this issue during their visits. Elephants have been damaging crops in Chittoor and Manyam districts, and there have even been incidents of human fatalities due to elephant attacks. Farmers in tribal regions are suffering significant losses because of this situation. Continued on Page 2

AP govt cancels registration services at V/W secretariats

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an important move, the Andhra Pradesh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, has withdrawn registration services at Village and Ward Secretariats, a scheme introduced by the previous YSR Congress government. RP Sisodia, Special Chief Secretary to the Revenue Department, issued GO Ms No 206, formalising this decision.

The order stated that the Commissioner and Inspector General of Registration & Stamps had requested the government to issue a notification for the withdrawal of registration services at Village and Ward Secretariats.

After a thorough examination of the matter, the government decided to annul the previous orders which had declared the new registration sub-districts, and the Village and Ward Secretariats as offices for the Joint Sub-Registrar/Sub-Registrar.

Additionally, Panchayat Secretaries who had been functioning as Sub-Registrars for registering documents at these secretariats will no longer perform these duties. The withdrawal comes into effect immediately.

Priority for infra in govt schools: Lokesh

Minister Lokesh remarked that a modest investment would greatly benefit unemployed youth. Plans are made to establish a world-class central library with state-of-the-art facilities in Amaravati soon.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Education, IT, and Electronics Minister Nara Lokesh has emphasised the need for authorities to prioritise basic infrastructure in government schools. At a high-level review meeting held at his Undavalli residence on Friday, he discussed meas-

Mega parent-teacher meetings on Nov 14



ures to strengthen school education. Minister Lokesh insisted that schools should be made leak-proof and equipped with benches, drinking water, and toilets. He highlighted the importance of setting up computer labs and expanding classrooms based on necessity. He instructed officials to establish com-

puter labs in schools and evaluate the process of internal assessment through these facilities.

He noted that the performances of Srikakulam Municipal Elementary School and Akanambattu High School, which he recently inspected unexpectedly, were commendable. Continued on Page 2

Ex-Mines director Venkata Reddy remanded till Oct 10

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former director of the Mines Department, VG Venkata Reddy, has been remanded until October 10 by the ACB Court following his arrest in Hyderabad on Thursday night. A case was registered against Reddy based on complaints of irregularities in mining leases and the granting of undue benefits to JPVL, GCKC, and Pratima organisations. ACB officials arrested him on September 11 and subsequently produced him in court, where he was remanded until October 10.

Reddy was apprehended at his residence in Hyderabad. He is accused of misusing his position during the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government's tenure to allocate sand, mines, and mineral resources to party leaders.

The ACB uncovered a staggering Rs 2,566 crore fraud linked to the sand mining policy under Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration. Reddy is alleged to have played a key role in this scheme, collaborating with sand mining companies such as JPVL, GCKC, and Pratima Corporation. Evidence suggests that Reddy assisted these companies in evading government dues and submitting false affidavits to the National Green Tribunal, which were later ruled against by the Supreme Court.

Reddy, a former senior officer of the Indian Coast Guard, joined the Andhra Pradesh government in 2019 and quickly ascended to the positions of Director of the Mines Department and Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development



Corporation (APMDC) in 2020. In these roles, he allegedly facilitated the exploitation of natural resources by YSRCP leaders.

After assuming office, Venkata Reddy introduced policies that favoured private companies with close ties to YSRCP leaders, leading to widespread irregularities. These included illegal excavation beyond permitted areas and depths, mining without the necessary environmental clearances, the use of unauthorised waybills for false reporting, and failure to collect payments from mining companies.

The ACB found that JPVL, GCKC, and Pratima Infra had illegally mined sand worth over Rs 921 crore. Reddy's actions are believed to have facilitated this significant loss to the state. He is also accused of implementing an online lease allocation system that favoured applicants linked to the YSRCP, privatising sand collections to benefit party-affiliated organisations, and transferring uncooperative officials to remote postings.

APGENCO-NHPC JV to boost AP's renewable energy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a landmark move towards a greener and more sustainable future, a historic Joint Venture agreement has been signed between the Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation Limited (APGENCO) and the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (NHPC) for the implementation of large-scale renewable energy projects in the State. The agreement was signed under the esteemed leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, with the vision of positioning Andhra Pradesh as a leader in the renewable energy sector.

Key highlights include APGENCO, which has an installed capacity of 8,800 MW and currently supplies around 47% of Andhra Pradesh's energy requirements. Since initiating renewable energy projects in 2015, solar power plants with a capacity of

405 MW have been established in the state by March 2019. Over the next five years, APGENCO plans to add 8,560 MW of power capacity through various renewable energy initiatives.

NHPC, with an existing installed capacity of 7,100 MW, aims to expand its portfolio with an additional 46,400 MW of green energy projects across the country, making it a pivotal player in India's renewable energy

transformation.

Andhra Pradesh is set to lead in renewable energy development, with both the Government of India and the Government of Andhra Pradesh fully committed to combating climate change and pollution by promoting solar, wind, and pumped storage projects.

The New and Renewable Energy Development Corporation of Andhra

Pradesh (NREDCAP) has identified 36 locations for pumped storage projects with a combined capacity of 39,000 MW, demonstrating the state's commitment to renewable energy development.

APGENCO is taking a bold step by establishing solar power plants with a combined capacity of 11,200 MW to provide input power for its new pumped storage projects, which will

have a capacity of 6,020 MW. The necessary land for these solar power projects will be leased from local landowners, ensuring a sustainable and community-focused approach to development.

Additionally, APGENCO is setting up 150 MW of solar power plants on vacant land within its existing power plant premises and APTRANSCO substations, further optimising available resources for renewable energy generation.

The Joint Venture between APGENCO and NHPC will see the development of 5,070 MW across five pumped storage projects, which are currently in various stages of development and expected to be commissioned within the next five years.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu expressed his deep commitment to renewable energy and lauded the efforts of both APGENCO and NHPC.



NHPC, with an existing installed capacity of 7,100 MW, aims to expand its portfolio with an additional 46,400 MW of green energy projects across the country, making it a pivotal player in India's renewable energy transformation.

That sinking feeling: Revanth's rule is déjà vu

Out of the frying pan into the fire. This idiom aptly describes the current governance situation in Telangana. In their haste to escape the frying pan of the dictatorial, corrupt, family rule of KCR-led Bharata Rashtra Samithi (BRS), Telangana voters appear to have jumped into the fire of rudderless, incapable, attention-diverting Congress governance currently led by Revanth Reddy. When the Congress promised "change", voters assumed the party was referring to a "change for the better" - a change in the right direction. Less than nine months into its rule, a review of Congress's governance clearly shows that "pace" - from bad to worse - is the only change Revanth's governance has delivered.

In less than 10 years, KCR succeeded in eliminating all opposition voices and brow-

beating the state bureaucracy into submission. Though the disastrous results of his dictatorial and corrupt style started surfacing during his second term, the complete picture of the devastation he caused to governance by engendering a "Yes Boss" culture in administration only became apparent after the voters dethroned him.

Under KCR's rule, the state Finance Department prepared budgets unrelated to actual expenditures year after year. Neither did it exercise control to maintain the sanctity of the budget, even as the state's financial situation crumbled to the level where it could not provide timely salaries to its employees. The Irrigation Department designed and executed projects worth tens of thousands of crores that failed quickly. The Police Department focused on snooping into citizens' private

When the Congress promised "change" before the elections, voters assumed the party was referring to a "change for the better" -- a change in the right direction. Less than nine months into its rule, a review of the Congress' governance clearly shows that "pace" - from bad to worse - is the only change Revanth's governance has delivered.

lives through mass-scale illegal phone-tapping and transporting black money for the ruling party candidates to fund their election campaigns. The Municipal department got busy taking bribes and providing illegal construction permits in prohibited areas. The Information Technology department got busy hyping the son of the Chief Minister as a globe-trotting, tech-savvy, futuristic leader and forgot to nurture the state into a start-up hub -- a fact that the department's Principal

Secretary himself alluded to in a newspaper interview after KCR lost power.

KCR's nine-and-a-half-year rule had left the state machinery in a shambles. Even as the state's High Court was fuming over tens of thousands of court orders left unimplemented by the disempowered and directionless bureaucracy, no officer of the state's steel frame could muster the courage to declare that the "emperor had no clothes". Consequently, citizens of the state had to suffer sub-par ser-



KISHORE POREDDY

vices in almost every area of governance, including education, health, and land revenue.

In this context, the state's voters delivered a mandate for change. The change they hoped for was apparent. They wanted the new government to end corruption, empower institutions—especially the administrative machinery—

allowing them to become responsive and efficient, prioritise the rule of law, improve security, and deliver on the welfare measures the Congress promised through its Six guarantees.

et, the actions of the Congress government indicate that the malaise has only grown. Before the elections, Congress, like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), made a hue and cry about corruption under the BRS rule. Nine months into its rule, the Congress government has not filed a case against any BRS politician in any significant corruption case. Be it the alleged corruption in the Kaleswaram project, the organised criminality of mass-scale illegal phone tapping, the sheep distribution scam, the poultry feed scam or any other scam that pointed to the involvement of those at the highest power levels in the

previous administration.

The Congress's actions on the governance front, the focus of this article, are even more baffling. On Thursday, the Chief Minister made shocking comments while handing over appointment letters to the newly recruited Assistant Executive Engineers in Jal Soudha. In all seriousness, he indicated that half of the current engineers in the Irrigation Department are corrupt or inefficient. Yet he said he would not act against them because the department would become empty. His comments leave only two conclusions. He is unable to get a grip on administration due to inexperience; thus, he feels despondent. Or, he likes the status quo and wishes to make no changes because he thinks such officers would, in turn, do his bidding when he needs them. Either way, the Chief Minister openly says there

would be no "change" from the previous BRS rule.

HYDRAA's actions also indicate a thoughtless and dictatorial "Ready, Fire, Aim" attitude towards governance. In most cases, HYDRAA demolished the dwellings of innocent citizens who had all requisite permissions without providing any compensation. Revanth neither accepted the criminality of the government departments nor took any strict action against officers for their malfeasance or misfeasance. Consequently, lakhs of innocent people who had purchased buildings with all necessary permissions fear losing their life savings and livelihoods. No wonder people feel they have jumped into the Congress' fire in their eagerness to escape the BRS' frying pan.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

MP urges Collector to provide flood relief in nine villages

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath, upon learning that enumeration had not been conducted in nine villages of Kanchikacharla Mandal, which were submerged due to recent heavy rains and floods, raised concerns over the lack of financial assistance from the State government. On Friday, the MP spoke to NTR District Collector Dr Srijana and Kanchikacharla Mandal MRO Jahnavi, bringing to their attention that the flood-affected villages of Kothapet, Ganiathkur, Chevittikallu, Kunikapadu, Munnaluru, Moguluru, Amaravaram, Vemulapalli, and Pendyala had

The Vijayawada MP emphasised that justice should be delivered to all flood victims, urging the authorities to handle the matter with care and generosity. He stressed that all those affected by the floods should receive due compensation without unnecessary delays.



not yet been enumerated. He urged them to expedite the enumeration process and ensure compensation is provided

to all flood victims. MP Sivanath emphasised that justice should be delivered to all flood victims, urging the

authorities to handle the matter with care and generosity. He stressed that all those affected by the floods should receive due compensation without unnecessary delays.

Following MP Sivanath's instructions, the government officials assured him that the enumeration process would be completed promptly, and necessary action would be taken to provide compensation to the victims.

The flood victims, along with TDP leaders and activists from the affected villages, expressed their gratitude to the MP for bringing their plight to the notice of the authorities and ensuring government assistance.

AP, Karnataka sign MoU...

Continued from Page 1

I brought this to the attention of Chief Minister Chandrababu, who suggested discussions with the Government of Karnataka. I then approached State Forest Minister Ishwar B. Khandre, who arranged a meeting within 48 hours. Karnataka Forest Minister Ishwar B. Khandre highlighted the importance of the agreement in addressing global environmental challenges. "With climate change threatening our ecosystems, this cooperation is crucial. We hope the MoU will serve as a model for other states and nations regarding collaborative forest management and wildlife conservation," he remarked.

He recalled the Vijayanagara Samsthan, which equally ruled over both Telugu and Kannada regions, and concluded by reciting a poem in both Telugu and English focused on forests.

115 grievances received from farmers and workers by APCRDA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A total of 115 grievances were submitted by farmers and agricultural workers from the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) area during the grievance cell held at the APCRDA regional office in Thullur on Friday. Of these, 92 were related to Lands - Capital City, 11 to Lands (Survey), seven to Social Development, three to the Planning Wing, and one each to the Development Promotion and Landscape and Environment departments.

APCRDA Additional Commissioner, G. Suryasai Praveen Chand, participated in the grievance cell, receiving petitions directly from farmers



and workers of the APCRDA region.

Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Commissioner noted that the grievance day offers a valuable platform for farmers and workers to present their issues for resolution within the capital region.

Several grievances were resolved on the spot, while the Additional Commissioner

directed officials to address the remaining petitions promptly. He encouraged the public to take advantage of the grievance cell, held every Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the APCRDA regional office in Thullur. Special Deputy Collector M. Visweswara Naidu, K. Swarna Mary, B. Sai Srinivas Naik, and other officials were also present.

YS Sharmila seeks SC intervention in Laddu issue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, YS Sharmila Reddy, has written to Justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, requesting a suo moto intervention into the issue of ghee adulteration in Tirumala's Laddu Prasadam. She emphasised that the Laddu Prasadam holds immense religious significance for millions of devotees across the globe. The tradition, over 300 years old, traces its origins to the Pallava practice of offering prasadam to devotees.

Sharmila recalled that in 2009, the Tirumala Laddu received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, underscoring its cultural importance. She noted that the preparation of the prasadam follows sacred traditions and customs. However, she



expressed concern that the issue has become entangled in partisan politics. She criticised the current investigation, led by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under an IG-ranked officer, as ordered by the Chief Minister, calling it distressing given the religious significance of the matter.

The Congress party has urged the Supreme Court to restore the faith of devotees, either by ordering a CBI enquiry or by having the Court directly oversee the SIT investigation initiated by the Andhra Pradesh government.

World Tourism Day celebrated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Joint Collector Prakhar Jain has announced that the State government is making substantial investments in tourism, allocating Rs 100 crore for development projects in Bapatla. He explained that under the theme "Tourism-Peace", celebrations are planned for 2024, with slogans such as "Developed Bharat", "Golden Andhra", and "Vision Bapatla" to promote tourism in the district. The World Tourism Day celebrations took place at the Collectorate on Friday.

Jain highlighted that the beaches of Bapatla district are aiming for Blue Flag certification, signifying compliance with international safety and cleanliness standards. He added that the World Tourism Organization has initiated the inspection process, focusing on maintaining clean beaches and preventing water contamination. A second phase of inspections is planned, to gain special recognition as a world-



"We are committed to protecting our tourists and ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience."

class tourist destination.

The Joint Collector emphasised the importance of enhancing the tourist experience by improving access roads and accommodation facilities. He noted that resources would be optimised to encourage visitors to spend four to five days enjoying the district's beaches. The 76-km coastal stretch, renowned for its natural beauty and historical sites such as the 'Pedda Shasanam',

Motupalli Jetty, Buddhist Stupas, and Bhavannarayana Swamy temples, will be a key area for tourism development.

Jain also announced that all beaches in the district are now open to the public, assuring that comprehensive safety measures are in place. Lifeguards are stationed every 100 m along the shore, and marine police will increase their patrols to ensure visitor safety. "We are committed to protecting our tourists and ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience," he said. During discussions with the Joint Collector, resort and hotel owners requested the installation of public toilets, improved drinking water facilities, and permission to set up food preparation hotels along the beaches.

They also raised concerns about rising electricity costs and sought discounts for resorts and accommodation facilities catering to tourists. Jain assured that these issues would be reviewed promptly and addressed in line with government policies.

Reliance Foundation donates Rs 20 cr for AP flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Reliance Foundation has made a substantial contribution to aid the flood victims of Andhra Pradesh. On Friday evening, PMS Prasad, Executive Director and Board Member of Reliance Industries Limited, along with

CM holds talks over insurance claims of flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has been actively involved in coordinating relief efforts for communities affected by the recent floods across the State. He held discussions with senior officials from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), including the Member Non-Life, the Executive Director, and the CEO of Universal Sampo General Insurance, representing the non-life insurance sector.

The meeting was also attended by senior officials from the Andhra Pradesh Government, including the Secretary, Additional Secretary, and the Commissioner. In this time of crisis, the Andhra Pradesh government, along with the Insurance Regulator and the entire insurance industry, is working to provide full support to flood victims by expediting claim settlements.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Ekadashi: Sep 27 01:20 PM to Sep 28 02:50 PM
Dwadashi: Sep 28 02:50 PM to Sep 29 04:47 PM
Nakshatram: Ashlesha: Sep 28 01:20 AM to Sep 29 03:37 AM
Magha: Sep 29 03:37 AM to Sep 30 06:18 AM
Rahukalam: 9:08 AM to 10:37 AM
Yamagandam: 1:35 PM to 3:05 PM
Varjyam: 04:58 PM to 06:45 PM
Gulika: 6:09 AM to 7:38 AM
Amritakalam: 01:52 AM to 03:37 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:42 AM to 12:30 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Rain
Temp: 33°C
Humidity: 80%
Sunrise: 5:57 AM
Sunset: 5:59 PM
Updated: September 27, 2024 5:00 PM

Priority for infra in...

Continued from Page 1

The Minister pointed out that during the previous government's administration, despite substantial expenditure through centrally sponsored schemes under the Nadu-Nedu initiative, the number of students in government schools declined. He urged the authorities to investigate the reasons behind this trend. Minister Lokesh announced that mega parents-teachers meetings would be organised statewide on November 14 to strengthen government schools and improve results, involving everyone from the Chief Minister to ward members. He stated that a review of improvements in school results would take place quarterly. Discussions also included enhancing libraries from the village to the district level across the state. He remarked that a modest investment would greatly benefit unemployed youth. Plans were made to establish a world-class central library with state-of-the-art facilities in Amaravati soon.

The Minister instructed officials to organise National Education Day on November 11 and to honour outstanding teachers, as Teacher's Day could not be celebrated due to recent floods. It was also decided in this meeting to grant Dasara holidays starting October 3, following requests from teachers and associations. Present at the meeting were School Education Secretary Kona Sasidhar, Commissioner Vijayaramaraju, and State Project Director of Inclusive Education Srinivasa Rao.

Jagan defers Tirumala...

Continued from Page 1

While he reads the Bible privately, he clarified that he respects all religions, including Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.

In a pointed critique of Naidu, Jagan accused him of spreading misinformation regarding the purity of the Tirupati laddu, asserting that Naidu was deflecting attention from his government's failures over the past 100 days. He explained the rigorous procurement process for the ghee used in laddu preparation, stating that strict quality checks are in place, and supplies that do not meet standards were rejected during both Naidu's and his own tenure.

Chandrababu Naidu responded to Jagan's allegations during a media conference at the secretariat in Velagapudi, stating that no one has prevented Jagan from visiting Tirumala, only that restrictions have been placed on rallies and public

gatherings. He challenged Jagan to provide evidence of any police notices issued regarding his visit, accusing him of misleading the public.

Naidu expressed concern for the sentiments of devotees, noting that Section 30 of the Police Act is in effect in Tirupati to prevent any untoward incidents. He stressed the importance of following temple customs and rules to respect the sentiments of all devotees. He questioned why Jagan had previously visited Tirumala in violation of established rules and noted that adherence to traditions is essential. The Chief Minister further addressed Jagan's claims about the purity of the laddu, stating that AR Dairy had sent eight tankers of ghee, of which four were used, with an NDDB report confirming no adulteration. Naidu challenged Jagan to explain the reasons behind the changes in tender calls for laddu preparation and asserted that inferior materials had tainted the prasadam.

YS Jagan countered Naidu's remarks, questioning why Naidu is being shielded by the BJP despite actions that allegedly tarnish the reputation of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) and the sanctity of Lord Venkateswara's prasadam. He urged BJP leaders to hold Naidu accountable for his actions, reiterating his respect for all faiths and condemning the political motivations behind religious declarations.

Jagan called on YSRCP supporters and the public to perform pujas in their towns to ensure that Naidu's alleged sins do not adversely affect the state. He requested collective prayers to protect the state from the repercussions of Naidu's actions, urging that Lord Venkateswara's anger be directed solely at Naidu.

As the political tension escalates, both leaders continue to make their cases to the public, raising questions about the intersection of politics and religion in Andhra Pradesh.

Govt mulls merger...

Continued from Page 1

According to a steel ministry document, RINL is in severe financial distress, operating at minimal capacity while incurring continuous losses. Its total dues have surpassed Rs 35,000 crore, placing it at risk of being classified as a non-performing asset.

"Securing capital for operations is essential," sources confirmed, adding that discussions are in progress with lenders for financial assistance and the potential monetisation of assets, including the sale of 1,500 to 2,000 acres of land to NMDC for a pellet plant. In January 2021, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) granted 'in-principle' approval for 100 per cent divestment of the government's stake in RINL, including interests in subsidiaries and joint ventures through strategic disinvestment. Currently, only one of RINL's three blast furnaces is operational, leading to concerns about its viability as a 'going concern'. The steel ministry is reportedly taking steps, in consultation with the finance ministry, to address the escalating crisis and ensure RINL remains operational. As discussions continue, the future of RINL hangs in the balance, with stakeholders closely monitoring the government's decisions regarding its merger and financial restructuring initiatives.

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Don't credit victim compensation under debt, says Collector

State govt has directly deposited amounts in accounts of flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has sanctioned financial assistance for the victims who lost everything due to the recent heavy rains and floods, and directly deposited amounts in the accounts of the victims. District Collector Dr G Srijana instructed the Bank officials that the amount deposited into the bank accounts should not be deposited under the existing loan of the beneficiary under any circumstances. If the adjustment has been made through auto debit, the beneficiary should be paid the amount of financial assistance to the beneficiaries in cash.

District Collector Dr Srijana held the ninth District Consultative Committee (DCC) and District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting at the NTR District Collectorate on Friday. On the occasion, the Collector said that the State government has announced financial assistance for the victims whose



houses were inundated due to recent floods, and is directly depositing the amount in their accounts through DBT.

She said that the financial assistance announced by the government regarding the loss of business and commercial property to nearly 90,000 families is being deposited in

their bank accounts transparently. She said that the bankers are advised not to credit the DBT amount, which was deposited as financial assistance under the already existing loan.

She said it is the responsibility of everyone to support the victims who are facing

many financial and psychological problems. "In this regard, the participation of banks is necessary. If the amount deposited is found to be automatically credited under the loan repayment, the respective bank officials should inform the beneficiaries and provide them with financial support in

the form of cash and help them get out of the trouble," Collector Srijana told the bank officials.

Convener of the meeting, LDO PM Purnima, Union Bank of India (UBI) Regional Head M Sridhar, LDM K Priyanka and representatives of various banks were present.

137-year-old railway bridge in a neglected state

Bridge, which had been in use for 110 years, was abandoned in 1992

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heritage remains of a 137-year-old railway bridge have been found in utter neglect at Diguvamittapalli in Prakasam district, says Dr E Sivanagi Reddy, archaeologist and CEO, Pleach India.

As part of the programme 'Preserve Heritage for Posterity', Dr Reddy, accompanied by Addanki-based historian Dr Jyothi Chandramouli and INTACH-trained heritage activist P Srinath Reddy, visited the spots on Friday and studied the tall masonry pillars and brick built walls of the defunct metre gauge railway line in Nallamala forest between Giddalur and Nandyal.

Dr Reddy revealed that these historic remains tell an interesting story of the British, who wanted a railway line between Goa and Machilipatnam as early as 1842 to transport civil and merchandise commodities. The bridge was completed in 1867 and the first train ran during the same year on the



800m length meter gauge line built at a height of 2,600 ft. above the mean sea level. The British, engaging the local labourers, fabricated the bridge called hanging bridge by raising 200-foot-high masonry pillars and brick built walls, on which 400-tonne iron bars cast in Buntingham iron factory in London were used.

Sivanagireddy added that the railway bridge, which had been in use for 110 years, was abandoned in 1992 and the iron was sold as scrap at a nominal price of Rs 4 lakh.

Since then, the metre gauge was converted into broad gauge. He lamented on the state of neglect of the historically significant remains, which lie uncared, and appealed to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to declare the remains as protected monuments.

He also urged the CM to develop the two spots as destinations of tourist interest in the green, lush and picturesque Nallamala forest, which offers a thrilling experience to the tourists.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In response to the recent industrial accidents in Parwada and Atchutapuram, the High-Level Committee on industrial accident prevention convened its inaugural meeting in Visakhapatnam. Chaired by retired IAS officer Vasudha Mishra, the committee aimed to discuss strategies for accident prevention, response protocols, and post-accident support measures. "We must prioritise safety by learning from past incidents and adopting world-class preventive measures. Only through consistent effort can

we reduce the occurrence of industrial accidents," said Mishra. The committee engaged in detailed discussions on key issues to be included in the report to be submitted to the government.

Labor Department Secretary MM Nayak stressed the importance of stricter enforcement of safety regulations. "The safety of our workers is paramount, and we must ensure that industries comply with stringent safety standards. Regular inspections and

High-level committee meets to prevent industrial accidents

Panel discusses key issues to be included in report

monitoring are crucial," Nayak remarked.

Industries Department Secretary N Yuvraj highlighted the need for collaboration between government agencies and industries. "By working together, we can create a safer industrial environment. The government is committed to providing the necessary support, but industries must also take responsibility for imple-



menting these practices," Yuvraj said.

District Collectors M.N. Harendhira Prasad and Vijay Krishnan shared their experiences in managing recent accidents. "A coordinated response is essential in such situations, and we need to improve our emergency response systems to ensure immediate action in the event of an accident," Harendhira Prasad pointed out.

Professors from IIT Chennai and IIT Tirupati

stressed the importance of ongoing research and innovation in industrial safety. "We need to constantly evolve our safety practices, and this includes investing in new technologies and systems that can predict and prevent accidents," one of the professors commented. The meeting concluded with a consensus on the need for a multi-pronged approach to industrial safety, combining preventive measures, technological advancements, and stringent enforcement. The committee is expected to submit its recommendations to the government in the coming weeks.

Rear Admiral Srinivas assumes command at Naval Dockyard

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Rear Admiral K. Srinivas assumed the position of Admiral Superintendent at the Naval Dockyard here on Friday. With a distinguished career spanning over three decades, Rear Admiral Srinivas brings a wealth of experience and leadership expertise to his new role.

Commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 1990, Rear Admiral Srinivas has had an illustrious career, serving extensively at sea and holding pivotal positions. His notable assignments include serving as Warship Production Superintendent in Severodvinsk, Russia, where he oversaw the repairs and re-equipping of INS Vikramaditya. He has also held key positions such as Principal Director Aircraft Carrier Projects and Principal Director Fleet Maintenance at Naval Headquarters in New Delhi.

Rear Admiral Srinivas expressed his enthusiasm for



his new role, stating, "It is an honour to take charge as Admiral Superintendent of the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam. I look forward to continuing the legacy of excellence in naval operations and ensuring that our dockyard remains a pivotal component of the Indian Navy's readiness and modernisation efforts."

Adali Viewpoint opened for tourists

Dist administration has developed essential amenities for visitors

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

The picturesque Adali Viewpoint was inaugurated on Friday on the occasion of World Tourism Day. The stunning viewpoint—offering sweeping views of the region's natural beauty—is hailed as a premier addition to the State's growing list of tourist attractions.

The district administration recognised Adali Viewpoint's potential as a key tourist spot and developed essential amenities for the visitors. ITDA Seethampet allocated Rs. 1.56 crore for setting up various facilities, including a kitchen-cum-breakfast area, toilets, safety railings, a scenic pathway, and a night camping lawn. A BT road has also been built for better access. The site's management and development have been entrusted to Vijay Associates by the District Tourism Council.

Parvathipuram Manyam, known for its scenic landscapes, now adds Adali Viewpoint to its list of must-visit spots, joining attractions like SK Padu Park and Seethampeta NTR Adventure Park. With stunning views of the 8.5 TMC Hiramandalam Reservoir, Adali Viewpoint is set to attract tourists from all over.



District Collector A Shyam Prasad, in his address at the event, reaffirmed the administration's commitment to tourism development in the region. "We are working tirelessly to improve the district's tourism infrastructure. The Tribal Museum, being developed with Rs. 4 crore, and the Jagathipalli resorts, which are being built with an investment of Rs. 27 crore, are testament to our vision for Parvathipuram Manyam as a tourism hub. We will continue to identify and develop new attractions to further enhance our tourism portfolio," he said.

Mr. Shyam Prasad also high-

lighted the importance of maintaining an eco-friendly environment. "While we develop tourism, we must also preserve the region's natural beauty and respect local traditions. Tourists can book accommodations at Adali Viewpoint online, and we have planned trekking routes and telescope facilities to enrich their experience. By next year's World Tourism Day, we aim to develop the Benarai waterfalls, another jewel in our tourism crown," he added.

Local MLA Nimmaka Jayakrishna underscored the region's potential for tourism-driven economic growth. "Seethampet and Bhamini are

rich in natural splendor, and their scenic locations and waterfalls can attract significant tourist interest. These developments will also provide livelihood opportunities for the local tribal youth, allowing the community to directly benefit from tourism," he said.

Superintendent of Police SV Madhava Reddy noted that Adali Viewpoint is destined to become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region. "This location is nothing short of spectacular, and with continued development, it will soon become a must-visit spot for travellers," he remarked.



DC advocates for value addition in pepper production

Stress on harvesting pepper at optimal ripeness and maintaining good hygiene practices

PNS ■ PADERU

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has called for enhancing the quality of raw materials to improve both product quality and economic viability. Speaking at a workshop co-hosted by the Spices Board India and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in New Delhi on Friday, Kumar emphasised the need for an efficient ecosystem that supports the production of high-quality aromatic peppers.

"By adding value to our peppers, we can significantly improve our market position and economic sustainability," Kumar said. He highlighted the importance of harvesting peppers at their optimal ripeness and maintaining good hygiene practices. The Collector also stressed the need for farmers to avoid selling peppers in their raw form, noting that by adding value through grading, packaging, and branding, they can increase their marketability and benefit small-scale producers, particularly tribal communities.

Kumar pointed out that the absence of scientific support for farmers often leads them to rely on brokers, undermining their potential earnings. "Farmers need access to scientific resources and support to avoid depending solely on intermediaries," he said. By adding value to peppers, Kumar explained, farmers can enhance con-

"By adding value to our peppers, we can significantly improve our market position and economic sustainability," Kumar said. He highlighted the importance of harvesting peppers at their optimal ripeness and maintaining good hygiene practices

sumer health and livelihood, lower input costs, promote export markets, and reduce overheads.

The Collector also highlighted the necessity of providing comprehensive institutional support for pepper production through the Spice Board. He noted that significant trade in pepper worth crores of rupees occurs in the district, often unrecognised, and called for the establishment of a regional office to better support farmers and the pepper trade in the region.

Experts including World Trade Organisation Economic Affairs Officer Pablo Jenkins from Switzerland, Spice Board Research and Finance Director Dr. AB Rema Shree, District Spice Board Senior Farmer B. Kalyani, and farmers Dippala Devi, K. Rajaratnam, and G. Anand were present.

Visakhapatnam hosts IndiaChem-2024 curtainraiser

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A curtain-raiser event was held in Visakhapatnam to kick off the countdown to IndiaChem 2024, the 13th Biennial International Exhibition and Conference, scheduled to take place from October 17 to 19, in Mumbai. Organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and supported by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the event aims to promote India's rapidly growing chemicals and petrochemical sectors. "Chemicals are deeply ingrained in our everyday routines, from healthcare to agriculture. The sector's ability to create jobs and its GDP contribution is immense," said Amit Malik, CEO of Adani Gangavaram Port.

Andhra Pradesh's strategic

advantages were highlighted by Dr. Yuvraj, Secretary of Industries & Commerce. "AP has six ports, 900 km of national highways, and an impressive railway network, making it ideal for import and export activities."

He also called for government support to identify an anchor investor for the Petroleum, Chemicals, and Petrochemical Investment Region (PCPIR) in AP. "We also need dedicated parks for MSMEs, which play a vital role in our economy. The State government is committed to fully supporting the development of the chemicals and petrochemicals sector in AP," he assured.

M. Sribharat MP pointed out the State's advantages, including rich natural resources, a large oil refinery, and a booming pharmaceutical sector.



Nivedita Shukla Verma, Secretary, Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, sharing optimistic projections for the petrochemical sector

However, he stressed the need for better access to research and development funds and improved educational infrastructure, particularly in safety standards.

Deepankar Aron, joint secretary, Department of

Chemicals & Petrochemicals, encouraged industry stakeholders to leverage the exhibition's opportunities for technology transfer and manufacturing. "This exhibition is an unparalleled platform for connecting with the global chem-

ical and petrochemical industries."

Nivedita Shukla Verma, secretary, Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, shared optimistic projections for the sector, with an estimated growth to USD 300 billion

by 2029 and USD 1 trillion by 2040. "There's immense scope for indigenisation, which aligns perfectly with the Prime Minister's vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat,'" she said. She also noted that NITI Aayog has projected that the three PCPIRs in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Odisha could attract investments of up to Rs. 2.5 lakh crore, creating employment for 3.7 lakh people.

Verma assured that the Government of India would consider setting up another Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and Technology (CIPET) centre in Andhra Pradesh and would extend support to tackle the issue of plastic waste. "IndiaChem 2024 will include a dedicated session on plant and machinery, and I urge all participants to take full advantage of this," she added.

Woman delivers baby in PHC corridor

PNS ■ NANDYALA

In a distressing incident, a pregnant woman gave birth in the corridor of the Primary Health Centre (PHC) after medical staff denied her entry, advising her to go to the Government General Hospital (GGH) instead. This incident occurred at Bramaramba Chenchugudem village in Kothapalli mandal on Friday.

Family members reported that Raya Eedamma was taken to the hospital in the morning as she began experiencing labour pains. Upon arrival, the medical staff insisted that her family take her to GGH in Kurnool or Atmakur. Despite her severe labour pains, Eedamma was not permitted to enter the hospital. Moments later, she collapsed at the hospital entrance and gave birth to a baby girl. The distressing scene was captured on video and photographs by onlookers using their mobile



phones.

Subsequently, Eedamma and her newborn were taken to their thanda (village). In a bid to avoid repercussions, the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) and other medical staff later visited the thanda to provide medical treatment to Eedamma.

In a separate case, another pregnant woman, Chenchu Guramma, gave birth in an agricultural field while work-

ing. She and her newborn were later taken to the same hospital. Fearing consequences from higher officials, the medical staff eventually admitted Guramma and provided her with treatment.

Both women are from the Chenchu tribal community, located a few kilometres from the hospital. The Chenchu tribe is demanding an inquiry and action against the negligent hospital staff.

MP's plea to expedite Bandar-Repalle rly line survey

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Machilipatnam Lok Sabha member Vallabhaneni Balashowry met with Union Railway Minister Ashwani Vaishnav in New Delhi on Friday, urging him to expedite the survey process for the proposed Machilipatnam-Repalle railway line.

The MP highlighted that the railway line has been a long-standing aspiration of the people in the region. He explained the significance of the project, including the proposed route map, and stressed the need for a new line connecting Machilipatnam and Repalle.

Balashowry requested the Railway Minister to instruct officials to swiftly prepare the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the construction of the railway line.



"The Machilipatnam-Repalle railway line has been delayed for decades. It is a long-cherished dream of the people, and it should be completed at the earliest," the MP emphasised during the meeting.

Currently, to reach Repalle from Machilipatnam via Gudivada, Vijayawada, and Tenali, travellers must cover around 120 km.

The new railway line would significantly shorten this distance, the MP pointed out.

Additionally, the railway line would ease the burden on Vijayawada station. Given that both Machilipatnam and Repalle are hubs for aquaculture, the line would facilitate the transport of fish and prawn produce to other parts of the country. The MP claimed that the Railway Minister responded positively to his appeal.

1,066 stolen/lost mobile phones recovered

PNS ■ NANDYALA

The police have recovered 1,066 lost/stolen mobile phones, worth Rs 2.43 crore. Some of them were handed over to the owners. The Nandyal police have so far recovered 2,426 lost mobile phones.

Nandyal district police organised a mobile recovery mela here on Friday. Superintendent of Police Adhiraj Singh Rana said that during the third phase of mobile recovery, the district police had recovered 1,066 stolen/lost mobile phones, worth Rs 2,43,10,400.

Some of the mobile phones were handed over to the owners in the mobile phone mela today. A large number of people who lost their mobile phones attended the mela and received their mobile phones today.

The SP said during the first phase mobile phone recovery drive, the police had recovered 847 mobile phones, worth 1,52,98,029 on April 27, 2023. During the second phase of stolen/lost mobile phones, 510 lost mobile phones were recovered worth Rs 86,57,000 on October 10, 2023.



The SP said during the first phase mobile phone recovery drive, the police had recovered 847 mobile phones, worth 1,52,98,029 on April 27, 2023. During the second phase of stolen/lost mobile phones, 510 lost mobile phones were recovered worth Rs 86,57,000 on October 10, 2023.

The police so far have recovered a total number of 2,426 stolen/lost mobile phones worth Rs 4,82,65,429. Most of the recovered phones had been handed over to the phone owners. Some of the stolen/lost mobile phones were recovered in other states including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu,

Karnataka, Goa and Telangana. The SP said that if anybody loses a mobile phone, a HAI message should be sent to Whatsapp number 9121101107 and then he/she receives a link and he/she is to send the details after opening the link. The victim can complain through the CEIR portal.



Steps for Tirumala Brahmsavams reviewed

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

With less than a week remaining for the prestigious annual Brahmsavams festival in Tirumala, TTD Executive Officer J Syamala Rao, along with Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdhary, reviewed the arrangements for the nine-day event with various departments.

The final preparatory meeting for the Brahmsavams was held at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Friday. Joint Executive Officers Goutami and Veerabrahmam, along with Chief Vigilance and Security Officer Sridhar, and heads of various departments, also participated in the meeting.

The EO emphasised that there should be no compromise in the arrangements, directing the Annaprasadam

and Health (sanitation) departments to coordinate closely to ensure a seamless experience for the large number of pilgrims expected. "As soon as the serving of Annaprasadam is completed, the Health Department, with its sanitation workers, should promptly begin clearing debris and maintaining cleanliness," he stated.

The EO also reviewed the engineering works, temple, vigilance and security, gardens and forests, dance and bhajan troupes, transport, Gosala, and medical services, instructing the departments to properly utilise the services of Srivari Sevaks.

Devasthanams Law Officer Varaprasad, Chief Engineer Satyanarayana, FACAO Balaji, and other officials from various departments were also present.

Aqua farmers told to learn advanced techniques



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has asked the aquaculture farmers to learn advanced techniques and produce quality products. District Collector Nagarani participated as the chief guest in the Aquaculture Expo 2024, organised by MA Nazir, Chief Executive of Expo, and Editor of Aqua International English Monthly here on Friday.

Aquaculture Expo 2024 was inaugurated by Undi MLA Kanumuri Raghurama Krishnam Raju. The Aqua Expo, an exhibition on the field of aquaculture is being organized for two days on September 27 and 28.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the exhi-

bitation was being organized to create awareness among the aqua cultivators about shrimp, fish, crab farming and various products, technology, agricultural practices, services available to get better yield, productivity and results in aquaculture.

She stated that the Expo is an excellent opportunity for aquaculture farmers to enhance their knowledge on various aspects of Aquaculture through the Aquaculture Expo exhibition.

MLA Raghurama Krishnam Raju said that the companies dealing with the production and supply of products and services related to the aquaculture sector want the aqua farmers to see their products displayed at the Aqua Culture Expo and increase their knowledge.

Research and development

organizations on aquaculture would also benefit from their participation; he said adding that the exhibition is also an opportunity for buyers and sellers in this sector.

After the opening of the Aqua Expo, Collector Nagarani inaugurated the stalls where various equipment and products were displayed. Later, experts from the Aqua sector participated in the face-to-face program with the farmers to make them aware and clear their doubts. Former MP and BMR Industries limited chairman B Mastan Rao, MPEDA Deputy Director TG Manoj Kumar district fisheries officer RVSV Prasad and AP aqua dealer's association president CH Krishnam Raju were among those who attended the programme.

Minor girl sexually assaulted; accused arrested

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

In a shocking incident, a 10-year-old mentally retarded girl was allegedly sexually assaulted at Seesali village in Kalla mandal by a man. The police arrested the accused.

The heinous crime incident took place on September 19 and the mother of the victim complained to the police on September 20. Police said that the victim was studying 5th class at a school. The victim is mentally retarded and also dumb.

The accused, Melimi Krupananand, alias Anand, who was working as a car driver, forcibly took the girl into a car and sexually assaulted her. The victim explained to her mother through gestures about the incident. The police arrested the accused Kurpanand and registered the crime in the Kalla police sta-



tion as Cr.No 214/2024, Under Sections 75 BNS & Sec 9 (m), (k), R/W of POCSO Act, 2012, 354 (A) PC.

Meanwhile, the parents of the students, who are studying at MPP school, voiced concern about the safety of their daughters. Though the heinous incident took place on September 19, it has not seen light so far. The parents lashed out at the indifference of the school teachers.

Two workers run over by roadroller

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

In a freak incident, two workers of a road construction agency were crushed to death when a road roller ran over them when they were asleep at Theertham village in Baireddypalli mandal in the wee hours on Friday.

Police said that the deceased Sadiq (29) and Sharif (31) were working with the highway road construction works.

The two deceased workers slept in an open area near the stationary road roller. The road roller driver, without noticing them, took the road roller backwards resulting in the two workers being crushed to death under the road roller. The road roller driver fled the scene after the incident. The police registered a case and began an investigation to ascertain whether it was an accident or conspiracy behind it. The bodies were shifted to the GGH for postmortem.

RS 5,500 CRORE TO CLEANSE THE MUSI RIVER Will bring back Hyd's glory: Ponnam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stating that the Congress government will definitely bring the lost glory to Hyderabad, the Hyderabad incharge Minister, Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar made it clear that the Congress government is ready to solve the problems of the Musi River Front victims. The Minister said that the government will launch Musi beautification works only after assisting the oustees.

While speaking to the media on Friday at Secretariat Media Centre, the Minister said that the State government prepared a plan with Rs 5,500 crore to cleanse the Musi River. He said that the people of Hyderabad were observing the conspiracies of the opposition parties. The



Minister Ponnam Prabhakar speaking to the media in Hyderabad on Friday

Minister said that they did not touch the Musi buffer zone and FTL. However, houses located in Musi River bed survey is going on and the government will provide rehabilitation to them.

Condemning the allegations of the opposition parties that the Congress government is doing injustice to the Musi oustees,

Prabhakar offered BRS working president KT Rama Rao, who has been criticising the Congress government sharply in regard to HYDRABAD, to share his views with him if KTR really has love towards people. He alleged that the BRS leaders did nothing but utter big words for 10 years when the BRS was in power. However,

the same BRS leaders are now provoking hatred against the Congress government.

The Minister alleged that the Congress constructed the Outer Ring Road (ORR). However, the previous BRS government sold it for Rs7,380 crore. He demanded KTR to come for a debate on the money spent on

The Minister said that they did not touch the Musi buffer zone and FTL. However, houses located in Musi River bed survey is going on and the government will provide rehabilitation to them

Hyderabad by the previous BRS government. has the previous BRS government put its efforts to quench the thirst of the people of Hyderabad? The BRS has been in power for 10 years, but the water-logging centres are still in the same situation. He alleged that the BRS party obstructed construction of Metro Rail in Old City.

Bike-lifter gang busted; 23 vehicles recovered

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

The police arrested a four-member interstate bike-lifting gang and recovered 23 motorcycles and scooters. CI Srinivasulu told the media that a police team arrested the four interstate bike-lifting gang and recovered 23 motorcycles and scooters worth Rs 21 lakh.

One more accused is at large and police have launched a search to nab him.



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Renowned experts from across India converged at GITAM Deemed to be University for a workshop titled '100 Years of Bose Statistics: A Quantum Legacy'. The event, jointly organised by the Indian Physics Association and the SN Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS), commemorated the centenary of Satyendra Nath Bose's groundbreaking contributions to quantum mechanics.

Addressing the gathering, Prof KS Krishna, Dean of GITAM School of Science, emphasised the significance of Bose's foundational work in the early 1920s. "Satyendra Nath Bose's pioneering work

Bose Statistics continues to shape modern science and technology'

Workshop on '100 Years of Bose Statistics: A Quantum Legacy' held

laid the cornerstone for a critical part of quantum mechanics, deeply influencing the development of quantum theory," he stated. His collaboration with Albert Einstein on Bose-Einstein statistics introduced the concept of Bose-Einstein Condensation (BEC), a phenomenon that has been central to advancements in quantum physics.

Prof BN Jagatap, Distinguished Scientist from BARC, echoed the sentiment, highlighting the instrumental role of Bose's work in developing modern quantum technologies. "Bose-Einstein condensation, quantum superconductivity, and quantum information theory owe their origins to the pioneering efforts of Bose," he remarked.

Prof Manik Banik from SNBNCBS (Kolkata) added, "The principles discovered by Satyendra Nath Bose over a century ago remain as relevant today as they were when first conceived." He expressed optimism that further exploration of bosons and their unique properties would lead to breakthroughs that could transform not only our understanding of

the universe, but also bring practical advancements to everyday life.

The workshop featured eminent speakers from IIT Bombay, SNBNCBS, and the University of Hyderabad. Over 150 attendees, including physics faculty, researchers, and students from surrounding colleges, engaged in the discussions.

ACROSS THE STATES



MCD wrongly overpowered, mandate stolen: Kejriwal

The BJP has wrongly overpowered the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and stole the mandate, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal alleged on Friday after the saffron party won the last vacant seat of the civic body's standing committee. The councillors of the ruling AAP and Congress had boycotted the election. With this poll result, the BJP now has 10 members in the panel while the ruling AAP has only eight. Addressing the Delhi Assembly, Kejriwal said that according to rules only the mayor can convene a meeting of the MCD House but the lieutenant governor changed it and directed an additional commissioner of the civic body to do it. "Is this election?" he posed and accused the BJP of resorting to "hooliganism". The former chief minister claimed that as per the rule, a notice has to be sent to every councillor 72 hours before the meeting, but it was not followed. In the election, the BJP's Sunder Singh got all 115 votes of the BJP councillors while the AAP's Nirmala Kumari did not receive any vote.



Villagers panic over footprints of leopard, wolf

The forest department in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district has stepped up vigil after animal footprints, suspected of leopard or wolf, were reported in a few villages. However, forest officials said the footprints belong to a canine species. The tracks found could be of a dog, jackal or another canine species. There is no evidence of a tiger (leopard) in the area, as the prints belong to the dog family. Forest Ranger Akanksha Gupta said. Locals in Budaun claimed that the prints indicate the presence of a leopard or wolf, amid reports of leopard and wolf sightings in neighbouring Bahraich district. The forest department received calls from Yaad Ram and Mahipal Singh of Nurpur village regarding the sighting of footprints, Gupta said. Villagers of Nurpur, in the Kadarchaak region of Budaun, claimed that they saw the "paw prints" in their fields, causing widespread panic about a possible leopard sighting. A team from the forest department went to inspect the area after they received information. Ranger Gupta, along with her team, examined the footprints and collected samples for further analysis.



'Only 2 of 24 parliamentary panels headed by women'

Tinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien on Friday said only two of the newly-constituted parliamentary panels are headed by women -- the Commerce Committee headed by the TMC's Dola Sen and the Consumer Affairs Committee headed by the DMK's Kanimozhi. In a post on X, O'Brien said only two parties, the TMC and the DMK, have "walked the talk". "At long last. Chairpersons for 24 Parliamentary Standing Committees announced," the Parliamentary Party leader of the TMC in the Rajya Sabha said. "Just two of these are headed by women. TMC and DMK walk the talk. The others? Only talk!" he said. "Bravo TMC Dola Sen heading Commerce and DMK Kanimozhi heading Consumer Affairs," O'Brien added. The parliamentary standing committees were constituted on Thursday. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Bhartruhari Mahabadi will head the key panel on finance and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor will head the panel on external affairs. The committee on defence will be chaired by former Union minister Radha Mohan Singh, while the panel on home affairs will be headed by BJP MP Radha Mohan Das Agrawal.

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday said he has written to the Centre, seeking assistance for a detailed investigation into the deaths of aspirants who were appearing for physical tests as part of a recruitment drive to appoint excise personnel. Fifteen aspirants lost their lives while undertaking physical tests during the drive recently. The BJP has been attacking Soren's government over the deaths, alleging they were victims of the administration's mismanagement. "Being concerned over the deaths of the candidates, I have written a letter to the Union health minister (JP Nadda) and sought help from him for a detailed investigation into the matter to ascertain the exact

Soren seeks Centre's help for probe

Deaths of candidates during recruitment drive

cause of the deaths. I do not think Jharkhand youths would be so weak that they cannot run or walk 10 km," the chief minister said. "It is going to be a big challenge. If we go for more recruitment drives where physical tests are required, more youth might lose their lives. So, we have decided to go forward with a detailed investigation in view of the safety of the youths," he said. Soren was speaking at a function where he handed appointment letters to 523 personnel who were recruited by the government.



On the allegation of malpractices in the Jharkhand General Graduate Level Combined Competitive Examination (JGGLCCE), he said attempts were being made to malign his

MUDA CASE

Lokayukta Police register FIR against Karnataka CM

PNS ■ MYSURU

Lokayukta police here on Friday registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, following the court order, official sources said.



A Special Court in Bengaluru on Wednesday ordered a Lokayukta probe against Siddaramaiah in the case, setting the stage for filing an FIR against him.

The order of the Special Court Judge, Santhosh Gajanan Bhat, came a day after the High Court upheld the sanction granted by the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to conduct an investigation against Siddaramaiah on the allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife B M Parvathi by MUDA.

The Special Court exclusively to deal with criminal cases related to former and elected MPs/MLAs issued the order directing the Lokayukta police in Mysuru to initiate an investigation on the complaint filed by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna.

The Court issued directions to take up the probe under section 156 (3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) (that gives a magistrate the power to order an investigation into a cognisable offense.) and file the investigation report by December 24.

"Acting under Sec.156(3) of Code of Criminal Procedure, the jurisdictional police i.e., Superintendent of Police, Karnataka Lokayukta, Mysuru is hereby directed to register the case, investigate and to file

"I am being targeted as Opposition is scared of me": Siddaramaiah

PNS ■ MYSURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday claimed he was being targeted in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case as the opposition is "scared" of him and said it's the first such "political case" against him. The Chief Minister reiterated that he won't resign following the court ordering a probe against him in the case as he has done no wrong and asserted that he

would fight the case legally. Accusing the central government of misusing central agencies like CBI, ED and also the office of the Governor in the opposition-ruled states across the country, he said there was a need for a national debate on Governors' "interference" in administration. "I have done no wrong. This is for the first time a political case is being registered against me. This is a political case, please underline," Siddaramaiah told reporters here.

a report as contemplated under Sec.173 of Cr.P.C., within a period 3 months from today," the court had said.

It had listed offences punishable under Sec.120B (Punishment of criminal conspiracy), 166 (Public servant disobeying law, with intent to cause injury to any person), 403 (Dishonest misappropriation of property), 406 (

Punishment for criminal breach of trust), 420 (Cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 426 (Punishment for mischief), 465 (Punishment for forgery), 468 (Forgery for purpose of cheating), 340 (Wrongful confinement), 351 (Assault) and other relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Stalin meets PM; seeks funds for Chennai Metro



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday and sought early release of pending funds for Chennai metro and integrated education initiatives, besides an intervention to protect Tamil fishermen.

The DMK president, who described the meeting as "purposeful", presented a detailed report on three main issues. "The Prime Minister listened patiently," Stalin told reporters after the meeting. The chief minister sought the speedy release of funds for the Chennai metro project as Rs 18,544 crore has already been spent so far.

The state government wants to start work on the second phase of the Chennai metro and the non-disbursement of the pending dues has "caused a delay in the works, he emphasised.

EC seeks explanation from Maha CS DGP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sending out a stern message, the Election Commission on Friday sought an explanation from the Maharashtra chief secretary and the state's police chief for failing to fully implement its orders on the transfer of officials ahead of the upcoming assembly polls.

In a strongly-worded letter, the poll body said despite a directive issued on July 31 to relocate officials who had served in their home districts or cur-



rent posting for over three years, the state administration had not completed the process. According to the Election

Commission's (EC) mandate, the compliance report was due by August 31. While the additional director general of police

submitted a partial report, the chief secretary is yet to provide a full response.

Sources noted that more than 100 inspector-level officers in Mumbai and revenue officials, many holding key positions in the state, had not been transferred as required.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar expressed his displeasure over the state administration's non-compliance, stating that the delay undermined efforts to ensure a free and fair electoral process.

IFS officer, husband booked for defrauding Lucknow doctor

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer and her husband have been booked here for allegedly duping a doctor of over Rs 64 lakh on the pretext of investment, police said on Friday. SHO Rajesh Kumar Tripathi told PTI that an FIR in the matter was lodged on Thursday at the Gomti Nagar police station on orders of a court. In her complaint, Dr. Mridula Agarwal alleged fraud

amounting to Rs 64,63,250 against the IFS officer Niharika Singh, her husband Ajit Gupta and their associated companies in Lucknow.

A police official said the IFS officer is currently posted in Indonesia.

PTI could not immediately contact her for a response. The FIR has been lodged under IPC sections 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating) for the offence that took place between February 2 and 29, 2020.

M V Shreyams Kumar president of Indian Newspaper Society

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



M V Shreyams Kumar of Mathrubhumi was on Friday elected president of the Indian Newspaper Society, an apex body of publishers of newspapers, magazines and periodicals. Kumar succeeds Rakesh Sharma of Aaj Samaj.

Vivek Gupta of Samrag was elected deputy president, Karan Rajendra Darda of Lokmat vice president and Tanmay Maheshwari of Amar Ujala honorary treasurer of the society.

The 85th Annual General Meeting of the society was held through video-conferencing. The 41-member Executive Committee includes S Balasubramanian Adityan of

Daily Thanthi, Samahit Bal of Pragativadi, KN Tilak Kumar of Deccan Herald & Prajavani, Viveck Goenka of The Indian Express, Mahendra Mohan Gupta of Dainik Jagran, Kundan Vyas of Vyapar-Janmabhoomi, Atideb Sarkar of the Telegraph, K R P Reddy of Sakshi and Pratap G Pawar of Sakal.

Massive corruption in Jharkhand, nothing moves without money: Shivraj

PNS ■ RANCHI



Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday accused the JMM-led coalition government in Jharkhand of misusing central funds sent to the state for various schemes and said that a probe will be launched into MGNREGA fund utilisation.

The Union Agriculture Minister launched a frontal attack on the JMM-led dispen-

sation, calling it a "paper leak government" and accused it of playing with the future of the youth. "There is massive corruption in Jharkhand, nothing moves here without money. Central funds meant for various schemes were grossly misused by the Hemant Soren-led government. We will initiate a thorough probe into the irregularities in MGNREGA," Singh said while addressing BJP's 'Parivartan Rally' in Latehar.

Cong to get 'massive mandate' in Haryana: Ex-CM Hooda

Will accept high command's decision on CM

PNS ■ ROHTAK



Predicting a "massive mandate" for the Congress in the Haryana Assembly polls, former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Friday said the final decision on the chief ministerial pick would be taken by the party high command and it would be acceptable to him.

Dismissing talk of infighting, Hooda said the Congress was united in Haryana and claimed that the party would derive more strength from having multiple claimants for the chief minister's post.

In an interview with PTI, Hooda also made it clear that he was a claimant for the chief minister's post ahead of his son Deepender Hooda, asserting that he was "neither tired nor retired".

Asked about senior leaders Kumari Selja and Randeep Surjewala also airing their chief ministerial ambitions, Hooda said, "It is a good thing. If you do not have 'ichha (ambition)' in politics, then your politics will become stagnant. More the claimants, more the strength we (Congress)

will derive," he said. Talking about the Congress' chances in the polls, the 77-year-old leader said, "I am travelling across the state and we are getting tremendous support from all sections. On the basis of that, I can say that people have made up their minds -- 'abki baar Congress ki sarkar'."

Asked if the gap between the Congress and the BJP had closed in the last few days, Hooda exuded confidence that his party would form the government with a "massive mandate".

On where he sees himself in the race for the chief minister's post, Hooda says the Congress has an established norm that MLAs are elected, observers come to take their opinion, and

then the high command takes a decision.

"Whatever it decides will be acceptable to me," the former Haryana chief minister said.

Hooda's comments come a day after Selja, another chief ministerial post claimant of the party, made similar remarks.

Selja had said the decision on who the chief minister would be on the party getting the people's mandate would be taken by the high command and that would be acceptable to everyone.

On his son Deepender Hooda being a prominent face in the campaign and whether he was also in the running for the chief minister's post, Hooda shot back, saying, "Why, do you want me to retire?"

"I have said earlier also, neither am I tired nor retired," he asserted.

Asked about the recent turn of events that saw Selja staying away from the campaign trail and then being placated by the party leadership, Hooda dismissed it as a "creation" of the media.

The Congress is united, he asserted.



BJP raises charges against Vadra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday dredged up the alleged corruption involving Rahul Gandhi's brother-in-law Robert Vadra when the Congress was in power in Haryana by firing a fresh salvo against the opposition party ahead of the assembly polls in the state.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia claimed the election in the state is a fight between "Haryana ka laal" (son of Haryana) and "dalaal" (fixer) of the Gandhi family, as it questioned the Congress leadership's silence on the corruption charges against Vadra and the party's then government headed by Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

He said people of the state have made up their mind to elect the BJP to power for a third straight term, asserting that the central government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the state government headed by Nayab Singh Saini have worked for farmers' welfare.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Playing with lives

CDSCO flags over 50 drugs, including paracetamol, as substandard, raising serious health concerns

In a concerning development, the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) has declared over 50 commonly used drugs, including Paracetamol and Pan D, as "not of standard quality" in its latest quality check report. The drugs, which also include vital medications such as calcium and vitamin supplements, high blood pressure medications, and anti-diabetic pills, were flagged in the organisation's August 2024 report, raising serious questions about their safety and efficacy for public use. The CDSCO's monthly quality check, which involves random sampling by state drug officers, identified numerous drugs under the "Not of Standard Quality (NSQ Alert)" category. Among the affected products are popular over-the-counter medicines such as vitamin C and D3 tablets, Shelcal (a calcium and vitamin D3 supplement), paracetamol tablets (IP 500 mg), Glimperide (an anti-diabetic drug), Telmisartan (for high blood pressure), and anti-acid Pan D. These widely used drugs, manufactured by companies like Hetero Drugs,



Alkem Laboratories and Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd, pose potential risks to consumers due to their substandard quality.

The CDSCO's report included two lists, one naming 48 drugs that failed the quality tests and another listing 5 drugs under investigation as potentially spurious. In response to the findings, some manufacturers have claimed that certain batches of the flagged products were spurious and not manufactured by them. But that is a standard defence. A thorough probe must be initiated against such companies. This isn't the first time the CDSCO has taken action against unsafe drugs. Earlier in August, the central regulator banned over 156

fixed-dose drug combinations (FDCs) across the country, citing "likely risk to humans." These recurring incidents are ringing alarm bells about the quality control standards in India's pharmaceutical industry and the potential health risks posed by compromised drugs on the market. As the investigation into the spurious drugs continues, the public's trust in the safety of medicines remains at stake. Last year cough syrup supplied to Africa had allegedly resulted in deaths of 141 individuals. This not only is inhumane act but also tarnishes the reputation of Indian pharmaceutical industry in the world. For consumers, the key takeaway is to remain cautious about the medications they purchase and consume, particularly from lesser-known sources. Additionally, it is imperative for the regulatory framework to intensify its vigil to ensure that pharmaceutical companies adhere to strict quality standards. And we are not even talking about the Counterfeit medicines that are freely sold in the market. CDSCO report has just scratched the surface of this 65 billion dollar market. Blinded by greed, many companies indulge in manufacturing substandard medicines and even counterfeits. They have scant regard for human life and are fixated on making profits. Indeed the Government has to deal with them with heavy hand and give them the taste of their own medicine.

PICTALK



Performers dressed in traditional attire rehearse for Garba, ahead of Navratri festival, in Ahmedabad

Quad summit: Prioritising security in the Indo-Pacific



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Quad summit reiterated its commitment to ensure regional stability and foster sustainable development in the face of China's growing influence

The fourth Quad Summit, held in Wilmington, Delaware, USA, marked a significant step toward reinforcing the strategic partnerships between the member countries—the United States, India, Japan, and Australia. The Quad, officially known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, has become an essential platform for collaboration on multiple fronts, particularly in addressing security issues across the Asia-Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region. Over time, the scope of this partnership has expanded to include critical areas such as disaster management, digital infrastructure, and climate change, making it a multifaceted initiative with both security and development dimensions.

One of the key highlights of this summit was Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal to establish a new collaboration between India and the United States in the semiconductor sector. Modi emphasised the potential of AI (American-Indian) power, in reference to both artificial intelligence and the burgeoning US-India partnership. This collaboration, centered on a semiconductor facility near Noida in Uttar Pradesh, promises to bring advanced technologies, including control chips essential to both Indian and American security. The move is seen as a direct challenge to China's and Taiwan's dominance in the global semiconductor market, signaling a shift in the geopolitical landscape of technology. Alongside the semiconductor cooperation, maritime and cyber security remained top priorities for the Quad. The recent summit, attended by US President Joe Biden, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, underscored the strategic importance of these areas. The Quad leaders are working to counter a variety of regional conflicts, including the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, transnational terrorism, and both traditional and non-traditional threats emerging in the Indo-Pacific. The member nations are



particularly concerned about China's increasingly aggressive stance in the Indian Ocean and parts of the South and East China Seas, areas critical to global trade and security.

Through dialogue and coordinated efforts, the Quad aims to tackle the growing threat of terrorism, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. By fostering diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution mechanisms, the Quad hopes to promote stability while ensuring economic prosperity for all member nations. The group's shared strategic vision is vital in shaping a multilayered, multilateral strategy for dealing with security challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. The Quad is not only a military alliance but also a platform for fostering development in fields such as education, science, biotechnology, and strategic planning, further strengthening the bonds between its members. India's rising global influence has been evident through its leadership in multiple international organisations such as the G20, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). These roles have allowed India to showcase its diplomatic prowess and address global issues. The Quad summit provided yet another opportunity for India



THE QUAD LEADERS ARE WORKING TO COUNTER A VARIETY OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS, INCLUDING THE ONGOING WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE, TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM, AND EMERGING IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

to contribute to the development of a robust, cooperative international system. The discussions during the summit included the need to evolve a new strategic approach to counter threats from nations that seek to destabilise the global order.

A key focus of the summit was the Indo-Pacific region, where the Quad aims to ensure a free, open, and secure maritime environment. This area has become a flashpoint for various conflicts, with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) posing a significant challenge to regional stability. To counter this, the Quad members have collaborated on several initiatives, including the "Quad-at-Sea" Ship Observer Mission, which will enhance maritime security by 2025. Moreover, the group is also investing in renewable energy and high-quality infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific, aiming to foster sustainable development and reduce reliance on Chinese-led initiatives.

Health cooperation was another important topic at the summit, with the Quad leaders announcing a collaborative effort to combat cervical cancer through the Quad Cancer Moonshot initiative. This humanitarian approach, combined with the group's security efforts, underscores the

Quad's commitment to a comprehensive vision for regional stability and prosperity. The focus on addressing modern terrorism, including its funding and cyber threats, also highlights the Quad's adaptive approach to emerging security challenges.

The ongoing collaboration among the Quad nations is not limited to traditional security measures. The group is working to enhance policing cooperation, cyber security, and border protection by leveraging technological innovations. These efforts are particularly crucial in addressing non-state actors who engage in smuggling, drug trafficking, and cyber-attacks. By tightening security mechanisms and boosting intelligence-sharing, the Quad hopes to build a more resilient defense network across the Indo-Pacific. The Quad's influence has also extended to humanitarian aid, as seen in its support for Papua New Guinea. The summit emphasised the need for a vigilant, modern approach to security, replacing outdated strategies that no longer fit the current geopolitical landscape.

(The writer is recipient of Bharat Gaurav and Rastriya Gaurav Award is a professor and an expert of strategic affairs, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIDDARAMAIAH FACES HEAT

Madam — The Karnataka High Court's dismissal of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the Governor's sanction for inquiry against him in the MUDA (Mysore Urban Development Authority) case is a political setback for Siddaramaiah. It is untenable for him to continue in office. The court has paved the way for Lokayukta to investigate the case in which the CM's wife Parvathi has been allotted 14 sites when she should have gotten only two sites as per rules. The judge raised some questions and inferences: Would the allotments have been made, "bending the rule from time to time," if the beneficiary were not the wife of a politician wielding power in various positions? While Siddaramaiah might not have signed any of the allotment documents or issued orders for the same, can he claim that he was not aware of what government favours his wife was getting and that she was claiming and getting benefits beyond her entitlement? These questions naturally lead to the judge's finding that "it prima facie, depicts stretching of the arms of undue influence and portrays abuse of power of the seat of the Chief Minister or Minister or any other post held by Siddaramaiah." For a politician who has had a relatively clean image over a long political career, these observations are damning. These are the very questions that the common man and voter, too, would be asking, given the facts of the case.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

CONCERN OVER CUSTODIAL DEATH
Madam—Now, another custodial death happened under another "double engine" government on September 23. According to the official report, Akshay Shinde, the accused of sexually assaulting two girls at a school in Badlapur, Maharashtra, snatched the revolver of one of the policemen, and he died in retaliatory firing by police. The Bombay High Court expressed serious concerns

Ensure children's safety



Recently, a physical education teacher (PET) was booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, as reported in your newspaper. The incident highlights the vulnerability of children but also raises serious questions about the effectiveness of current protective protocols in edu-

cational institutions. This distressing event underscores the urgent need for stronger measures to safeguard our children from such grievous acts. It is critical that schools adopt thorough background checks for all staff members and provide regular training on child protection measures.

Furthermore, the reported stone-pelting incident, which resulted in injuries to four policemen, is an alarming indicator of rising public disorder. It's essential for law enforcement agencies to address such issues swiftly to uphold public safety and order. The authorities should take immediate action to strengthen child protection laws and ensure strict enforcement. In addition, public awareness campaigns should be launched to educate the community about the importance of safeguarding our children and maintaining public order.

Juloori B Saraswathi | Hyderabad

KANGANA'S COMMENTS BACKFIRE

Madam — Actor-turned-politician and the BJP MP Kangana Ranaut once again at the centre of controversy with her recent remark calling for the return of the now-repealed farm laws, though withdrawing it later. Her remark highlights a pattern of provocative statements that raise important questions about her intentions and the broader political implications, leaving the BJP itself in an embarrassing situation every time. The BJP high command must know that while her willingness to engage in controversial topics can energise a segment of the party's base due to her celebrity status, her comments always draw flaks and pose risks.

The BJP must ensure that its party members maintain balance in their comments, especially when addressing sensitive topics like agriculture and farmers' rights.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Technology as a force multiplier in education

The intertwining of education and technology has brought about a profound transformation in the way knowledge is imparted

Education gave birth to technology and technology revolutionised education in several ways giving the "Force Multiplier" effect in promoting the main objectives of education. The Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst in revolutionising the educational system. With many objectives and aims wherein education and technology both became mutually inclusive and dependent. Thus many educational tools emerged, and technology catapulted the availability of much-needed time that can be highlighted in various and innumerable ways, and how technology is promoting education with such tools. It becomes our utmost responsibility to guard against its misuse considering the emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). The Information technology (IT) resources thus aid in academics as well as research. A Learning Management system (LMS) along with an Enterprise resource planning (ERP) has been introduced in educational institutions and universities to have outcome-



based education. The future of higher education thus lies in embracing technology effectively as is taught by the challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, providing innovative use of e-learning platforms for an effective learning environment. With technological advancements, it is now necessary to enhance education so that it meets the interests of both students and teachers. It is very essential to build awareness about the process of technology with remarkable advances in technology. The way technological advancements are incorporated into the education system for knowledge transfer is remarkable. Thus the teach-

ing learning process has undergone revolutionary changes and posed challenges to forcibly learn the effective use of technology (teaching tools). While the education system is harnessing the several advantages of technology-based tools, it is pertinent and equally important to foresee the negative aspects emerging in some quarters and ponder over the preventive steps to be thought of in the ever-changing world of the education system. Thus Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education has become important for imparting quality education that is ethical, transparent and secure. The ICT tools have transformed how the education sector is evolving. The rapidly emerging technology and the educational field are inseparable and they are like conjoined twins to monitor and improve quality in higher education. However, one needs to address the challenges associated with digital access to transform education. Education requires continuous monitoring, brainstorming and supervision and with the invasion of technology

into the teaching-learning process, it has become very effective. Technology offers accessibility to educational resources such as online platforms and digital libraries that offer a wealth of information making learning very interesting and dynamic. The e-resources aid in a very large magnitude, especially with the integration of artificial intelligence which will increase opportunities for research and academics. The design of technology and its implementation includes the perspectives and the skills that are required for diverse users. Thus technology is an integral part of education with the development of various devices such as laptops, smartphones, and apps that have changed the learning process. Education with technology has progressed by leaps and bounds in modern times. This blend has helped to achieve perfection but with caution that it must not be misused and produce adverse consequences.

(The writer is Director Academics, Dr DY Patil Medical College, Pune; views are personal)



P VATSALA SWAMY



FIRST COLUMN

COUNTERING WORKPLACE MANIPULATION

It can quietly undermine trust and productivity, often without employees realising the damage



SAKSHI SETHI

In any workplace, collaboration and effective communication are vital for achieving organisational goals. However, these dynamics can be undermined when manipulation becomes a part of the equation. A manipulative colleague can distort the working environment, leading to decreased morale, distrust among coworkers and even stifled productivity. Manipulative individuals may use various methods, including emotional blackmail, guilt-tripping, gaslighting, or even leveraging workplace politics to gain control or ascend in their careers. This type of manipulation involves the use of deceptive tactics by individuals to influence others for personal gain, often at the expense of colleagues.

Such individuals tend to be skilled at subtly exploiting their coworker's emotions or vulnerabilities, leaving their targets unaware of the manipulation until it has already caused them damage. Manipulative behaviours can manifest in different forms. Some may employ gaslighting, making others question their perception of reality, while others may pit coworkers against each other to create divisions. Moreover, in certain cases, manipulative colleagues present themselves as victims, seeking sympathy to evade accountability.

In more extreme cases, they might distort facts, spread rumours, or even take credit for others' accomplishments. The presence of a manipulative individual in the workplace can create a toxic environment. Manipulation can lead to a breakdown in trust among team members. Coworkers may become wary of each other, questioning each other's intentions and credibility. The tension that manipulation creates can also disrupt team cohesion, leading to a lack of collaboration and efficiency. Additionally, manipulative individuals often prioritise their agenda over the success of the group, negatively affecting overall productivity.



Constant manipulation may cause stress, anxiety, and frustration among colleagues. Individuals who fall victim to manipulation may experience decreased confidence in their abilities or find themselves overloaded with tasks due to guilt or coercion. Over time, this emotional strain may even lead to burnout, poor job satisfaction and higher turnover rates. While manipulation can be difficult to address directly, some strategies can help mitigate its effects and create a healthier work environment. The first and foremost step in dealing with manipulation is being able to identify it which involves recognising patterns of behaviour, such as when a coworker tries to guilt-trip into taking on tasks, using flattery to sway decisions or playing the victim to avoid accountability.

Dealing with a manipulative colleague in the workplace is a challenging task that requires both emotional intelligence and assertiveness. One of the most effective long-term solutions for dealing with workplace manipulation is to foster a culture of transparency, open communication and collaboration. A strong and united team is harder for manipulative individuals to exploit. If the manipulation becomes severe or affects the broader workplace, it may be necessary to seek help from higher management or HR. A neutral party can help mediate conflicts, establish formal boundaries and ensure that manipulative behaviours are addressed appropriately. Involving HR ensures that the organisation is aware of any detrimental patterns, protecting not just but potentially other colleagues as well. By recognising manipulative behaviours, setting clear boundaries and maintaining composure, an individual can mitigate the impact of such individuals. It is equally important to seek support from supervisors or HR when necessary and contribute towards creating a positive work environment. Staying vigilant and proactive can help ensure that manipulation does not compromise the productivity, well-being as well as overall success of the team.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

Charting a course for global leadership



GURMEET SINGH

The Government's ambitious Sagarmala project aims to solidify India's position as a dominant maritime power in the coming decades



The existing world order is undeniably in crisis, with geopolitical dynamics undergoing significant changes over recent decades. Historically, the division between East and West, or North and South, largely defined global politics, with rich and poor nations distinctly separated by ideology, economic strength, and resources. However, this traditional world order began to shift dramatically towards the end of the 20th century, erasing the once-clear lines that divided these global spheres. What we see now is a world not defined by competing ideologies, but rather by economic and political strategies aimed at consolidating power and influence.

The latter half of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century have seen discernible shifts in global economic and political power.

The Cold War's end led to a unipolar world dominated by the United States, but cracks in this dominance began to appear, especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, which severely damaged faith in market-driven economies. Financial instability across the globe exposed the fragility of once-trusted economic systems. Simultaneously, international relations have grown increasingly strained, compounded by more recent crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and the resurgence of violence in the Israel-Hamas war. These events have brought the global economy back to a state of stress and instability.

This ongoing instability signals that the world is transitioning from a unipolar system, first towards a bipolar or tripolar system, and now, perhaps, toward a multipolar future. As new powers rise and old alliances shift, nations are compelled to reassess their resources and strategic positions. Among the most critical of these resources are those connected to the sea, particularly the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), which provide nations with substantial control over marine resources. These zones are essential for securing economic growth, national security, and environmental sustainability.

Human activity, driven by technological advancements, has increasingly turned towards the maritime domain, not only for international trade but also for security and ensuring open, free access to international

waters. The importance of the seas cannot be overstated, as oceans provide an array of resources vital to sustaining global commerce, energy needs, and food supplies. In recognition of this, international conventions and agreements have been signed to create standardised norms for maritime conduct, aiming to ensure peaceful seas.

One example of this shift is the practice of ships being registered under flags different from their countries of ownership, a practice now followed by more than 60 per cent of the world's ships. This reflects the interconnected nature of modern trade and economic systems. Additionally, with 85 per cent of the world's nations having a coastline and nearly 40 per cent of the global population living within 100 nautical miles of the sea, the importance of the maritime domain for both individual nations and global commerce is clear. Moreover, most of the world's major capitals and economic centers are situated along coasts, and 36 per cent of the ocean's area falls under the EEZ of nations. Critically, 97 per cent of the world's trade is conducted by sea, underscoring the dominance of maritime trade in global affairs.

Oceans represent an enormous economic opportunity, providing vast areas for investment, development, and growth. Many countries, including India, heavily depend on the sea for economic prosperity. Given this, the need for India to build a robust national maritime consciousness is more urgent than ever.

India is uniquely positioned as a maritime power, with a coastline of over 7,500 kilometers, an EEZ covering 2.37 million square kilometers, a continental shelf of 530,000 square kilometers, and nearly 1,200 islands. Since 2011, India has been working to extend its EEZ from 200 nautical miles to 350 nautical miles, which would give the nation access to an additional 1.2 million square kilometers of marine resources.

This extension would significantly bolster India's potential for economic growth through the exploitation of its maritime resources.

Historically, India's maritime heritage has been rich and vibrant. The Satavahanas, Pallavas, Cholas, and Pandyas built strong maritime traditions, engaging in far-flung trade that brought prosperity to their kingdoms. For example, during the 5th to 11th centuries, the Malacca Straits were controlled by the Srivijaya Empire, a critical maritime chokepoint for global trade. Indian ships, reputed for their advanced design and durability, played a significant role in regional and long-distance trade. However, after the arrival of the Mughals and later the British, India's maritime tradition began to erode, as colonial policies discouraged Indian maritime development.

One major oversight in modern Indian education is the neglect of this rich maritime past. Very few students are taught about India's ancient maritime successes, such as how the Chola Empire led military expeditions across Southeast Asia or how the Travancore Navy defeated the Dutch. This lack of awareness has stifled India's maritime aspirations, but there is a growing recognition that the nation must reclaim its historical maritime identity.

India's future as a global economic and political power will hinge on its ability to harness its maritime resources. With advancements in technology, deep-sea mining has emerged as a new frontier, offering the potential for extracting hydrocarbons, natural gas, and rare earth metals from the ocean floor. In addition, the demand for shipping services is projected to grow as seaborne trade becomes even more critical to global economies. India, where 95 per cent of trade by volume and 77 per cent by value travels by sea, is particularly reliant on maritime trade for its continued economic growth. India must focus on developing multiple sectors

within the maritime domain, including fishing, shipbuilding, ports, coastal tourism, and blue energy. The country has a significant advantage in terms of labor costs and technological know-how, yet it contributes only 1 per cent to global shipbuilding. Furthermore, more than 60 per cent of Indian cargo is carried on foreign vessels, underscoring the need for greater domestic capacity in shipping and shipbuilding.

The Indian government's Sagarmala project, which envisions the modernisation of ports and coastal infrastructure, is a crucial step in developing the country's maritime potential. With an investment of USD 1.42 trillion planned by 2035, this project aims to revolutionise India's coastline, focusing on creating special economic zones, inland waterways, and promoting coastal tourism. India's growth as a maritime power will also enhance its standing as a responsible global player, capable of providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The Indian Navy's initiative to create the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2008 was an important step in fostering cooperation among regional navies. India is now seen as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean, reinforcing its commitment to maintaining open, rule-based seas. As India looks to the future, building awareness about the maritime domain and its economic potential is essential. Universities and defense institutions must collaborate to design programs that will prepare future generations to embrace India's maritime identity. Through a combination of education, policy, and strategic investment, India has the opportunity to emerge as a true maritime power and an influential global leader.

(The writer is former Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University and former Vice-Chancellor of Gandhigram Rural Institute; views are personal. Inputs by A. Subramanyam Raju)

THE COLD WAR'S END LED TO A UNIPOLAR WORLD DOMINATED BY THE UNITED STATES, BUT CRACKS IN THIS DOMINANCE BEGAN TO APPEAR, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAKE OF THE 2008 FINANCIAL CRISIS, WHICH SEVERELY DAMAGED FAITH IN MARKET-DRIVEN ECONOMIES

Education in the Age of AI: Why traditional methods no longer fit the future

As automation and artificial intelligence reshape industries, the education system faces an urgent need for transformation

The growing controversy around entrance exams, particularly regarding paper leaks, has spotlighted the need for reforms in our education and evaluation systems. One obvious solution is transitioning to computer-based exams, which have already been implemented for major tests like JEE Mains, BITSAT, and CAT. These exams feature randomly generated questions and simultaneous distribution across various nodes, effectively preventing paper leaks. Additionally, the possibility of immediate grading offers transparency. Conducting such exams multiple times a year could also alleviate the immense pressure students face.



RAJNEESH BHANDARI

It is equally important to reassess the fundamentals of our education system. The questions of "why to teach," "what to teach," "how to teach," "how to evaluate," and "why to evaluate" should be at the heart of this debate. Oscar Wilde once remarked, "Education is an admirable thing, but nothing that is worth learning can be taught."

This statement resonates deeply with the current state of education. Our system tends to follow a one-size-fits-all model, assuming that sixty students in a classroom can learn the same material at the same pace and, more importantly, enjoy the process.

Rote learning, which dominates the Indian education system, is a clear indicator of how outdated the approach has become, especially in an era of artificial intelligence. Until 2011, CBSE even offered Typewriting as a subject, reflecting how antiquated parts of the curriculum are. The pressure on students has reached a breaking point, contributing to alarmingly high suicide rates among those preparing for competitive entrance exams. Many stu-

dents begin preparing for entrance exams like the IITs from as early as the ninth grade, which hampers their childhood and overall development.

Each individual is unique, and every human brain functions differently. Despite advancements in pedagogy—the science of learning—we continue to follow an archaic, cookie-cutter approach that aims to mass-produce education. The original purpose of mass education was to prepare individuals for jobs. However, automation and AI are now poised to eliminate many of these jobs. Technological advancements are rapidly rendering certain skills obsolete. A large number of young professionals today are employed in the app and web develop-



ment sectors, jobs that can now be done by generative AI systems like ChatGPT. These systems can create apps or websites based on simple prompts. Furthermore, with tools like generative AI, anyone has the potential to become a writer, artist, musician, or coder, drastically reducing the skill gaps that once existed between experts and novices. The most critical skill in the

future, therefore, will not be the ability to perform a specific task, but the ability to learn and adapt continuously. In an ever-changing world, much of the knowledge we acquire will either become irrelevant or require frequent updates. Education should not be seen as a one-time investment made during the early years of life. Instead, learning should be recognised as a lifelong journey. The degree one earns at the beginning of their career may be irrelevant by the time they are halfway through it. Traditional degrees, once crucial for securing jobs, may lose their relevance in the coming years. Many software developers, for instance, learn programming from online platforms like Coursera, rather than from formal university

programs. The way companies evaluate job candidates is also evolving. Resumes are increasingly being replaced by portfolio reviews, where individuals can showcase their skills and creativity. The impact of AI on education is already evident. Last year, ChatGPT made headlines by passing the US Medical Licensing Exam, the law school exam, and Google's coding exam. This has sparked debates about whether AI tools should be banned in educational institutions. Nassim Taleb recently commented on this by stating, "ChatGPT passing is not a reflection of ChatGPT but of the examination system." The core purpose of education should not be to test students by limiting their resources, but

rather to prepare them to solve real-world problems using all available tools. A calculator, for example, is a common tool allowed in many international board exams but still restricted in some Indian boards like CBSE. Generative AI holds the potential to revolutionise education by generating personalised lesson plans and assessments. Virtual tutors providing real-time feedback are already available through platforms like Khan Academy and Duolingo. The future of education lies in learning that is seamlessly embedded in everyday life, facilitated by mentors rather than traditional teachers.

(The writer is founder Founder NeuroEquilibrium; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold hits another record; silver rates climb Rs 500

Gold prices advanced to yet another record high -- for the third straight day on Friday -- rising Rs 50 in the national capital on the back of continued buying by jewellers. Continuing a firm momentum for the third straight session, gold prices rose Rs 50 to hit a fresh high of Rs 78,300 per 10 grams, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Thursday, the precious metal had finished at Rs 78,250 per 10 grams. Silver also jumped Rs 500 to Rs 94,500 per kg on fresh offtake by industrial units and coin makers. The metal had closed at Rs 94,000 per kg in the previous trade. Traders said increased buying by local jewellers to meet festive and wedding season demand and a firm trend in the overseas markets mainly lifted gold prices to this year's highest level. Further, the US Federal Reserve's optimism that they will maintain an aggressive pace of interest rate cuts this year also boosted the bullion prices, they added.



India's forex reserves swell \$2.83 bn to a new high

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.83 billion to a new all-time high of USD 692.296 billion for the week ended September 20, the RBI said on Friday. The overall kitty had increased by USD 223 million to a new high of USD 689.458 billion for the previous reporting week. For the week ended September 20, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 2.057 billion to USD 605.686 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 726 million to USD 63.613 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 121 million to USD 18.54 billion, the apex bank said.



MP govt receives investment proposals of Rs 23,000 crore

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday said investment proposals of Rs 23,181 crore were received at the Regional Industry Conclave (RIC) held here on Friday. Sixty percent of these proposals were for investment in Bundelkhand region itself where the gathering was held, the chief minister noted. "During the RIC, the state has received investment proposals of Rs 23,181 crore which will generate 27,375 employment opportunities," Yadav told reporters at the conclave. Proposals worth Rs 22,241 crore came from large industries while remaining proposals worth Rs 940 crore came from Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), he said. Letters of Intent were issued to 96 units for allotment of 240 acres of land which will attract investment of Rs 1,560 crore and generate employment for 5,900 persons, Yadav said. Investment proposals of Rs 3,200 crore were received from Pacific Meta Steel in Niwari district while Data Centrics proposed investment of Rs 1,700 crore at Surkhi in Sagar district.

Telecom manufacturing zones to be set up: Scindia

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The government of India is setting up telecommunication equipment manufacturing zones in the country, as the sector is expected to go through a revolution in attracting foreign direct investments, Union Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said on Friday.



said at an event here.

The Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern region, said the country during the last 10 years exported mobile phones worth Rs 1.28 lakh crore under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Recalling that India imported the majority of mobile phones and shipped just Rs 1,500 crore worth of mobiles to overseas, he said, "we became the second largest producer of mobile phones in the world with 30 crore of mobile phones being produced in India."

"Value addition (in mobile phones) has gone up by 20 per cent and that has happened because our government has changed the 'FDI norm,' he

said at an event here.

Elaborating, he said, "India had close to USD 98 billion of FDI and in the last 10 years. We have grown by 60 per cent to Rs 160 billion FDI. The same revolution will happen in the telecom sector".

"With USD 39 billion worth of FDI, now it is time for the telecom equipment manufacturing sector to go through the same revolution. We had the fastest 5G roll out in India and 98 per cent of our cities have been covered," he said.

Scindia said PM Modi has mandated that the government-owned telecom major Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd

(BSNL) would set up its 4G services based on indigenous 4G stack.

"We are the sixth country in the world to produce our own 4G telecom stack and we would have rolled out 1 lakh towers by mid next year and by mid 2025, we would have ensured 4G saturation across India," he said.

Scindia along with Tamil Nadu Minister for Industries TRB Rajaa were here at the inauguration of the first manufacturing facility of US-based network equipment maker Cisco.

Accompanied by senior officials, the ministers visited

the manufacturing facilities later.

Sharing some images later in the day, Scindia on his social media post said: "Telecom transformation, technological triumph. On our mission to make India the global telecom manufacturing hub, inaugurated the CISCO-FLEX manufacturing facility in Sriperumbudur."

The state-of-the-art facility would fuel India's growth through employment generation, innovation and world-class ideas, while showcasing the power of 'Made in India' products, he said.

Tamil Nadu Industries Minister Rajaa said the state-of-the-art facility of Cisco would cement state's position as the advanced electronics capital of India.

The factory would manufacture Network Convergence System routers, bringing more high quality jobs to the state, he said.

The Sriperumbudur facility of Cisco would also export the products to Mexico, Japan, Australia, Netherlands and the United States of America, he said.

Meta hit with \$102 million privacy fine from EU regulator

PNS ■ LONDON

Meta was punished Friday with a fine worth more than USD 100 million from the social media giant's European Union privacy regulator over a security lapse involving passwords for Facebook users.

The Irish Data Protection Commission said it slapped the US tech company with the 91 million euro (USD 101.6 million) penalty following an investigation.

The watchdog started investigating in 2019 after it was notified by Meta that some passwords had been inadvertently stored internally in plain text, which means they weren't encrypted and it was possible for employees to search for them.

Deputy Commissioner Graham Doyle said it's "widely accepted" that user passwords

should not be stored in plain text, "considering the risks of abuse."

Meta said a security review found that a "subset" of Facebook users' passwords were "temporarily logged in a readable format."

"We took immediate action to fix this error, and there is no evidence that these passwords were abused or accessed improperly," the company said in a statement.

"We proactively flagged this issue to our lead regulator, the Irish Data Protection Commission, and have engaged constructively with them throughout this inquiry."

It's the latest in a series of hefty fines for Meta and its social media platforms from the Dublin-based watchdog, which is the company's lead regulator under the 27-nation EU's stringent data privacy rulebook.



Pinnacle Group sets up APAC regional headquarters in Chennai

Aims to triple employee base

PNS ■ CHENNAI

US-based global workforce solutions company, Pinnacle Group, has expanded its global footprint with the opening of a new office in Chennai that will be the regional headquarters in the Asia Pacific region, a top official has said.

The new facility on the Rajiv Gandhi Salai (popularly known as the IT Corridor) would be able to deepen the company's relationships with its existing customer base.

Pinnacle Group has been operating in India since 2007 and with the inauguration of the new facility, the company expects to double or triple its employee base in the near future, Pinnacle Group Chairman and CEO Nina Vaca said here.

"We currently have about 100 employees in India, and I



am hoping to double or triple the number of employees in the future. We do not serve customers for years, we serve them for decades... The company is committed to extend the investments in people and technology to drive further innovation and serve more of our customers in India and beyond," she said in a brief interaction on Friday.

"We have made significant investments in India since 2007 and we are one of the fastest growing companies in the region," she said.

Pinnacle Group was ranked America's greatest workplace for women and asked about it, Vaca said the employee base in the United States for Pinnacle comprises 60 per cent women and 40 per cent men.

Ramping up hiring in India; focus on freshers, says Accenture CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT services and consulting firm Accenture is ramping up its hiring efforts in India, with a continued focus on freshers, company CEO Julie Sweet has said.

Sweet, Accenture Chair and Chief Executive Officer, during an investor call, emphasised the company's commitment to recruiting new college graduates and refreshing its workforce pyramid.

She said a majority of these new hires will be concentrated in India, which is seen as a significant growth driver for the company as it heads into fiscal year 2025.

The company operates on a September-August fiscal calendar.

"We are hiring primarily in India... a lot of that hiring is technology in India, and of course it also addresses refreshing our pyramid at this time, so you've got kind of the new college graduates coming in, so there's really no change



in our talent strategy.

"We hire all over the world, and in technology, which is a big driver of the growth that we're seeing now, and going into FY2025, that is a lot of hiring in India," Sweet said.

The IT major is steadily betting on GenAI and "reinventing" its services, she said, adding that Accenture's FY2024 growth was driven by its clients seeking to reinvent using tech, data, AI and new ways of working.

"We have continued to steadily increase our data and AI workforce reaching approx-

imately 57,000 practitioners against our goal of 80,000 by the end of FY 2026. We invested in our people to continue to develop their marketable skills and to help us reinvent our services using GenAI," she said.

Accenture employees had approximately 44 million training hours this year, representing an increase of 10 per cent predominantly due to GenAI training, Sweet added.

Ireland-headquartered Accenture is one of the largest employers in the Indian IT services sector, with over 3,00,000 staff.

Its global employee count stands at 7,74,000.

Accenture reported revenues of USD 16.4 billion for the fourth quarter ending August 2024. This marks a 2.62 per cent increase from USD 15.99 billion in the year-ago period.

Revenues for fiscal 2024 came in at USD 64.90 billion, compared with USD 64.11 billion in the previous fiscal.

Cross-border infra projects to be developed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bhutan on Friday held discussions to expedite development of certain cross-border infrastructure projects, including setting up of an integrated check post to promote bilateral trade.

The issues were deliberated upon in the meeting of Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal and Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE) Bhutan Dasho Tashi Wangmo in Thimpu. They decided to expedite the development of cross-border and connectivity infrastructure.

Govt to increase number of airports to 350

Boosting connectivity and tourism

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on Friday said as India strives towards becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, the ministry is seeking to increase the number of airports in the country to 350 and boost tourism.

In his address at an event held to mark the World Tourism Day at Vigyan Bhawan here, he also said his ministry is working on connecting more hinterland locations which are close to unexplored sites.

Naidu emphasised the government's vision of boosting domestic connectivity and providing better facilities and warm hospitality at airports to welcome foreign tourists, as airports are "gateways to a country".

"Today, we have 157 airports but in the next 20-25 years, when we are going to see the real Viksit Bharat in 2047, we want to increase the number of airports which is 157 today to the tune of 350," he said at the event hosted by the Tourism Ministry.

He also congratulated the tourism ministry after Union Tourism Minister Gajendra

Singh Shekhawat announced that under the 'Chalo India' campaign, one lakh foreign tourists will be exempted from paying visa fee in coming times.

"4.6 crore travellers landed in India in 2014, and now that we have increased the number of airports from 74 to a staggering 157... we are seeing almost 7 crore people landing in the country today. And, within these numbers, more than 35 per cent people are arriving for holidays and recreation only," the civil aviation minister in his address said.

He said that his ministry is now connecting many previously "unserved" and "underserved" airports which are close to beautiful landscapes.

He praised the UDAAN scheme of the Narendra Modi government in making air travel closer to the common man. "We are looking at connecting more of these hinterland locations which are close to these unexplored gems by creating more airports also... We are completely in line with the tourism sector," the Union civil aviation minister added.

He said his ministry is keen to improve seaplane and helicopter connectivity also.



'Fiscal profligacy by poll-bound states needs to be watched'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Fiscal profligacy by poll-bound states needs to be watched closely, as higher spending on welfare measures will impact capital expenditure over the coming years, a Swiss brokerage said on Friday.

A total of 11 states have gone to polls or are likely to have elections soon, the report by UBS Securities said, adding that four of them -- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha -- have increased their fiscal deficit targets.

"The recent fiscal profligacy seen in poll-bound states should be watched closely," the report said.

In the last few years, states managed to control their fiscal deficit under the 3 per cent level proposed by the Fifteenth Finance Commission, the report said, acknowledging that the Centre has also been bringing



In the last few years, states managed to control their fiscal deficit under the 3 per cent level proposed by the Fifteenth Finance Commission, the report said, acknowledging that the Centre has also been bringing down the fiscal deficit.

down the fiscal deficit.

The poll-bound states are increasing their welfare spending and stimulus, which has led to a widening in their aggregate FY25 fiscal deficit estimates by 0.20 per cent in the budgets presented in June or July, it said.

"We believe this could also weigh on states' own capex spending over the coming years due to higher revenue expenditure directed towards populist promises," it added.

It can be noted that in Maharashtra, the Eknath SHinde-led government

has announced to deposit Rs 1,500 into the accounts of women, which will result in an annual spend of over Rs 35,000 crore.

Meanwhile, the brokerage said it does not expect the RBI to start the rate cut cycle at the next month's pol-

icy review and the earliest that the monetary policy committee would act will be in December.

The RBI is set to cut by a deeper 0.75 per cent during the current cycle, it said, adding that factors like low food inflation and decent monsoons will offer more comfort.

India's consumption growth will pick up to over 6 per cent in FY25 from 4 per cent in FY24, the brokerage said, adding that even after the acceleration it will still be trailing the long-term average.

There is a "fatigue" in the premium segment which will lead to a narrowing in the "k-shaped" consumption pattern seen over the last few years, it said.

The GDP growth will come at the 6.5-7 per cent levels pegged in the Economic Survey and will not come at the RBI's estimate of 7.2 per cent, it said.

Palak Sindhvani speaks out on mental harassment by TMKOC makers!

Palak Sindhvani who plays the role of Sonu Bhide in the long-running comedy *Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashma* has been in the news for apparent breaches of contract with the producers of the show. The makers served her a notice citing several breaches of key provisions in her exclusive artist agreement which they say led to harm to her character and the show. They served this notice in response to apparent unauthorised third-party endorsements and appearances she participated in without written consent as required as per her contract. The producers, Neela Film Productions, say that the breaches continued despite oral and verbal warnings given to her and therefore the notice was served to her. According to reports, the actress revealed that she took the decision to quit the show and informed the production house on August 8. They told her that it would take some time and that they would give her the appropriate email to send her official resignation letter to, but this did not happen. Palak claims that they delayed the process of approving her resignation and all of a sudden she saw

news reports about her breaching her contract. She went on to say that she signed her contract five years ago and the makers had denied giving her a copy of the contract and only received a copy on September 19 2024. She says that they agreed to allow her to carry out brand endorsements and she had also been doing some brand endorsements on social media after the pandemic. Palak says that they did not say anything to her at that time and only started this course of action when she informed them of her decision to quit! The actress also states that she is going to take legal advice and will do what is best for her career and says that her decision to quit the popular comedy series was due to health reasons and professional growth. Palak finds the makers' response unexpected, especially after working with them for five years.



'Most of us in my family have never paid the paps'

Actor Saif Ali Khan has been celebrated for his amazing performances on the silver-screen. Just like people love his craft, they also adore his amazing sense of humour. When Saif attended a conclave, where he explained his relationship with the paparazzi in India. While discussing an incident with paparazzi, Saif Ali Khan appreciated the shutterbugs for their amazing qualities. He said, "They are not very intrusive. They understand and are quite polite. When you tell them to give you a break, they do that. When they chase a kid who is in a car, it gets a little frightening. It goes part and parcel of what we do. It is not like America or England,

where they really do publish an embarrassing photo of you. That is the whole point of the paparazzi, to post an embarrassing photo. But these guys don't do that. India is very special." When asked if the paparazzi were actually paid by the celebs, Saif added, "Some times celebs invite paparazzi, some of them pay them, but most of us in my family have never paid the paparazzi. They have a rate card where certain people get paid a certain amount and one of my children is very high up on that card." On the film front, Saif Ali Khan's *Devara: Part 1* released on Friday. Saif's avatar in the film's trailer has been quite lauded!



NETLIX'S NON-COOPERATION RAISES RED FLAG FOR EOW

In April 2024, Vashu Bhagnani filed a complaint, saying Netflix interfered with three of his films—*Hero No. 1* (still being filmed), *Mission Raniganj* and *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*. He also filed complaints against two companies, Los Gatos Production Services India and Zoo Digital India, along with their executives. Senior Inspector Ravindra Avhad, who is handling the case, stated, "This Rs 47.37 crore is what Netflix owes Vashu Bhagnani. But Netflix

is not cooperating. We sent them two summonses, but they didn't appear. The Bhagnanis came to us in April, gave their statements and handed over documents. Netflix asked for time but never showed up. They keep sending lower-level staff, but it's Monica Shergill (Content Head, Netflix India) who should be appearing." Meanwhile, Vashu Bhagnani, shared, "We registered the case against Netflix in April. We have full faith in the EOW to resolve the matter."



Wizarding world mourns as Dame Maggie Smith passes away

Awards: Best Actress for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1970) and Best Supporting Actress for *California Suite* (1979). A statement from her sons Toby Stephens and Chris Larkin said: "It is with great sadness we have to announce the death of Dame Maggie Smith." "She passed away peacefully in hospital early this morning, Friday September 27. An intensely private person, she was with friends and family at the end. She leaves two sons and five loving grandchildren who are devastated by the loss of their extraordinary mother and grandmother. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful staff at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital for their care and unstinting kindness during her final days. We thank you for all your kind messages and support and ask that you respect our privacy at this time." Hugh Bonneville, who co-starred in *Downton Abbey* with Dame Maggie, paid tribute, saying: "Anyone who ever shared a scene with Maggie will attest to her sharp eye, sharp wit and formidable talent. She was a true legend of her generation and thankfully will live on in so many magnificent screen performances. My condolences to her boys and wider family." Dame Maggie Smith's illustrious career originated in theatre, where she laid the foundation for her future success. Her breakthrough in film came with the 1958 melodrama *Nowhere to Go*, earning her first BAFTA nomination. In 1963, Laurence Olivier invited her to play Desdemona alongside his Othello at the National Theatre. Two years later, the production was adapted into a film, retaining the original cast. This iconic performance garnered Smith an Oscar nomination.

claimed actress Dame Maggie Smith, renowned for her iconic roles in the *Harry Potter* franchise and *Downton Abbey*, has passed away at the age of 89, her family announced. A legendary figure in British theatre and cinema, Dame Maggie Smith garnered numerous accolades throughout her illustrious career, including two Academy

Akansha Ranjan Kapoor unites with Vasana Bala for fun cameo in *Jigra*!

Akansha Ranjan Kapoor, known for her standout performances, is all set to make a surprise cameo in National Award-winning director Vasana Bala's upcoming action-packed prison drama *Jigra*. After their earlier collaborations on *Monica*, *O My Darling* and the Netflix anthology *Ray*, Akansha and Vasana are back together, and it looks like they had a blast! Vasana has often called Akansha one of his favourite actors, so it's no surprise he wanted her on board for this project. While *Jigra* stars Alia Bhatt and Vedang Raina in lead roles, Akansha's appearance as an air hostess in the trailer has everyone talking. Her quirky character brings some light-hearted fun to the film, showing up just when things need a bit of a twist. Decked out in a sharp air hostess uniform, she looks gorgeous, as always! Vasana Bala, known for adding unexpected and unconventional roles for his actors, called Akansha to shoot for just one day without even explaining the scene—why not? She simply showed up and had a great time! Aside from *Jigra*, Akansha is gearing up for her South Indian film debut in *MaayaOne* opposite Sundeep Kishan. Plus, she's got some exciting OTT projects in the works and we can't wait to see what she does next!

FUN

ARCHIE

ARCHIE: "KNOCK IT OFF, YOU TWO!"

JUGHEAD: "YOU HAVEN'T GOT THAT MUCH HOMEWORK!"

CALVIN AND HOBBS

HERE I AM, WAITING FOR THE BUS. ELEVEN MORE YEARS OF SCHOOL TO GO. THEN COLLEGE, THEN MAYBE GRADUATE SCHOOL, AND THEN I WORK UNTIL I DIE.

WHAT KIND OF WORLD IS THIS?? YOU ONLY GET FIVE YEARS TO BE A KID??

WHAT ABOUT EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING AND PLAYING? THOSE THINGS ARE IMPORTANT, TOO!

WELL, YOU STILL HAVE AFTERNOONS AND WEEKENDS.

THAT'S WHEN I WATCH TV.

GARFIELD

DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THE FRIEND WHO NEVER STOPS REMINDING YOU THAT THEY'RE YOUNGER THAN YOU?

REALITY CHECK

WHEN DOGS SKYPE

FRANK! STOP LOOKING BEHIND THE SCREEN. I DIDN'T GO BEHIND THE— YOU FRANK— WHERE'D YA GO??

SPEED BUMP

LIFE IS ABOUT THE CHASE, NOT THE BALL.

NOW GO GET IT!

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8	9		10	11
		12		
13				
14	15	16	17	18
19				

NANCY

NANCY YOU LOOK A LITTLE... OFF

YEARTHINK THE CARTOONIST IS HAVING AN OFF ART DAY

ACTUALLY THIS IS JUST A SNAPCHAT FILTER

CARTOONIST NOTE: ANY QUESTIONABLE ART FROM NOW ON IS BECAUSE NANCY AND SLUGGO ARE USING A SNAPCHAT FILTER.

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- Speed up
- Someone on a horse
- Keep your money in this
- A ship for carrying people across a river or sea channel
- Grass colour
- A jam flavour
- A meal
- Mistake
- Someone who shows you to your theatre seat
- A carpenter's cutter
- Very uncommon
- A sign of tiredness
- Became larger
- Listen with these

DOWN

- This liquid chemical will dissolve metal
- Expensive
- Jump over
- A barber cuts this
- Dish-washing liquid

SOLUTION

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



Drag Kings take centre stage in *The Gentlemen's Club*

TEJAL SINHA
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We are sure the majority of our readers do have a special inclination towards entertainment and acting, for that matter. But let's not forget how theatres have been the foundation stone for many actors! Well, the love and respect that one has for theatres is beyond just eternal.

Are we going back to the history of theatres? Well, certainly not. But the recent talk of the town was none other than the second season of *The Gentlemen's Club*. The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) had presented the electrifying new version of their hit show. Following the exhilarating lives of the city's drag kings, headlined by the enigmatic Rocky, also known as Shamsher. His act was a tribute to the legendary Shammi Kapoor and the golden era of Hindi cinema. Alongside Rocky, a diverse ensemble of women

The National Centre for the Performing Arts, India presented an electrifying new version of *The Gentlemen's Club*, making its international debut in London's Soho Theatre. *The Pioneer* brings to you some behind-the-scenes and the making of this season, following the exhilarating lives of the drag kings

embraced the art of drag, delivering a cabaret-style performance that transported one to a gritty, hidden world where you can be anyone you desire. Featuring a dazzling mix of dance, music and projection, this show unfolded an exciting and provocative narrative celebrating women and their exploration of masculinity.

Following its run in India, the production made its way to London, where it showcased at Soho Theatre, marking its international debut. Guess what? As the weekend arrives, sit back with your morning cup of chai or coffee, because *The Pioneer* brings to you some behind-the-scenes of the second season of *The Gentlemen's Club*.

As per the team of the production house, "*The Gentlemen's Club* has become a labour of love for all of us. We wanted to explore notions of gender and masculinity in performance, but the way in which it has been received over the years really spoke to how powerful these themes are for audiences as well. The name refers to a club that features a motley crew of drag kings, from a Shammi Kapoor stand-in to a hip pop icon to a Bengali intellectual-type and it is set in an imagined Mumbai that is inclusive and adventurous. It's aspirational but still very real in terms of what we explore. And it has something for everyone—song and dance, dress-up and make-believe, playfulness and

a hint of everyday revolution." The inspiration for this show came from various conversations. They were keen on exploring the creation of drag queen characters. Meanwhile, Vikram Phukan was in discussions with Gaysi Family, a queer organisation, to write a show about drag queens. When Vikram and Pooja (Soho Theatre) met for coffee one day, they decided to merge the two ideas and that's how *The Gentlemen's Club* was born.

"Gender is a construct and does not belong to anyone," they affirm. "Nobody owns masculinity or femininity. Drag is about commenting on, celebrating, mocking and essentially playing with gender. Through drag, we can blur the lines between traditional ideas of gender, making the audience question what is 'real' and what is simply performance. The show is also about artists, inspiration and relevance. These are universal themes that we hope audiences will be able to find resonance with."

While the first season took place in 2015, the second is now here after nine years. Reason? "There has been no gap! We have toured and performed this show from 2015 all the way till 2019. We took a break because of the pandemic and now finally we are ready to start touring again."

In this season, Rocky's character draws inspiration from Bollywood icon Shammi Kapoor, who was known for his flamboyant style and larger-than-life screen presence in the 50s and 60s. While drag kings weren't a visible or popular phenomenon in India during that era, Rocky's Shammi is a playful nod to the cultural moment Kapoor represented—one of charm, rebellion, and fluid masculinity—which makes Rocky's character both nostalgic and subversive in a drag king context.

The previous year, they had also achieved a historic milestone by presenting Zakir Khan at the Royal Albert Hall and supporting Urooj Ashfaq's win of 'Best Newcomer' at the Edinburgh Fringe. This time they had a different move: bringing India's first show about Drag Kings to the UK! "Soho Theatre is London's leading producer of Indian comedy and has supported and facilitated monumental moments in the comedy exchange between the UK and India. This co-presentation is the culmination of so many galvanising conversations with Indian theatre makers and playwrights and we hope it will pave the way for future artist development programmes and co-productions of audacious new theatre shows. I've not seen a show quite like this - neither in India nor the UK - and I know that it's unique exploration of gender and drag will resonate with our audiences on Dean Street," she enthuses.

Going ahead, we also get the chance to interact with Bruce Guthrie, Head, Theatre & Films, NCPA and he speaks of gender and masculinity and their development of new writing.

"New writing in theatre and performance is a significant focus. We're creating platforms to support and nurture Indian playwrights and theatre makers. Initiatives like *Darpan*, our Marathi new writing programme, and *Connections India*, where we've commissioned three new plays for young people, are just the beginning. Beyond this, we've commissioned various plays to offer diverse voices and stories on stage."

FLEXING DREAMS

Hyd's homegrown fitness hero is here!

AARTI SREENATH
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Shafi Shami's journey is a remarkable tale of resilience, grit and perseverance. In the land of biryanis and bad traffic, Shafi Shami decided to take the road less travelled—literally, because he prefers the gym over the streets of Hyderabad! Born into a family of pehelwans and Army men, Shafi swapped cycles for dumbbells and stitched together a fitness empire with sweat, muscle and a lot of *jugaad*. From his humble beginnings to training Indian soldiers and opening 24/7 gyms across the city, Shafi's journey is a mix of grit, gains and endless gym stories. If you think Hyderabad's famous for its food, wait till you hear about its homegrown fitness legend.

Shafi faced tremendous challenges from a young age, including the loss of both his parents. "I was really young when it happened, so I don't have a strong memory of it," he recalls. Raised by his maternal grandparents, Shafi found solace in his work ethic and early responsibilities. His maternal grandfather was a *tahsildar* and his paternal grandfather, along with his father, served in the Indian Army, establishing a legacy of discipline and duty.

From a young age, he balanced school and work. He attended government schools and by the age of 8-10, he was already working to support himself. This duality of student and worker shaped his character and worldview. Despite the hurdles, he went on to complete his BA from Osmania University.

But it wasn't just academics that shaped his path. His passion for fitness, specifically *desi pehlwani* (traditional Indian wrestling), was ignited by his uncles. "They were *desi pehwalans*, managing and practicing traditional *pehlwani*. I got inspired by them," he shares. While his uncles trained for dangals (wrestling matches), Shafi channelled his energies into fitness.

His entry into bodybuilding in 1998-99 marked the beginning of a lifelong love affair with the gym. Back then, gym culture wasn't widespread and access to fitness facilities was limited. He fondly recalls how he managed to pay his gym fees for just one month—after which the gym owner, recognising his dedication, waived the fees and welcomed Shafi to train without worry. "I used to keep the equipment back after the others were done. That's how much I loved being in the gym," he says.

His hard work didn't go unnoticed. In time, he became a coach for the Indian Army, where he trained soldiers under the supervision of colonels and captains. "It was a golden era for me," he reminisces. The pride he felt in training India's soldiers remains one of his greatest achievements. Even as he thrived in this role, his passion for bodybuilding grew and he began competing in various contests, earning top positions in Mr. Hyderabad, Mr. Andhra Pradesh and Mr. South India.

Despite his accomplishments, he faced the reality of bodybuilding's declining popularity. Aware of the financial challenges it posed, he diversified into business, joining multinational companies like Bank of America and Deloitte. His earnings surged, but his heart remained in

Shafi Shami has been a much-celebrated face in the world of bodybuilding. Today, for our special segment of Hyderabad, *The Pioneer* connects with him as he discusses his childhood here in the 'City of Nizams', growing around *pehwalans* and more



fitness. By 2015, he took a bold leap and opened his gym, 24/7, in Gachibowli, a venture that turned into a massive success. Today, he owns multiple fitness centers across India and continues to organise bodybuilding shows.

Reflecting on his journey, he expresses deep gratitude to the mentors who helped shape his career, including the strongest pillars of support, Ram and Srinivas Yadav. He also feels strongly about fostering inclusivity, emphasising that throughout his life, no one questioned his religion or background when offering him support. Bhaskar Reddy also coached him and has played a significant role in his bodybuilding career.

When it comes to his fondest memories of Hyderabad, his connection to the city runs deep. From Charminar to Golconda, his love for the city's heritage is palpable. His favourite place? The Hanuman Vyayam Shala, a nod to his traditional roots.

When it comes to food, he sticks to a no-nonsense diet that's as disciplined as his fitness regime. He avoids anything that's too rich or indulgent, opting for a "dead" diet—his term for meals without salt, oil, or masala. True to his old-school roots, Shafi still enjoys a simple *desi thali*, reminiscent of the Telangana-Andhra era when wholesome, balanced meals were the norm. For him, it's all about keeping the calories in check and staying aligned with the fitness principles that have shaped his life.

However, Shafi's wisdom isn't limited to fitness alone. He urges young athletes to avoid shortcuts like steroids, stressing the importance of natural training and proper guidance. "Youngsters today are playing with their bodies as if life came for free," he cautions, highlight-

ing the rise of health issues due to steroid abuse. At the end of our conversation, he leaves us with a powerful message: "Never give up. Hard work is essential, but smart work is just as important." This philosophy, he believes, is what transformed him from Shafi to Shafi Shami—a self-made man who rose above his circumstances to create a lasting legacy in the fitness industry and beyond.

India's rise as a plastic surgery powerhouse

In recent years, India has emerged as a beacon of hope for individuals seeking transformative plastic surgery procedures. Plastic surgeons have witnessed firsthand the country's remarkable growth into a global hub for cosmetic excellence. But what's driving this phenomenon and what sets India apart?

Surgeon's perspective

India's plastic surgery landscape has undergone a significant transformation, with a new generation of skilled surgeons leading the charge. We're not just technicians; we're artists, innovators and patient advocates. Our expertise is matched only by our passion for



delivering exceptional results. With rigorous training and experience, Indian plastic surgeons have honed their skills in the latest techniques and technologies.

World-class infrastructure

State-of-the-art facilities, cutting-edge technology and rigorous safety protocols have become the norm in Indian plastic surgery. From accredited hospitals to specialised clinics, patients can expect a seamless, high-quality experi-

ence. Investments in infrastructure have enabled Indian healthcare to rival global standards, ensuring patient comfort and safety.

Affordability without compromise

India offers a unique value proposition: world-class plastic surgery at a fraction of the cost. This hasn't compromised quality; rather, it's driven innovation, efficiency and excellence. Patients

can access advanced procedures without financial burdens, making India an attractive destination for medical tourism.

Government support and initiatives

Proactive government policies have fostered a conducive environment for medical tourism, streamlining regulations and encouraging investment in healthcare infrastructure. Initiatives like the 'Make in India' campaign have promoted medical device manufacturing, reducing costs and enhancing accessibility.

Patient-centric approach

At the heart of India's plastic surgery success lies a patient-centric approach. We prioritise empathy, education and empowerment, ensuring individuals make informed decisions about their bodies. Patients are treated with dignity and respect and their concerns are addressed with compassion and understanding.

(The author, Dr. Anmol Chugh, is the Lead Consultant and Plastics & Aesthetics Centre at CK Birla Hospital.)

Future of plastic surgery in India

As demand continues to soar, India must remain committed to:

- **Safety and ethics:** Upholding the highest standards of patient care and professional conduct.
- **Innovation and research:** Staying at the forefront of technological advancements and surgical techniques.
- **Patient education and awareness:** Empowering individuals with knowledge about plastic surgery options and benefits.

By doing so, India will solidify its position as a global leader in plastic surgery, transforming lives and redefining beauty standards. With a growing pool of skilled surgeons, world-class infrastructure and patient-centric approach, India is poised to revolutionise the plastic surgery landscape.

AKASH DEEP, ASHWIN KEEP INDIA AHEAD ON RAIN-HIT DAY 1



PTI ■ KANPUR
Pacer Akash Deep was impressive in a probing opening spell while Ravichandran Ashwin removed the dangerous Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto before rain halted India's progress in the second Test on the opening day, here Friday. Given the forecast, it was expected to be a weather-hit contest from the beginning.

Only 35 overs could be bowled after Rohit Sharma invited Bangladesh to bat in overcast conditions as visitors struggled to 107 for three after a brief resistance through Shanto (31). Mominul Haque (40 batting) and veteran Mushfiqur Rahim (6) were at the crease when heavens opened up. Overnight rain had delayed the start of the match by an hour. Heavy overcast conditions influenced India's team

selection as the hosts kept all three pacers from the Chennai Test, which meant that local boy Kuldeep Yadav missed out on another Test match. Akash (2/14 in 10 overs), who bowled round the wicket to the left-handers, consistently hit the good length areas and got the ball to either shape away or come in with the angle. Shanto (57 balls, 4x6), though, batted with positive intent, if not combative, to ensure Bangladesh don't lose way

from the start. As expected, the initial bounce and seam movement had openers Zakir Hasan and Shadman Islam playing in circumspect manner. Islam (24) worked the ball around but an overcautious Hasan (0) simply couldn't get going. Jasprit Bumrah had the openers squared up as the away-going deliveries kept landing in Rishabh Pant's gloves. Mohammed Siraj induced edges that flew to the slip

cordon but none carried to the fielders. Shadman hit couple of boundaries off Bumrah in a single over, the first was a flick off the pads, and the second was an uppish drive. On the other side, Hasan consumed 23 dot balls and was yet to open his account. Akash, who came in as a second-change, ended his misery by inducing an edge that flew to Yashasvi Jaiswal who went low on his right to

grab the chance. Akash soon sent back Shadman on a ball that came in and caught him in front of the wicket. The opener reviewed the decision but to no avail. Shanto, who has been in good rhythm, began with two shots to the fence in a sort of statement that he won't get intimidated by the classy Indian bowlers. He also got a boundary off Siraj but those were not the cleanest of hits. His reverse sweep off off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin though stood out. Ashwin, who did not get a wicket in the opening session, trapped Shanto in the third over of the second session. Shanto played for the turn but was beaten. The umpire had no hesitation in raising his finger. The Bangladesh skipper reviewed the decision hoping against hope. Seasoned Mominul grew in confidence as he spent more time at the crease. He hit two boundaries off Akash in a single over and later hit an exquisite drive through mid-off. He raised Bangladesh's hundred with another four. Only nine overs were bowled in the second session when bad light stopped play even as the flood lights were on, forcing the players off the field. Light drizzle followed and soon it was pouring.



Bravo retires from all forms of cricket, joins KKR as mentor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
World Cup-winning West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket and will join IPL side Kolkata Knight Riders as its mentor, a move that marks the end of his long-standing association with Chennai Super Kings. In KKR, the 40-year-old will replace Gautam Gambhir, who left the role to take over as India's head coach earlier this year. Bravo's last season in the Caribbean Premier League was cut short due to an injury that he sustained earlier this week. "Today is the day I say goodbye to the game that has given me everything," he wrote on Instagram on Thursday. "Twenty-one years as a professional cricketer - it's been an incredible journey, filled with many highs and a few lows. Most importantly, I was able to live my dream because I gave you 100 at every step."

Apart from KKR, he will be in charge of the other franchises under the Knight Riders label in T20 leagues. The new role puts an end to his long association with CSK. "We're also pleased that Bravo will be involved with our other franchises globally, including CPL, MLC, and IIT20, Mysore said. Talking about his role in KKR, Bravo said: "I've been part of the Trinbago Knight Riders for the last 10 years in the CPL. Having played for and against the Knight Riders in various leagues, I have a lot of respect for how they operate. "BODY CAN NO LONGER ENDURE THE PAIN": Ahead of the ongoing CPL season, Bravo had declared it would be his final tournament. However, a groin injury sustained while fielding against the St. Lucia Kings in Tarouba earlier this week cut his CPL stint short. "My mind wants to keep going, but my body can no longer endure the pain, the breakdowns, and the strain. I can't put myself in a position where I might let down my teammates, my fans, or the teams I represent," Bravo wrote in his Instagram post. "So, with a heavy heart, I officially announce my retirement from the sport. Today, the Champion bids farewell." During his illustrious career, Bravo played 582 T20 matches and took 631 wickets, besides scoring nearly 7,000 runs. "Though this ending is bittersweet, I have no regrets about my career or this decision. Now, I look forward to my next chapter. Once again, thank you. See you soon on the other side," he added.

Injury is fine now, next big target is 2025 world championship: Neeraj Chopra

PTI ■ SONEPAT
Promising to be 100 per cent fit for the new season, India's two-time Olympic medal-winning javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra on Friday said a podium finish in the 2025 Tokyo World Championships is the next big target on his mind going forward. The 26-year-old is back in the country after winding up his season with a second-place finish at the Diamond League finale in Brussels. This was after he became the first Indian track-and-field athlete to claim successive Olympic medals by adding a silver in Paris to the momentous gold clinched in Tokyo. "The season is over now. The biggest target for next year is the World Championship, and we will begin preparations for that now. The Olympics are always on our minds,

but we have four years for that," Neeraj told PTI Videos on the sidelines of a conference on 'Mission Olympics 2036' organised at the Sports University of Haryana here. The world championship is scheduled to be held from September 13 to 21 next year. Chopra battled an adductor muscle niggle throughout the year and it also affected his performance at both the Olympics and the DL finale, where he also competed with a fractured left hand. He had spoken about consulting doctors at the end of the season to decide whether to go for a surgery to fix the problem. Asked about his fitness, Chopra played down concerns and also stated that he will look to improve his technique. The Haryana-lad is trained by renowned German biomechanics expert Klaus Bartonietz.



"It was an injury-plagued year but injury is fine now, I will be 100 per cent fit for the new season," he asserted. "Technical issues are also there but we

will work on them. I will look to improve my technique. I do like to train in India but when competitions start, I prefer to train abroad," he said. Reflecting on India's Olympic

performance, which yielded six medals but no gold this time, Chopra pointed out that the country could have got more as reflected by the half a dozen fourth place finishes. "There were a lot of fourth positions. (But) this time, we had a very good performance in the Paralympics and won several medals. "In the coming times, we expect strong performances in both the Olympics and the Paralympics," said Chopra. Chopra has been working hard to hit the 90m mark but hasn't managed so far despite coming close. In the Paris Olympics, his silver-winning throw was 89.45m and he was bested by Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who broke the Games record with a 92.97m effort. At the DL finale, Chopra threw 87.86m to miss the top finish by just one centimetre.

Medvedev beats Monfils in Beijing, Draper upsets Hurkacz in Japan

AP ■ BEIJING
Daniil Medvedev safely navigated a tricky first outing at the China Open on Friday, winning 6-3 6-4 against French veteran Gael Monfils. The third-seeded Medvedev, runner-up to Jannik Sinner here last year, broke Monfils' serve three times in a dominant opening set. After trading breaks in a closer second set, former No. 1-ranked Medvedev clinched the match with another service break to seal the win in 92 minutes. Roman Safiullin, who made the main draw as a lucky loser in qualifying, beat three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka 6-3 6-4 and will face top-ranked Sinner. No. 3-ranked Carlos Alcaraz, seeded second in Beijing, begins against No. 51 Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard of France later Friday. In the women's draw, sixth-seeded Emma Navarro was upset by Chinese wildcard Zhang Shuai 6-4 6-2 in 75 minutes. The 35-year-old Zhang, a doubles specialist, played well above her current singles



ranking of No. 595 as she took five of her seven breakpoint opportunities against the U.S. Open semifinalist. Zhang will play Greet Minnen of Belgium, who beat 28th-seeded Anastasia Potapova 7-5 2-6 6-4 in the third round. Also, 12th-seeded Diana Shnaider beat former Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin 6-2 6-3 and Yulia Starodubtseva had a 6-2 6-2 win over 27th-seeded Katerina Siniakova. Second-seeded Jessica Pegula was due open her tournament later Friday against Diane Parry of France, and Coco Gauff faced Clara Burel in a night match.

US Open champion Aryna Sabalenka plays Saturday against Thai qualifier Mananchaya Sawangkaew. Top-ranked Iga Swiatek was not playing this week for personal reasons. **JAPAN OPEN:** Second-seeded Hubert Hurkacz lost 6-4 6-4 to US Open semifinalist Jack Draper in the second round in Tokyo, a day after top-seeded Taylor Fritz and third-seeded Casper Ruud were eliminated from the tournament. While the 22-year-old Draper and Hurkacz were evenly matched on aces and winners, it was the Polish player's 30 unforced errors, to Draper's 20, that proved costly. Draper will next play either Brandon Nakashima or Ugo Humbert in the quarterfinals. Defending champion Ben Shelton also progressed to the quarterfinals with a 6-4 6-3 defeat of Mariano Navone. Shelton, along with Fritz, traveled to Japan from the Laver Cup in Berlin, where they represented Team World in a loss to Alcaraz's Team Europe.

India U-17 face Nepal hurdle in semifinals

PTI ■ THIMPHU
Buoyant Indian football team will take on Nepal in the semi-finals of the SAFF U17 Championship here on Saturday, hoping to continue its good run of form in the continental age-group tournament. The Blue Colts eased into the last four as Group A table toppers after beating Bangladesh (1-0) and Maldives (3-0). Nepal, on the other hand, sneaked into the semi-finals, thanks to a late winner against Bhutan in their last group match, which lifted them to second place in Group B behind Pakistan, who will face Bangladesh in the second semi-finals later on Saturday. India have had ample rest between their matches so far, including three full days to prepare for their semi-finals. Head coach Ishaq Ahmed stated that the rest days for



players are more about recovery and staying injury-free. "This rest is about recovering because we are playing on artificial turf. It's not easy to play and train on turf everyday. It has its negative impacts also. We've been training mostly to recover our boys. "It has been raining here everyday and we are stuck inside the hotel. Sometimes that can be a good thing because you spend a lot of time with each other and that helps.

mark for the Indian backline as the Nepalese striker is the competition top-scorer with four goals, including a hat-trick against Sri Lanka and the all-important match winner against Bhutan. "I rate Nepal as a good side. They are not afraid of playing. They have done quite well, coming from 0-1 down, showing character and beating the hosts," said Ahmed. "Since it's a knockout match, you have to take your chances. In both matches so far, we created a lot of chances but failed to make the most of them. Whether it was a good save by the goalkeeper or a missed shot, it doesn't matter. We need to convert our ball possession into goals. "If we get an early goal against them, it will be a little bit easier for us. We wouldn't want the match to stretch because then you have to keep one eye on the defence as well," Ahmed added.

Tottenham overcomes early red card to post 3-0 win in revamped Europa League

AP ■ LONDON
Tottenham marked its return to European competition after one-year absence by overcoming an early red card to beat Qarabag 3-0 in the revamped Europa League. Defender Radu Dragusin was sent off in the eighth minute for bringing down Juninho to prevent the forward from going in alone on goal. But the hosts opened the scoring just four minutes later. Brennan Johnson's angled shot was his third goal in three games. Pape Sarr doubled the advantage early in the second half off a corner kick and Dominic Solanke finished it off on a rebound in the 68th. "The red card was not ideal, we started really sloppily but the reaction afterwards was good," Spurs manager Ange Postecoglou told TNT Sports. "We wanted to press high, even

with ten men." Johnson also scored in a 3-1 win over Brentford in the Premier League and had a stoppage-time winner in a 2-1 victory over second-division Coventry in the English League Cup three days earlier. Tural Bayramov wasted a golden opportunity to score from the spot when the Azerbaijan visitors were 2-0 down. Travel disruptions forced the game to start 35 minutes late. Roma blows lead Roma allowed a late goal and settled for a 1-1 draw with Athletic Bilbao following the Italian club's turbulent recent stretch that included firing coach Daniele De Rossi. Aitor Paredes headed in the equalizer in the 85th minute to offset Artem Dovbyk's first-half goal. Roma beat Udinese 3-0 in Serie A on Sunday in the first game under new coach Ivan Juric. Bilbao winger Nico Williams



came on as a substitute for last 30 minutes in his return from an ankle injury. Ajax cleans up Mika Godts had two goals, Kian Fitz-Jim and Kenneth Taylor added one each for Ajax in a 4-0 rout of Besiktas. Czech side Viktoria Plzen scored two late goals from Prince Adu and Vaclav Jemelka to hold high-flying Eintracht Frankfurt to a 3-3 away draw.

Frankfurt, the 2022 Europa League winner led 3-1 on goals from Hugo Ekitike, substitute Junior Dina Ebimbe and defender Rasmus Kristensen. Olympiacos, last year's

Conference League champion, started with a 2-0 loss to Lyon in France on second half goals by Rayan Cherki and Said Benrahma. Braga rallied to beat nine-man

Maccabi Tel Aviv 2-1. Romania's FCSB beat Latvia's RFS 4-1 in Bucharest. Fenerbahce, Rangers score early wins Fenerbahce opened the competition with a 2-1 home win over Belgian club Union Saint-Gilloise with both teams finishing the game with 10 men. Defender Caglar Soyuncu opened the scoring for Jose Mourinho's team in the 26th with a half-volley from close range and Christian Burgess' own goal in the 82nd made it 2-0 for Fenerbahce. Ross Sykes scored in stoppage time for the visitors. Union defender Kevin Mac Allister received a red card in the 74th and Fenerbahce substitute Bright Osayi-Samuel was sent off in the final minute. Last season, Fenerbahce eliminated Union in the round of 16 of the third-tier Conference League. Europe's second tier is a familiar turf for Mourinho, who led

Manchester United to the 2017 title. He took the Fenerbahce job in the offseason. With Mourinho in charge, Roma lost the 2023 final to Sevilla after a penalty shootout. In another early game, Rangers won 2-0 at Malmo. The 2022 Europa League beaten finalist didn't waste time. Nedom Bajrami scored in the opening minute. Ross McCausland scored in the second half. Rangers lost in the 2022 final to Eintracht Frankfurt. The German club will be in action later Thursday, hosting Czech side Viktoria Plzen. As in the Champions League, the traditional group stage of the Europa League has been replaced with an expanded league phase with all 36 teams competing in a single standings. Each Europa League team will play eight games against eight different opponents through Jan.



Jr NTR's open letter to his fans

Jr NTR, who is now in the USA promoting *Devara*, posted a big note thanking the director and the important technicians of the film. The actor also thanked his fans for showing love to him. Jr NTR and director Koratala Siva's combination film *Devara* released on Friday and the actor is coming up with a solo film nearly after six years. On this occasion, he wrote a heartfelt note to his fans.

"The day I had been waiting for is finally here. Overwhelmed by your incredible reactions. Thank you,

Koratala Siva garu, for envisioning *Devara* with such engaging drama and emotional experience. My brother @anirudhofficial, your music and background score brought this world to life. Special thanks to my producers, Harikrishna Kosaraju garu and Sudhakar Mikkilineni garu for being the strongest pillars. Huge gratitude to @RathnaveluDop sir, @sabucyril sir, @sreekar_prasad sir, and every technician for their amazing work (sic)," said Jr NTR on his social media. Apart from the technicians, the actor also thanked his fans for making celebrations of *Devara*.

"To my fans, witnessing your celebrations for *Devara* makes me so elated. Forever indebted for your love. Glad you're enjoying it as much as I did. I promise to keep entertaining you all," said Jr NTR.

Narne Nithin Sri Sri Sri Rajavaru ready for Dasara

Jr NTR's brother-in-law, Nithin, was initially set to make his debut in Satish Vegesna's *Sri Sri Sri Rajavaru*. However, due to significant delays, Nithin went on to act in other films that were released first. Nithin's filmography began with *MAD*, a college-based story that became an instant hit. He then starred in *Aay*, another superhit film. With two successful films under his belt, the makers of *Sri Sri Sri Rajavaru* are now gearing up to release his original debut film.

Directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Satish Vegesna (*Sathamnam Bhavati*), *Sri Sri Sri Rajavaru* is a love and family entertainer produced by Chintapalli Ramarao. Sampada plays the female lead. The film's release is planned for Dasara. Renowned director Vamshi

Paidipally had launched the film's teaser. On this occasion, Vamshi praises director Satish Vegesna. "Director Satish Vegesna, who previously won a National Award with *Shatamanam Bhavati*, seems to be following a similar flavor with this movie. I have known Narne Nithin since the time of NTR's marriage, and he has been growing as a promising actor with films like *MAD* and *Aay*. I hope this film will be another hit for him," said Vamshi Paidipally.

The producer is confident that this film will definitely give a hat-trick of success to Narne Nithin. He praises director Santish Vegesna for coming up with another entertaining story with this one. Senior actors like Rao Ramesh and Naresh are also playing some important roles in the film.



Sai Pallavi transforms into Indhu in Amaran

Sivakarthiseyan stars in the upcoming multilingual film Amaran, directed by Rajkumar Periyasamy and produced by Kamal Haasan, R Mahendran and Sony Pictures International Productions. Sai Pallavi plays the female lead, Indhu Rebecca Varghese and her character's emotional journey is highlighted in a newly released first look.

It features original footage from the 2015 Republic Day parade, where Indhu receives the Ashok Chakra from President Pranabh Mukherjee. Sai Pallavi brings depth and authenticity to her portrayal of Indhu.

The promo focuses more on Sai Pallavi's character. The film is based on the chapter 'Major Varadharajan' from the book titled India's Most Fearless, written by Shiv Aror and Rahul Singh. Amaran is set for its theatrical release on October 31 for the Deepavali festival. Nithin's father, Sudhakar Reddy and his sister, Nikhitha Reddy, will release the movie in Telugu states through the Sreshth Movies banner.

STANDALONE



Ustaad Ram Pothineni brings the house down in Nizamabad! His stylish entry steals the show at the CMR shopping mall.

Satya Yadu goes from watching RGV's films to working with him

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The teaser for RGV Den's upcoming psychological thriller dropped like a bomb, sending shivers down our spines! *Saaree* promises a hair-raising ride as Satya Yadu's chilling portrayal of a stalker spirals into madness, fixated on Aaradhya Devi's captivating character. Readers, obsession turns deadly, boiling over into blood-curdling violence and mind games that will leave you gasping. So, we're going to reveal the details of our upcoming exclusive interview with the movie's lead actor.

For those who don't know, Satya Yadu, a few of his noteworthy short films are *Dashansh*, *Steps* and *Galat Sahi*. He also made a brief appearance in the well-liked television series *Kumkum Bhagya*. And now the leading man for this captivating story of love and passion! "Through a buddy who provided the project details in August 2023, I was able to secure the lead role in *Saaree*. I had no idea that Ram Gopal Varma was working on the project at the time. After submitting my profile in the required format and waiting three months, I received a call from the casting department informing me that RGV had liked it and wanted to talk about the role." Oh, that's how he landed the role in *Saaree*.

Next up, "RGV, the gentleman, didn't disclose that the character was the lead during our talk; instead, he just described it. He promised to update me later. But after two months there was no news; I thought maybe someone else had been cast. RGV sir called me again two months later and said he would send me the first draft. I was requested to read my character and get back to him. I knew at that point that I had the role. I found out my character was the project's lead after reading the script." A moment of congratulations!

The birthplace and upbringing of Satya Yadu are from Uttar Pradesh. He completed his schooling in

his hometown and later graduated with a degree from Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar University. His mother is a stay-at-home mom and his father works in the private sector. While he continues to talk about his debut, he mentions, "I studied the screenplay for two months, reading it through about fifty times, in order to get ready for this complicated character. I was able to fully comprehend the character's intricacies and feelings as a result of this. In order to completely put myself in the character's shoes, I also conducted self-reflection tests and developed a simple framework to direct my representation. 90% of the character was already developed by the time I went to the workshop and the final 10% was honed there."

As everyone is aware, Ram Gopal Varma, who was previously praised as one of the best directors of Hindi cinema, has had difficulties lately due to the lackluster reception his films have received. Not to be deterred, RGV is currently taking on new projects. RGV hopes to revitalise Satya Yadu's cinematic presence by presenting him as the main character. "I was aware of his distinct approach, having grown up watching his films. There were moments during filming when I found it difficult to capture the character's feelings, but RGV's advice enabled me to give outstanding performances. He is incredibly talented at getting his actors to give excellent performances."



Satya Yadu, who is all set to make his debut in RGV's Saaree, speaks exclusively with The Pioneer about landing a lead role in the film, getting to work with RGV and more

performances," Satya gives his producer acclaim. "Since *Saaree* was my debut, I was first anxious. Nevertheless, my worries vanished as soon as filming started because of the welcoming and helpful environment on set. I was given the creative freedom to thrive in my part by director Giri Krishna Kamal, who encouraged me to offer my thoughts. Because of Aaradhya's genuine personality, we were able to click with her off-screen and it easily transferred to our on-screen chemistry. From playing a character, transitioning from love to obsession was challenging; the director's guidance made it smoother, and working on it taught me teamwork's importance in filmmaking. Every crew member's role is vital! Moreover, RGV encouraged me to push limits and his supportive nature made challenging scenes manageable. Initial nerves were overcome by the team's support; my first day on set, surrounded by dedication and living my dream, was surreal. I learned to control emotions to separate my character's feelings from my personal life," continues Satya.

Regarding the future, he comes to a conclusion: "I'm excited to explore diverse roles with compelling stories. My first day on set was unforgettable. My journey as an actor has just begun. Regardless of the character, the story should be good."



Devara falls short of expectations!

SURESH KAVIRAYANI

Director Koratala Siva has made a name for himself in Telugu cinema with his unique blend of socially conscious and commercially viable films. His previous collaborations have consistently delivered impactful messages alongside entertainment. Koratala Siva and Jr NTR have reunited for *Devara* after their successful partnership in *Janata Garage*. This film marks Jr NTR's return to solo leads after nearly six years, following the multi-starrer blockbuster *RRR* alongside Ram Charan. *Devara* also stars actress Janhvi Kapoor to Telugu cinema, making her debut alongside Jr NTR. Saif Ali Khan joins the cast, bringing his signature style to the film. The music composition is handled by Anirudh Ravichander.

REVIEW

The story unfolds in Ratnagiri, a coastal town on the Andhra-Tamil Nadu border, where four villages—Erra Samudram — are nestled amidst hills and forests. *Devara* (played by Jr NTR) and Bhaira (played by Saif Ali Khan) are leaders of these villages, resorting to ship robberies to survive. However, they soon discover they're unwittingly aiding Muruga's (played by Murali Sharma) gang in smuggling illegal arms. A tragic turn of events changes Devara's perspective. After a village boy falls victim to an extremist landmine, Devara realises the devastating consequences of their actions. He decides to cease collaborating with Muruga and urges his villagers to do the same. Bhaira disagrees, sowing discord between the two former allies. Devara takes drastic measures, eliminating Bhaira's crew when they continue pirating ships. He disappears, leaving behind a legacy of fear, as he continues to target anyone engaging in illicit activities at sea. Years pass and

Cast: Jr NTR, Janhvi Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan, Prakash Raj, Ajay, Shruti Marathe, Srikanth and Shine Tom Chacko, among others.

Writer and Director: Koratala Siva

Producer: Sudhakar Mikkilineni, Kosaraju Harikrishna

Music: Anirudh Ravichander

Cinematographer: R Ratnavelu

Rating: 2.5/5

Devara's son, Vara (played by Jr NTR), seeks to make amends for his father's past.

What drives Vara's actions? Who is Thangam (Janhvi Kapoor) and what's her connection to Devara's family? What strategies will Bhaira employ to lure Devara back to the villages? What brings the Ajay group to Erra Samudram? The answers lie within the film.

ANALYSIS

Director Koratala Siva ventures into new territory with *Devara*, shifting from emotionally charged social dramas to action-packed cinema. Set against the backdrop of a seaside town, the film explores the lives of four villages dependent on the coast. Initially, Siva strikes the right balance, introducing Devara and Bhaira as leaders of the villages. However, as Devara's moral awakening transforms the narrative, the pace slows. The story becomes overly focused on Bhaira's vendetta against Devara, lacking impactful moments due to the sluggish pace. Siva excels in capturing the initial ship-robbing scenes and vibrant festival episodes, but repetition and subpar graphics detract from the experience. The first half shows promise, while the second half falters. Notably, Koratala Siva's trademark strong female characters are underutilized, particu-

larly Janhvi Kapoor's character, Thangam. The influx of characters and action-oriented approach overshadows the storyline. The climax, expected to set the stage for the sequel, falls short. Koratala Siva's earlier films demonstrated emotional depth, but *Devara* missed the mark. Refining his writing skills could have elevated the film.

PERFORMANCES

The performances in *Devara* are spearheaded by Jr NTR, who shoulders the responsibility with ease. He delivers a powerful performance as Devara and later as Vara, showcasing his exceptional acting prowess. Jr NTR is undoubtedly one of Telugu cinema's finest actors, and his talent shines through in this film. While Jr NTR steals the show, Saif Ali Khan's character lacks depth and fails to leave a lasting impression. Janhvi Kapoor's role is limited to a cameo appearance in one song and a few scenes. Srikanth, Prakash Raj and Ajay have brief roles, with limited screen time. Murali Sharma also makes a fleeting appearance. The female characters, including Shruti Marathe as Jr NTR's wife, are underdeveloped due to inadequate writing. Fortunately, Anirudh Ravichander's background score elevates the film, compensating for the lackluster songs. His music stands out, particularly in the sole Jr NTR-Janvi duet. Ratnavelu's cinematography captures memorable moments, although the graphics are inconsistent.

VERDICT:

Ultimately, *Devara* caters primarily to Jr NTR fans, with his performance being the film's standout aspect. Anirudh's background score serves as another redeeming factor. However, *Devara* falls short of Koratala Siva's usual standards, lacking depth in its storyline and emotional resonance.