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Future of youth in 'limbo' due to 'anti-edn mindset' of

BJP: Rahul

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RBI DEPUTY

GUV FLAGS CONCERNS OVER QUALITY OF DISCLOSURES BY SOME NBFCS



8

'Salman Master carried me to my vanity after I hurt

MY LEG'

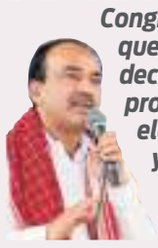


P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY

the pioneer

Brutal attacks on the unemployed are a testament to the true nature of the Congress. For 10 years, the unemployed in Telangana have been waiting with bated breath for jobs. The faulty policies of BRS in the job recruitment process severely harmed the unemployed. People hoped their lives would change with the Congress, but they are now questioning their decisions. What did you promise before the elections, and what are you doing now? Your true nature has become evident within seven months.



- Eatala Rajender, BJP MP

P4

DON'T MISS...

Doctors asked to enhance services...

West Godavari district Collector C Nagarani directed the doctors of Area hospital to provide more medical services to the people and said that the 100 bed hospital would be available soon. Collector Nagarani conducted a surprise inspection of the Area Hospital here on Wednesday. The Collector inspected each ward including the maternity ward, medicine storage center, administration, OP departments, lab, scanning and X-ray units and she gave instructions to the concerned doctors. The Collector first visited the maternity ward and inquired...

-PAGE: 4

Causal links between poverty...

Living in poverty could be causing mental illnesses and vice-versa, according to a study. While previous studies have shown a strong correlation between poverty and mental illness, researchers said that they have not been able to discern the cause-and-effect relationship between the two. While certain mental conditions are known to impact financial stability, the authors found that poverty "can lead to mental health problems". They analysed data from the UK Biobank and the international...

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'Vedanta going ahead with ...

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal on Wednesday said that the company is going ahead with the proposed demerger of its businesses that will lead to formation of six firms and unlocking of massive value. The company has received approvals from the majority of its creditors for a proposed demerger of businesses, marking an important step in the company's plan to split into six independent listed companies. Addressing shareholders during the 59th Annual General Meeting, the Chairman said...

-PAGE: 8

Sunil Gavaskar turns 75: Gave...

It is difficult to be consistently relevant in an ever-evolving world. Unless, of course, one happens to be Sunil Gavaskar, who is celebrating the completion of 75 eventful summers in his life on Wednesday. It's tough for today's young cricket fans, who have grown up watching IPL big hits, to truly understand the significance of Gavaskar, as often they have a shrunken image of him -- a former-cricketer-turned-commentator -- in their mind. Now, there are too many of them. Or, perhaps, it's...

-SPORTS

Ganja menace a big concern, says Lokesh

Minister orders probe into goings-on in IIIT Idupulapaya



Responding to the incidents, Minister Lokesh promised to solve the problem and save the future of the students. He said that strict action has been ordered against local politicians who encourage ganja consumption. The Minister assured the parents that strict action will be initiated to eradicate ganja from educational institutions.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ganja menace has become a big concern for the students of IIIT Idupulapaya in Kadapa district and their parents. IT Minister Lokesh expressed anger over the situation in the IIIT and instructed the authorities to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the incident. The parents met the minister requesting to put an end to the irregularities in the IIIT, pointing out that their children's future is at stake.

They complained that the entire campus has become a ganja den.

Responding to the incidents, Minister Lokesh promised to solve the problem and save the future of the students. He said that strict action has been ordered against local politicians who encourage ganja consumption. The Minister assured the parents that strict action will be initiated to eradicate ganja from educational institutions. Lokesh explained that the government has already taken strict measures in this regard.

Meanwhile, the parents brought to the notice of the Minister that due to the negligence of the staff, the students failed to get good marks.

They said that their children scored more than 90 percent marks in Class 10. The lecturers of Intermediate classes deliberately give the students less internal marks, they alleged.

AP best place to invest, CM tells VinFast, BPCL

State likely to get Rs 60,000 cr investment from BPCL

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, on Wednesday, told the industrialists that Andhra Pradesh is the best choice for investments. Representatives of BPCL and VinFast had a meeting with the Chief Minister at the State Secretariat here and held a detailed discussion on the investments in the State. If the proposals discussed at the meeting materialise, the State will get investments to the tune of Rs 60,000 crore from BPCL on oil refinery and petrochemical complex.



Chandrababu asked the Vietnam-based company representatives to set up their electric vehicle and battery manufacturing units in the State and that the State government is ready to provide the necessary land and other basic facilities for them.

The Chief Minister, during his recent visit to New Delhi, had a discussion with the Central leaders on the investments by BPCL in the State, and Wednesday's meeting with the BPCL representatives is in continuation of this. The company representatives brought to the notice of the Chief Minister that at least 4,000 to 5,000 acres of land is needed for setting up the petrochemical complex.

Responding to this immediately, Chandrababu said that the necessary land will be allotted to the company within 90 days and asked the company representatives to come with the detailed and necessary proposals for establishing the project.

The representatives informed Chandrababu that they will be back latest by October with the feasibility report.

The CM also explained in detail to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of VinFast, Pham Nhat Vuong, and other company representatives on the available resources in the State to launch the electric vehicles. Chandrababu asked the Vietnam-based company representatives to set up their electric vehicle and battery manufacturing units in the State and that the State government is ready to provide the necessary land and other basic facilities for them.

Earlier, the Chief Minister had lunch with the CEO and other representatives of VinFast, the Chairman and Managing Director of BPCL Krishna Kumar, and other representatives of the company.



RPF's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit rescues 4 children

Four people accompanying the children arrested

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a commendable operation, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) at Bapatla rescued four minors from being trafficked to Chennai for labour exploitation.

The RPF team, led by Senior Divisional Security Commissioner Vallleswara B Thokala, apprehended four suspicious adults accompanying the four children on board Train no. 13351 Dhanbad-Alappuzha Express at Bapatla.

The children, aged between 10 and 14, were being transported without proper documentation or adult supervision. The RPF team suspected human trafficking and intervened promptly, ensuring the safe rescue of the children.

Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, commended the RPF team for their vigilance and swift action.

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Irrigation sector back by 20 years: Minister

Slams YSRCP regime for ignoring key irrigation projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources Nimmala Rama Naidu has commented that the previous YSRCP government took the irrigation sector in the State back by 20 years. Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy neglected all the important projects, such as Purushottapatnam, Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme, and Pulichinthala Project, he alleged. Jagan called the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (PLIS), 'Vattiseema'. He should apologise to the farmers, the Minister demanded.



Ministers Nimmala Rama Naidu, Kollu Ravindra, Partha Saradhi and others switching on motors at the Krishna Eastern Head Regulator to release drinking water into canals in Vijayawada on Wednesday



Water from the Prakasam Barrage being released into canals Pix: Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

Ministers Nimmala Rama Naidu, Kollu Ravindra, Kolusu Saradhi, MP Kesineni Sivanath alias Chinni, MLC Paruchuri Ashok Babu, MLAs Mandali Buddha Prasad, Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, Kagitha Krishna Prasad, and Yarlagadda Venkata Rao released drinking water to Krishna Eastern and Western Delta canals from the Prakasam Barrage Head Regulators in Vijayawada. They, along with Irrigation Department officials, performed special pujas at the head regulators. Later, the ministers switched on motors to release water into the canals. On the occasion, they sprinkled turmeric, saffron and flowers in the canals. The Irrigation authorities released 1,500 cusecs of water for Eastern Delta canals and 500 cuses for Western Delta canals.

Speaking to the media, Minister Naidu said that YS Jagan totally neglected the Pulichinthala Project, which was constructed to store around 45 TMCs of water to cater to Krishna Eastern and Western Deltas' drinking and irrigation requirements. During the rainy season, the government must store adequate water in Pulichinthala.

Continued on Page 2



Free sand available; construction sector picking up

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The free sand policy introduced by the TDP-led NDA government in Andhra Pradesh has turned out to be a boon for the construction sector as construction activity is picking up across the State with the availability of sand free of cost. Unlike during the previous YSRCP government, the builders had to spend thousands of rupees on one truck load of sand.

The builders across the State are heaving a sigh of relief after the announcement of the free sand policy that was assured by the TDP chief and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu before the 2024 elections to hand hold the construction sector which was in neck-deep trouble during the previous government.

Soon after forming the coalition government in the State, the government has focused on reintroducing the free sand policy and issued a GO two days back and the free sand supply kick-started in more than 20 districts in the State immediately.

It can be recalled that during the previous YSRCP regime, the builders had to shell down huge amounts to purchase sand for construction activity forcing many small and medium builders to wind up their activities. The sand policy introduced by the previous government left lakhs of construction workers jobless, as the contractors backed out to pay high price to sand and due to non-availability of sand.

Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) AP chapter president YV Ramana Rao told The Pioneer that the temporary sand policy is a relief to the construction sector. However the available stocks of 45 lakh tonnes will be exhausted in maximum 10 days.

Continued on Page 2

Kejriwal directly enjoyed excise 'scam' kickbacks

❑ Group of Ministers a sham: ED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal "directly used" part of the alleged Rs 100 crore generated from the "kickbacks" of the Delhi excise policy "scam" by staying in a luxury hotel in Goa, the ED has claimed in its charge sheet filed against the AAP supremo.



The federal probe agency also said the GoM (Group of Ministers) constituted by his government in this context was a "sham".

A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court on Tuesday took cognisance of the prosecution complaint, filed on May 17, and issued a production warrant for the jailed Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader for July 12.

The 55-year-old politician and the AAP have been named as accused in this seventh supplementary charge sheet filed in the case.



India, UK committed for FTA: P8

Aadhaar-based eKYC of LPG customers underway to weed out bogus users

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



State-owned oil companies are conducting an Aadhaar-based eKYC authentication of LPG customers to weed out bogus ones, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

This is done to remove bogus customers under whose names cooking gas is booked but these are used by commercial establishments.

While households buy what is called domestic LPG for Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder (about Rs 56.5 per kg), commercial establishments like hotels and restaurants are mandated to buy a 19-kg commercial cylinder that comes for Rs 1,646 (Rs 86.3 per kg).

"Oil marketing companies are undertaking eKYC aadhaar authentication for LPG customers to remove bogus customers against whose name commercial cylinders are often booked by certain gas distributors," Puri said in a post on X. "This process is in place for more than 8 months now."

His post came in response to V D Satheesan, Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, raising the "unprecedented hardship" caused to common man due to the decision.

"It has been learned that the central government has mandated mustering for gas connections in order to ensure that LPG cylinders are held by legitimate customers. "

Employees upset over RINL's appeal to sacrifice wage

Move aims to mitigate company's severe financial distress

LAKSHMANA RAO
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), has ignited a firestorm of controversy with an appeal to the employees to sacrifice a part of their wages and allowances. This contentious move aims to mitigate the company's severe financial distress, a situation exacerbated by VSP's listing for 100 percent privatisation by the Centre in 2021.

The circular, issued on July 8 and signed by the General Manager (HR)-Establishment and Rules, has incensed the 13,000-strong workforce. The document, perceived as a 'voluntary pay cut' circular, declares, "As you all know, RINL is passing through tough times and is in a precarious financial position. In order to navigate the current economic and financial challenges, it is essential that we come together as a team to support our organisation from your salary or to defer a part of your salary for a specific period. This gesture will help us support our company's operation and ensure the continued growth and survival of RINL."

Employees are urged to voluntarily contribute by giving up or deferring parts of their salary, including basic pay, perks, allowances, energy allowances, canteen subsidy, night shift allowance, LTE for non-executives, and spouse allowance. The appeal stresses the voluntary nature of the contributions, asserting that any amount will make a significant impact.

However, the Visakha Steel Workers' Union (VSWU), the recognised union, has outrightly rejected the appeal. A senior RINL executive, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the move as 'counter-productive,' warning that it would demoralise employees rather than inspire the collective efforts needed to pressure the Centre to withdraw the privatisation decision and announce a revival package, including a working capital grant of Rs 3,000 crore. VSWU president KSN Rao and general secretary D Adinarayana criticised the appeal, calling it a suicidal step that sends wrong signals at a critical time. Visakha Steel Employees Congress president Neetukonda Ramachandra Rao accused the company of attempting to instigate labour unrest, labelling the appeal a retrograde step.



RINL, with an annual capacity to produce 7.3 million tonnes, has faced prolonged production cuts due to raw material shortages and working capital issues. A 36-day strike by workers at Adani Gangavaram Port further impacted production. Despite selling its forged wheel plant at Rae Bareli to the Railways for Rs 1,800 crore, RINL effectively received only Rs 50 crore due to old loans. Legal hurdles halted a land sale in Visakhapatnam that had initially fetched Rs 50 crore.

RINL has invested around Rs 16,300 crore for expansion and capital repairs of blast furnaces, but its net worth has plummeted from Rs 13,659 crore in FY12 to Rs 391 crore in FY23.

From Cuddapah to Kadapa: transformation over four decades

BY AMITABHA BHATTACHARYA

Visiting an old place, especially one entwined with the recollections of youthful days, always yields a mixed experience. It can be enjoyable if one goes open-minded and does not take the dictum 'Old is gold' too seriously. For one born and bred in a big city, life in rural and mofussil settings can be challenging, but the rewards can be so overwhelming, that during quiet reflection in late life, members of the All-India Services tend to regard that phase -- roughly the first decade of their career -- as the most vivid and perhaps the most satisfying too.

I still remember the day in February 1983, shortly after Telugu Desam Party founder-president N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) stormed to power, when I received my posting order as the Collector and District Magistrate of Cuddapah district, near the southern tip of undivided Andhra Pradesh. I had been forewarned by some colleagues that it was a 'difficult' district, full of factional strife, a drought-prone area with an inhospitable climate, and the like.

For a young couple with a two-year-old child, after a tiring, eight-hour-long journey from Hyderabad, what appeared most pleasing was the magnificent double-storied bungalow - with one bedroom fitted with an air conditioner! The morning after, sipping tea on the large verandah of the upper floor, we were mesmerized. The place burst upon us with all the natural glory it could muster.

A Collector's tenure never lacks in excitement -- the theatre of human life ceaselessly unfolding its drama. One gets so drawn into and involved with the lives of large swathes of people of all denominations, that to remain cool and detached, in order to fulfil the bureaucratic dharma with objectivity, appears to be a mighty challenge. How to prioritise one's objectives? How to even- handedly deal with political leaders -- to be firm without being harsh? How to align one's personal preferences in dealing with myriad public issues with the priorities of the government? How to retain clear-headedness while being responsive to unending public demands and grievances? With sub-optimal fund allocations to crucial sectors – such as primary education, basic healthcare and poverty alleviation - what should be done to maximise the efficiency of expenditure and reduce leakage? The list is endless.

A Collector's tenure never lacks in excitement -- the theatre of human life ceaselessly unfolding its drama. One gets so drawn into and involved with the lives of large swathes of people of all denominations, that to remain cool and detached, in order to fulfil the bureaucratic dharma with objectivity, appears to be a mighty challenge.

Cuddapah (later Kadapa, and then YSR district) is one of India's oldest districts with Sir Thomas Munro, later Governor of Madras and respected in the area almost as a seer, as its first Collector (1800-1807). The district derives its name from the word 'Gadapa' (meaning 'threshold'), signifying the place as gateway (to Tirupati). Illustrious ICS and IAS officers like V.S. Hejmadi, S.K. Chetturand A. Krishna Swamy had nurtured the district. Endowed with abundant mineral resources, the region was noted for 'red sanders' (red sandalwood). Forests, hills and hillocks, and important pilgrimage centres adorn the landscape.

The advent of NTR scaled up welfare governance in the state with heavily subsidized rice scheme and large-scale housing for the weaker sections. In a sense, these measures provided a model for the rest of the country. Expanding irrigated network under the Telugu-Ganga project was a major initiative. Law and order problems, with occasional police firings to quell riotous mobs, however, continued so much so that, during my two-year tenure, I had to work with four superintendents of police.

Forty years later, things appear to have changed beyond measure. Signs of prosperity, largely due to state intervention and private initiative, are visible everywhere. Factionalism, murders and related problems have receded. No force could disrupt communal harmony. Officials can devote most of their time to pursuing developmental activities. The brand new Collectorate office and the DC's bungalow - all with modern facilities - are symbolic of the new face of the district. The industrial hub on the outskirts of the city, multiplicity of cement plants in the vicinity, NTPC's power plant, a thriving airport that is being upgraded, a new super-specialty hospital, an outfit of the prestigious Hyderabad Public School and the like reflect new aspirations.

My daughter noticed three major jewellery showrooms in Kadapa town that mirror the increasing affluence of the region. The once inaccessible Gandikota Fort, on the banks of Penna River, as well as its surroundings have been developed into a tourist spot with potential to become a major national attraction. The way the memorial of C.P. Brown (1798-1884), a district official who has made enormous contribution to Telugu language and culture, is being maintained and the rich collection of the library being preserved, raise hopes.

Amidst these changes, there are certain values which remain unchanged. The love of two of my faithful camp clerks –M Ganeshan and Sabdar Hussain - made my visit particularly memorable. The young Assistant Collector under training, the Joint Collector, and other staffers of the Collectorate briefed me about how they combat emerging problems, making me feel younger by four decades!

The erstwhile Collector's bungalow and the Collectorate building are no more used by the head of the district. One wonders if owls – Gudluguba -- as my child used to utter to others' amazement -- still nest in that bungalow. Amateur homeopathic doctors would have been edged out by the mushrooming modern nursing homes. Today's Collector would be busy with more weighty issues than write to the Indian Railways to introduce an AC-sleeper compartment to the Rayalaseema Express, or raise public awareness about the serious health hazards of asbestos mining. (Fortunately, it stopped years ago).

Looking dispassionately at the plethora of positive changes, one feels assured that the sustained efforts of public servants that had laid the foundation of today's prosperity have not gone in vain.

(The writer served as the Collector and District Magistrate of erstwhile Cuddapah district from 1983-85)

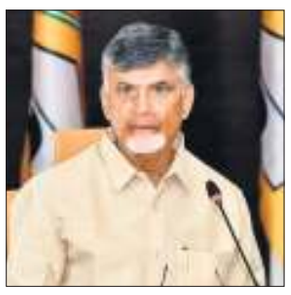
CM to inspect Bhogapuram, Polavaram canal today

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

To participate in a series of programmes during visit to Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will visit Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts on Thursday, where he will participate in a series of programmes. The TDP and JSP cadre are planning a grand reception for Naidu's first visit to Visakhapatnam since assuming office as Chief Minister.

During a review meeting in Anakapalli on Wednesday, Home Minister V. Anitha discussed the arrangements, including police bandobast and the establishment of a helipad for the Chief Minister's visit, with Collector Vijaya Krishnan, Superintendent of Police K.V. Murali Krishna, and heads of



various government departments. Anitha mentioned that Naidu is scheduled to land at Visakhapatnam airport at 10 a.m. He will then fly to Dwarlapudi in Payakaraopeta constituency to inspect the Polavaram left main canal work and check the progress of the Bhogapuram International Airport project. Anitha visited Dwarlapudi to enquire about the progress of the Polavaram left main canal work from the Irrigation Department officials in Anakapalli.

The Home Minister also visited the AP MedTech Zone in Visakhapatnam and discussed the arrangements with Collector Harendhira Prasad, Police Commissioner Shanka Brata Bagchi, and Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Commissioner C.M. Saikanth Varma.

Detailing the Chief Minister's schedule, Harendhira Prasad said he is expected to arrive at AP MedTech Zone at 1.45 p.m. from Bhogapuram. He will attend the CII meeting from 2.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. and participate in an interactive session with AP MedTech Zone employees from 3.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Following this, Naidu will inaugurate two new drug manufacturing blocks. He will also take part in a meeting with officials to discuss the Visakhapatnam Metro Rail and NHAI projects at Visakhapatnam airport, he added.

Police caution public against rising cyber frauds

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Perpetrators exploit public trust under guises of courier services, TRAI directives, and credit card payments

The Visakhapatnam city police have issued a strong advisory in response to a significant rise in cyber fraud cases. Perpetrators are employing increasingly sophisticated tactics to exploit public trust under false guises such as courier services, TRAI directives, and credit card payments, which have already resulted in staggering losses exceeding Rs 20 crore this year alone.

According to reports from the cybercrime division, there have been approximately 100 documented cases where unsuspecting victims fell prey to sophisticated scams. In one prevalent tactic, fraudsters impersonate bank credit card department officials, deceiving individuals with fictitious claims of unpaid bills on non-existent credit cards. Upon resistance or inquiry, the fraudsters seamlessly redirect calls to accomplices who extract personal details such as mobile numbers and Aadhaar credentials. They then allege that criminal elements in Mumbai have exploited the victim's identity for illegal financial transactions.



These criminals have also posed as Army representatives to medical laboratories, promising to conduct tests for supposed Army personnel. Using video calls to establish credibility, they coerce lab owners into financial transactions under false pretenses.

Inspector Bhavani Prasad of the cybercrime police station emphasised that while traditional courier scams like Fedex cons were previously prevalent, criminals have adapted with more sophisticated methods. Exploiting fears of terrorism and criminal involvement, they manipulate victims into believing their credit cards, phone numbers, or even courier packages are linked to illegal activities. In a recent incident, a city resident was duped of Rs 3.75 crore in a TRAI-related fraud scheme, underscoring the severity and financial impact of these deceptive operations.

The police have told the public to remain vigilant and cautious of unsolicited calls or messages demanding personal information or payments. As investigations continue, the authorities have urged anyone with information or who has been a victim to come forward and report to the police immediately.

Shaik Aleem Basha appointed MTMC Municipal Commissioner

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Shaik Aleem Basha has been appointed as Commissioner of Mangalagiri-Tadepalli Municipal Corporation (MTMC) following the transfer of V Nirmal Kumar. In a minor reshuffle, three Municipal Commissioners have been transferred across the State as per the GO Rt No 486 issued by Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Chief Secretary to Government, on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, V Nirmal Kumar was posted as Commissioner of Bapatla municipality on deputation following transfer of B Srikanth. Srikanth is posted as Deputy Commissioner of Mangalagiri - Tadepalli Municipal Corporation vice B Siva Reddy. Siva Reddy has been directed to report before the Commissioner & Director of Municipal Administration, Andhra Pradesh, Mangalagiri, for further posting.

Minister Sandhya Rani urges youth to stay away from ganja

20-30 per cent of college students are using ganja

PNS ■ PADERU

Women and Child Welfare and Tribal Welfare Minister Gummadi Sandhya Rani has urged people to take a stand against ganja. She highlighted the government's unwavering commitment to eradicating ganja within 100 days, a pledge made by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. She pointed out the plight of the 2.50 lakh tribal families cultivating coffee in the district, promoting Araku coffee as a lucrative and sustainable alternative to cannabis. Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chief Minister have praised Araku coffee, underscoring its potential to transform local economies.

The government is implementing 16 schemes through the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) to support these efforts. These include Tricar loans, subsidised fertilisers, seeds, and agricultural tools. However,



despite these initiatives, some individuals are still drawn to ganja cultivation due to the promise of higher profits.

In a startling revelation, Minister Sandhya Rani disclosed that 20-30 percent of college students are using ganja, leading to behavioural issues and life destruction. She proposed dedicating five minutes during morning prayers in colleges to raise awareness about the dangers of cannabis. She urged the community to take responsibility for their children and treat this issue as a social problem.

Additionally, RTC bus drivers and conductors were instructed to stay vigilant, as buses are often used to transport ganja. Sandhya Rani also recommended establishing rehabilitation centres and providing psychological services for addicts.

Superintendent of Police Tuhin Sinha emphasised that ganja cultivation can be detected without satellite technology through focused efforts. He urged staff and volunteers to remain vigilant and announced the establishment of a toll-free number for reporting. Initially, warnings and education will be provided to growers, followed by legal action if necessary. Due to police efforts, alternative crop initiatives, and training programmes, cannabis cultivation, previously affecting nine mandals including Pedabayalu and Araku, has decreased significantly from 7,500 acres to 1,039 acres last year.

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar outlined an action plan to promote alternative crops to ganja and improve tribal livelihoods through training. Proposals amounting to Rs 144 crore have been submitted to the government to provide alternative crops within three years. These proposals include the cultivation of groundnut, Valisalu (Niger seeds) and Rajma on 14,800 acres, and various horticultural crops on 18,660 acres.

The Coffee Board and Skill Development Department will provide training and employment opportunities, while the Spices Board will explore spice crop cultivation. Loans with a 35 percent subsidy will support micro-industries.



Durga Temple EO KS Rama Rao presenting the portrait to Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Governing bodies for all temples soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Endowment Anam Ramanarayana Reddy has stated that after discussing with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the government will constitute governing bodies for all temples in the State soon. His government is focusing on the development and required facilities, he said.

Minister Reddy, along with family members, visited the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The temple authorities led by Executive Officer KS Rama Rao accorded a warm welcome to the minister's family. Minister Anam and his family offered special pujas to the presiding deity Durga Devi. Later, they visited the Malleswara Swmy and Sri Valli Devasena Sametha Subrahmanya Swamy and made special prayers.

Minister Ramanarayana Reddy spoke to the media and said that the present governing bodies should resign from their posts immediately, maintaining ethical values. If not, the government will take appropriate steps, he commented.

Further, he stated that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will conduct a review meeting on the Endowment Department soon. In the suggestions given by Chandrababu, and the department will react appropriately, he added. As per the Hindu Dharma, they would honour everyone irrespective of parties and positions in all temples, he said. Meanwhile, Minister for Housing and Information and Public Relations Kolusu Partha Saradhi, Machilipatnam MP Vallabhaneni Balashoury, BPCL CMD Krishna Kumar and others visited Durga Devi and offered special poojas. After that, the Vedic scholars gave blessings to all at the Veda Ashirvanchana Mandapam and presented Laddu Prasadam, Sesha Vasthram and Portraites.

Durga temple nets Rs.3.36 crore in last 20 days

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam earned a Hundi collection of Rs.3.36 crore during the last 20 days, said EO Rama Rao. The counting process of the hundi collection was conducted at the Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam on Wednesday. The Temple EO Rao and other officials supervised the counting of cash, gold, silver and other donations donated by the devotees.

During the counting, the temple earned 436 grams of gold and 6.060 kg of silver which were donated by the devotees. Also, the temple earned 1,300 USA Dollars, 85 UK Pounds, 7 Australia Dollars, 2.5 Oman Riyals, 80 Canada Dollars, 295 UAE Dirhams, 6.25 Kuwait Dinars, 8 Quatar Riyols, 10 Europe Euros, 100 Soudi Riyols, 118 Singapore Ringats, 70 New Zealand Dallors, 80 Thailand Bhats and 15.5 Behrain Dinars was donated. Additionally, the temple earned Rs.1.91 lakh by e-hundi.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Panchami:	Jul 10 07:52 AM to Jul 11 10:03 AM
Shashthi:	Jul 11 10:04 AM to Jul 12 12:33 PM
Nakshatram:	
Purva Phalguni:	Jul 10 10:15 AM to Jul 11 01:04 PM
Uttara Phalguni:	Jul 11 01:04 PM to Jul 12 04:08 PM
Rahukalam:	1:59 PM to 3:36 PM
Yamagandam:	5:52 AM to 7:29 AM
Varjyam:	09:11 PM to 11:00 PM
Gulika:	9:07 AM to 10:44 AM
Amritakalam:	05:55 AM to 07:42 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	1:55 AM to 12:47 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy
Temp: 35°c
Humidity: 68%
Sunrise: 5:42 AM
Sunset: 6:44 PM

Updated: July 10, 2024 5:00 PM

RPF's Anti-Human...

Continued from Page 1

He stated that prompt and dedicated efforts of our RPF personnel saved four innocent children from a life of exploitation. This successful operation demonstrates the RPF's commitment to combating human trafficking and ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children. We will continue to work tirelessly to prevent such heinous crimes, he added.

The children were handed over to the Child Welfare Committee, Guntur, for further care and support. The arrested adults were handed over to the Railway Police, Guntur, for further necessary action.

Irrigation sector back....

Continued from Page 1

However, the previous YSRCP government did not make such efforts, he alleged. As a result, as of now, there is less than 0.5 TMCs of water, he added. Further, he said that the current Kharif season is getting delayed by a month due to insufficient water in the upstream reservoirs. So, the government has taken steps to divert water from River Godavari through PLIS towards River Krishna via the Polavaram Right Main Canal. As of now, 6,500 cusecs of water is coming from the Pattiseema and Tadipudi Lift Irrigation Schemes. The water should be first used for drinking purposes and then for preparing seed beds for the paddy plantation, he requested.

"The water released now will be used to irrigate around 7.38 lakh acres. Also, it will facilitate drinking water for the 11 Assembly constituencies covering 35 mandals in Krishna, NTR, and Eluru districts. Also, another 5.69 lakh acres will be irrigated in Guntur, Prakasam and Bapatla districts to resolve the drinking water problems in seven Assembly constituencies," Naidu said. Further, he said before the release of water, the government completed the removal of silt, weeds and others in the canals on a war-footing to ensure the free flow of water, as per the direction of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. From the next year onwards, the department will prepare a plan in advance to remove the weeds and silt in the canals and will invite tenders for that, he said.

Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations Kolusu Partha Saradhi said that in any sector, maintenance is most important and it was neglected by the previous YSRCP government. As a result, the irrigation sector suffered severely, he felt. Due to the non-operation of the Purushottapatnam Lift Irrigation Scheme, the upland areas Nuzvid, Mylavaram and Tiruvuru were severely affected, he said. During the TDP regime from 2014 to 2019, Chandrababu Naidu spent Rs.4,000 crore for Purushottapatnam. However, the amount spent during the YSRCP regime was just below Rs.50 crore, he said. Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra commented that people of the Krishna Delta faced a hectic drinking water problem during the YSRCP government. With the help of the PLIS, the drinking water problem will be resolved after the release of water into canals, he said. Water Resources Department Advisor Mamidi Venkateswara Rao, Engineer-in-Chief C Narayana Reddy, NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana, Superintending Engineer TJH Prasad Babu, KC Division EE PVR Krishna Rao and others were present.

Free sand...

Continued from Page 1

The whole construction sector is waiting for the New Sand Policy to be released in September and the construction activity will pick up.

He said that now, by paying a meager amount, the truck will be filled with sand and the buyer has to bear the transport which is extra. They demand that the old free sand policy that was in force during 2018-19 during the TDP regime should be reintroduced. He said that immediately there cannot be any relief to the buyer who wishes to buy a flat but in the days to come there will be slight relief to the buyers. On the other hand the State government is also spreading awareness among the people about the availability of free sand, said Ramana Rao.

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Govt to conduct study in Kerala, Gujarat on fisheries programmes

Satellite station for 4,000 boats will be set up in State: Minister Atchannaidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agricultural, Cooperative, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries, K Atchannaidu has asked the officials concerned to conduct a study on the implementation of the fisheries development programmes in Kerala, Gujarat and other States. He said the government is aiming to bring back the previous glory for the fisheries department in the State. A satellite station for 4,000 boats will be set up in the State as per the directions received from the Central government.

Minister Atchannaidu held a review meeting on the fisheries department at the Fisheries Commissioner's office at Penamaluru in the Krishna district on Wednesday. During the meeting, the minister enquired about the officer about the pending dues to the fishermen.

Atchannaidu said that as of now the government is mulling arranging a satellite station for 4,000 boats and later it would be extended for all 20,000 boats in a phased manner.



Minister Atchannaidu conducting a review meeting on the Fisheries Department at the Commissioner's office at Penamaluru in Krishna district on Wednesday

He directed the officials to clear the Rs.10 crore of diesel subsidy dues. The previous YSRCP government did not pay these amounts to fishermen and boat owners, he said. His department would take all issues in the fisheries department into the concern of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, he added.

Further, he said the previous government did not clear the compensation to the fishermen during the period of the fishing ban. So, officials are to conduct a resurvey about the beneficiaries and submit it within 20 days. The department should improve the capacity of fisheries industries production and prepare plans to increase the fish products export growth in the State, he explained.

Meanwhile, the Minister instructed the department officials to seek a detailed report about the Budagatlapalem, Pudimadaka, Kothapatnam, Vodarevu, and Biyyaputippa fishing harbours present conditions. Also, he asked for a report on fisheries programmes that were implemented in the last five years. Further, he directed officials to instead the fisheries programmes that were implemented from 2014 to 19.

Subsequently, Atchannaidu sought a report on the financial position of the department and if they submitted the details it would be easy to approve in the coming budget meeting. Officials are advised to take the necessary steps to provide bank loans for all fishermen, he said.

Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad, Fisheries, Aqua and Horticulture Secretary A Babu, Fisheries Commissioner A Suryakumari, Additional Director Dr S Anjali, Joint Directors Dr V Venkateswara Rao, G Heera Naik, Sk Lal and others were present.



Adani Port donates Rs 90 lakh for paediatric healthcare at KGH

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Adani Gangavaram Port Limited has stepped forward with a generous contribution of Rs 90 lakhs towards enhancing paediatric healthcare facilities at King George Hospital (KGH). As part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, the Adani management handed over the cheque to District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad.

Adani Gangavaram Port, renowned as the deepest and most modern port in the country, has been actively involved in various community initiatives through the Adani Foundation. Their collaboration aims at bolstering community infrastructure, health, education, and overall development in Visakhapatnam.

The contribution is earmarked for the enhancement of the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and other paediatric healthcare facilities at KGH, effectively doubling the capacity to accommodate up to 200 beds. This initiative promises to significantly elevate the standard of care available to local children and families, addressing critical healthcare needs within the community.

Speaking on the occasion, the management of Adani Gangavaram Port Limited expressed their commitment. "We are dedicated to providing the best possible medical care to the local community, particularly to children. This initiative reflects our steadfast commitment to developing infrastructure and healthcare facilities for the underprivileged. Community health and development remain central to our mission, and this contribution marks a significant step towards ensuring a healthier and better quality of life for all."

Rs 300-cr financial irregularities uncovered in Railway Cooperative Urban Bank

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a stunning revelation, East Coast Railway Shramik Congress general secretary RC Sahoo has exposed alarming financial discrepancies within the Railway Cooperative Urban Bank, involving nearly Rs 300 crore. Sahoo further revealed that dividends worth Rs 100 crore have not been distributed to shareholders.

Accusing the bank's current directors of deep-seated corruption, Sahoo announced that the union would escalate the matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). He urged the Union government to take immediate and stringent action against the perpetrators. Highlighting the lack of accountability, Sahoo pointed out that the bank has not held elections for the past decade, with the executive committee allegedly stalling the process to retain power.

"The money belongs to railway employees from the East Coast, South Central, and South East regions, who are all shareholders. Irregularities amounting to around Rs 100 crore in dividends and about Rs 73 crore in reserve fund money are unaccounted for. We lodged a complaint with the general manager of East Coast Railway, but there has been no progress so far," Sahoo stated.

J Sampath Kumar, zonal president of Shramik Congress, emphasised the significance of the forthcoming Railway Cooperative Urban Bank elections. Scheduled for July 24 and 25, these elections will be held in 84 constituencies to elect new directors. Kumar alleged that 19 out of the 21 current directors are retired individuals, underscoring the dire need for fresh and accountable leadership. Approximately 1.73 lakh railway employees are poised to vote in these crucial elections.

Railway Claims Tribunal holds Lok Adalat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Railway Claims Tribunal, Amaravati Bench, under the supervision of G John Prasad, member (Technical) and Satyabhama, member (Judicial), is organising a Lok Adalat for expediting the settlements to the Railway victims from July 9 to 12. The main objective of holding this Lok Adalat is to provide a platform for amicable settlement of railway-related claims and disputes, ensuring justice and convenience to the public.

Speaking on the occasion, G John Prasad said that 76 proposed cases which were listed before are being undertaken for settlement during this Lok Adalat. He also said it is a wonderful opportunity for parties to resolve disputes without prolonged litigation. Satyabhama stated that Lok Adalat will help in faster resolution of cases with reduced legal formalities and very convenient platform for the aggrieved parties and appealed to utilise the services of Lok Adalat organised by the Railway Claims Tribunal, Amaravati, for settling their railway-related claims and disputes

Ravi Prasad Padi, Chief Claims Officer, and Rajendra Prasad, Additional Registrar, RCT Amaravati, supervised the proceedings to facilitate the settlement of cases.

First delegation of AP Hajis returns

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Law and Minority Welfare Minister N Md Farook gave a warm welcome to the Haj pilgrims who returned to Andhra Pradesh, at Gannavaram Airport, after completing the pilgrimage. The first delegation of AP Hajis returned on Wednesday and two delegations of Hajis will be returning on Thursday.

On the occasion, Minister Farook said that the Andhra Pradesh government had arranged the necessary facilities for the pilgrims without any difficulty.

On the safe return from the Haj pilgrims, said that the Andhra Pradesh Government and Minister of Minority Department Farook have made all the arrangements and expressed our special thanks to them on behalf of our Hajj pilgrims committee.

Guntur MLA Naseer Ahmed, Minority Welfare Department Principal K Harshavardhan, Haj Committee CEO Abdul Khadar, and others participated in the programme.

NTR Police launch Anti-Narcotic Cell

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



NTR District Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna has said that the 'Anti-Narcotic Cell' has been launched on the premises of the City Taskforce. The cell would be worked under the supervision of ACP B Pardha Saradhi and appointed two inspectors IV Nagendra Kumar and Ramesh Kumar besides five Sub-Inspectors and additional staff, he said. In a press release here on Wednesday, Commissioner Ramakrishna said that additionally three sub-teams have been formed for East, West and Rural Zones under the supervision of one Sub Inspector and other staff. These Anti-Narcotic Cells, have Intelligence, Operations, Data Analysis and Awareness Creation Wings, he added.

Further, he said that these teams would work to prevent the illegal transportation of drugs and put vigilance on consuming youths. Also, he said the police would take stringent action against illegal ganja transporters, buyers and sellers. He said that the police arrested 70 people and seized 80 kg of ganja so far in the city. Meanwhile, he said the Police Department has provided a toll-free number 9121162475. He urged the people if they have any information about drugs and ganja, they can send the information to the toll-free number or send it to mail ID: antinarcoticcell@vza.appolice.gov.in.

Youtuber nabbed over child abuse video

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Cyber Security Bureau on Wednesday arrested Praneeth Hanumanthu, a Telugu Youtuber, accused of sharing a child abuse video on the social media platform.

Hanumanthu was arrested in Bengaluru and produced before a lower court; he is being shifted to Hyderabad on transit. The accused is a native of Andhra Pradesh who claims to be a content creator; Hanumanthu's latest Youtube vedio sparked outrage on the social media where the accused and his friends made lewd remarks on a father-daughter video.

Several netizens found the video offensive and a few celebrities raised concerns over child safety. Following the outrage over the video, Praneeth issued an apology. He took to X and said, "Edited out the problematic part from the video.

Expired food items found in Hyd restaurants

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task Force teams of Telangana's Commissioner of Food Safety conducted inspections at various restaurants in Secunderabad area on Tuesday.

During the raids at Vivaha Bhojanambu restaurant in Secunderabad, the food inspectors found 25 kgs of Chittimutyalu rice with 'best before date as 2022' and 500 grams of coconut grates found with synthetic food colours. The stock has been discarded.

In that hotel, the inspectors found raw food articles and semi-prepared foods stored in steel containers being covered, but not labelled properly. A few dustbins were not covered with lids. Medical fitness certificates for food handlers were not available. Water stagnation was observed in the drains inside kitchen premises.



In the Grill 9 restaurant, the inspectors found 35 packets of expired Potli Masala, 1.4 kgs of sauce, 13 packets of garlic chilli sauce items and 250 ml of cosmetic rose water was found in the store room and with suspicion of being used as a food ingredient, discarded the item on the spot.

Possible rat infestation suspected as rat faeces and burrows observed inside storeroom. A few of the food handlers were found without wearing hairnets, gloves and uniforms. Food articles stored in the refrigerator were not covered and not labelled properly. Veg and non-veg food articles were stored together.

In the Grill 9 restaurant, the inspectors found that refrigerator was in an unhygienic condition. Pest control records for premises and medical fitness certificates for food handlers were not available.

Premises were not fitted with insect-proof screens and doors not close-fitted to avoid entry of pests. After the inspection, Vivaha Bhojanambu restaurant clarified that the Chittimutyalu rice bag without an expiry date was a sealed sample from their vendor, intended for quality assessment and not used in cooking. The bag was sealed and this was confirmed by the inspecting officials.



CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao, along with party leaders Babu Rao and DV Krishna, addressing the media at the Balotsav Bhavan in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Boiler blast occurred due to negligence: CPM

Murder case should be registered against Ultratech company

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao has alleged that the boiler blast in the Ultratech Cement Factory was caused due to the negligence of the management. Also, the management overlooked the workers' and staff's warnings, though they had brought that there was a dangerous situation in the factory and it would lead to an accident, he said. The Ultratech Cement Factory management used the Corporate Social Responsible (CSR) funds and develop the Budavada village, he demanded.

Addressing a press conference at the Balotsav Bhavan in Vijayawada on Wednesday, Srinivasa Rao said that the Ultratech Cement Company has not been extending welfare activities in the surrounding villages. Though the company employees and workers have children, the company did not provide school, and hospital facilities to them, he commented.

The company should provide safe drinking water after purifying, he said.

VMC Council nod for rise in corporator's yearly budget from Rs 30 L to Rs 50 L

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Council unanimously passed the resolution to enhance the Corporators' budget per year from Rs.30 lakh to Rs.50 lakh. Also, the council said that the enhancement of the budget will be implemented from the current financial year. The council passed a resolution that officials should prioritise the division budget.

On the other hand, the council expressed displeasure with the Engineering and Public Health department officials as they neglected the proper drinking water supply and maintenance of sanitation in the city. Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi has given directions to the officials to give top priority to the drinking water supply and sanitation.

The VMC Council meeting was chaired by Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi at the council hall on Wednesday. Soon after starting the meeting, the Opposition TDP and CPM demanded that media might be allowed inside the council hall to cover the council proceedings. But the Mayor denied their demand and the council was adjourned for a while. After resuming the council proceedings, it paid homage to deceased ex-corporators and the meeting extended the condolence.

During the agenda, the TDP Corporator Mummaneni Prasad proposed to enhance the corporator's budget from Rs.30 lakh to Rs.50 lakh per year. He asked the council to implement the enhanced budget usage from the current financial year. Also, he urged Mayor Bhagya Lakhsmi to first give priority to the proposals from the Corporators and later give other works. The TDP member's proposal was unanimously passed in the council. With this initiative step, the YSRCP and other members thanked the council.


The council meeting progressing at Vijayawada Municipal Corporation on Wednesday

(Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar)

Meanwhile, the ruling YSRCP in the council, the opposition TDP and CPM members have expressed their unhappiness over the drinking water supply and maintenance of sanitation. The drinking water is being contaminated by the drainage water and as a result, people are suffering from diarrhoea and other diseases, they said.

TDP floor leader N Balaswamy, members M Prasad, Ummadi Venkateswara Rao, Lalitha and the YSRCP members Adapa Seshagiri, Deputy Mayor Bellam Durga and others agreed with it. Even Mayor Bhagyalakshmi was also unhappy over the drinking water supply and poor sanitation.

Irrespective of the parties, all members of the council targeted the Engineering and Public Health department officials for neglecting the people's amenities. The TDP member Prasad commented that it was shameful for the council including the officials for not providing needful facilities to the people. To improve sanitation in several areas, many members came forward to appoint staff to a sharing system with the collaboration of residents.

After holding detailed discussions, the council passed a resolution to recruit additional staff for the maintenance of sanitation in the city. Also, to conduct repairs to leaked pipelines to avoid the contamination of drainage water, the authorities were directed to recruit contract workers.

Meanwhile, Mayor Bhagyalakshmi was angered by Chief Engineer Prabhakar for not immediately responding to the council resolutions. She questioned him why they were not putting files in this regard. Later, the Commissioner In charge Dr A Mahesh replied to the council that all pipeline repair works are to be completed by July 20.

After that, the shifting of the Mango Market at Kedareswara Pet in the 34th division was proposed by Bandi Punyasheela, and the opposition TDP opposed it. Punyasheela said that the Mango Market is being obstructed because of the traffic problem on Kolandareddy Road. However, the TDP members differed with her proposal. Also, the council opposed the proposal from the commissioner to arrange traffic signals at 21 junctions including five junctions in the rural areas with an outlay of Rs.2.97 crore.

Zoo parks should be developed as per international standards: Dy. CM

PNS ■ GUNTUR



Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj and Forest K Pawan Kalyan underlined the need of developing the zoo parks in the state with international standards.

He directed the officials concerned to formulate plans for the development of zoos and viability to establish new zoo parks across the state. The 14 th governing body meeting of Zoo Park Authority of AP was held in the camp office of the deputy Chief Minister at Mangalagiri near here on Wednesday. The deputy Chief Minister presided over the meeting as chairman of the Zoo Parks Authority.

Speaking on the occasion, Pawan Kalyan asked the officials to formulate plans to attract more tourists to the zoo parks in Visakhapatnam and Tirupati. He said that the possibilities of setting up new zoo parks in the state should be examined.

"The officials should focus on developing zoo parks with international standards and make them more attractive to tourists with environment-friendly programmes. Focus should also be laid on aspects such as providing funds for the development of zoo parks should be laid," he observed.

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasized the need of Public Private Partnership (PPP) system and importing rare animals to attract more people to zoo parks. The zoo parks should be modernized in a way that they create a good wildlife experience, he told them. The Corporates should be involved in the development of zoo parks and take up necessary development programs for zoo parks with the CSR funds of industries, he told the officials.

The deputy Chief Minister suggested that entrepreneurs should be advised to create activities such as adopting animals individually and taking donor's support for development, adding that special meetings "Tea with Deputy CM" should be organised during his visits to Tirupati and Visakhapatnam to promote the program.

Dy. CM Pawan Kalyan also ordered the officials to ascertain the feasibility of establishing new zoo parks in the state and submit a report to him in this regard. Forest department PCCF (HOFF) Chiranjeevi Chowary, Tourism commissioner K Kannababu, forest department officials AK Naik, Santhipriya Pande, Sharavanan and other officials were among those who attended the meeting.

Minor girl gang-raped and murdered by minor boys

PNS ■ NANDYALA



In a shocking incident, a minor girl was gang raped by three minor boys and later killed her at Muchhumari village in Pagidyala mandal in the district.

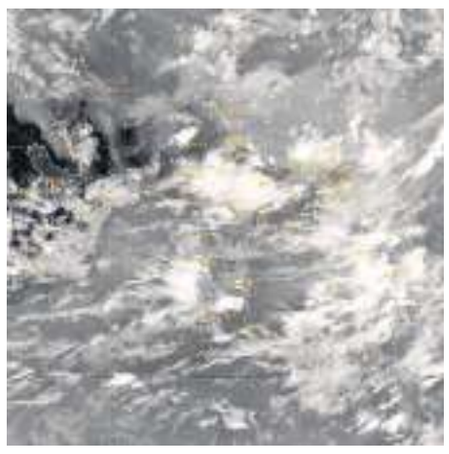
Police said that an eight-year-old girl went missing on Sunday. The family members and the neighbours searched for the girl but did not find her. The parents lodged a complaint with the Muchhumari police station on Monday. The Police pressed sniffer dogs into service to collect clues. The police got information that the three minor boys were seen taking the girl to the outskirts.

The police held three minor boys in connection with the disappearance of the minor girl. Police said that when the girl was playing with other girls at the park at the village, the three accused minor boys, who were acquaint to the deceased girl, took her to a secluded place at the outskirts and gang raped her. Later fearing that she would reveal their names, the minor boys killed the girl by pushing her into an irrigation canal. The three minor boys confessed to the crime, the police said.

MLA Gitta Jaya Surya consoled the parents of the deceased girl and assured of extending all needed help. The MLA who moved with the horrendous incident, directed the police officials to ensure that perpetrators were punished by the court.

Thunderstorm with lightning, strong surface winds likely in AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR



Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and strong surface winds with speed ranging 30-40 Kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next five days, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that the same situation is likely to prevail in Rayalaseema on July 13 and 14. Strong surface winds with speeds ranging from 30-40 Kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in Rayalaseema during the next three days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at many places or at a few places or at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

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

Doctors asked to enhance services in Area Hospital

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM



West Godavari district Collector C Nagarani directed the doctors of Area hospital to provide more medical services to the people and said that the 100 bed hospital would be available soon.

Collector Nagarani conducted a surprise inspection of the Area Hospital here on Wednesday. The Collector inspected each ward including the maternity ward, medicine storage center, administration, OP departments, lab, scanning and X-ray units and she gave instructions to the concerned doctors.

The Collector first visited the maternity ward and inquired about the medical assistance provided to the new born babies and mothers. She inquired about the CTG machines to monitor the heart function of a newborn baby and whether they are in use. She asked the doctors whether the CRG medical equipment is functioning properly.

Later, she inspected the neonatal warmer and phototherapy units. Talking to the pregnant and postnatal women in the ward, she inquired how the deliveries are going on in the hospital and whether medical examinations are being done well

Interacting with an 18-year-old girl, who was undergoing treatment in the ward, the Collector inquired about what she was being treated for. The doctor explained that the girl attempted to end life by taking poison due to personal reasons and she is now recovering. Responding to this, the District Collector gently reprimanded the young woman who committed suicide. The details of expired medicines should be entered in the relevant register and those medicines should be kept separately, she ordered the medical staff. She also advised to check the expiry dates of medicines from time to time and inquired whether all the necessary medicines were available. She also inquired about the construction of a LCU unit at a cost of Rs 5 lakh. "The Bhimavaram area hospital is now a 50-bed hospital. If the construction of the new hospital building is completed, it will be a 100-bed hospital and the medical services can also be expanded," Collector Nagarani stated. Hospital Services district Coordinator Dr. P Suryanarayana explained to the Collector about the hospital and the services being provided to the patients.

Later talking to the media, the Collector said that she inspected all the wards and spoke to some patients to know about the medical services being provided to them. Medical Superintendent Dr.Madhavi Kalyani and RMO Dr.Praveen were among those who accompanied her.

Spl. officers to keep Annaprasadam complex clean: EO

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Executive Officer J Syamala Rao on Wednesday announced that special officers have been deployed to maintain cleanliness and hygiene in Tirumala, where nearly two lakh pilgrims consume Annaprasadams. Recent measures taken in Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba Annaprasadam Complex (MTVAC) to provide more delicious Annaprasadam to tens of thousands of devotees who come every day to Tirumala have enhanced the taste of delicacies, Rao told reporters after conducting a surprise inspection at MTVAC here along with TTD JEO Veerabrahaman.

Min promises to release pending hostel mess charges

PNS ■ GUNTUR



Minister for Social Welfare Dr. Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy assured of taking steps to release pending mess hostel mess charges. The Minister took representations from the people on their grievances in the Secretariat on Wednesday.

Leaders of SFI and members of Social Welfare Residential Employees Federation and people from different communities met the Minister and presented petitions. The student union leaders and members of the Social Welfare Residential Employees Federation brought their problems to the attention of the Minister. They said that during the 5-year rule of YSRCP, the system of the Social Welfare Department was neglected by not providing facilities.

They appealed to the Minister to fill up the vacancies as they were facing difficulties due to insufficient staff. The principals were given additional charge as in-charges of other schools in other areas.

They explained to the Minister that they were unable to speak on their problems in the previous government. Responding to their grievances, the Minister promised that the vacancies would be filled soon. The Minister assured them of providing all needed facility to the social welfare hostels.

The SFI students urged the Minister to take steps to release pending hostel mess charges and hike the mess charges as per the spiraling prices. Minister Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy responded positively and assured to take steps to release pending mess charges.

Etela condemns Cong' actions against unemployed



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Etela Rajender, MP from Malkajgiri, expressed strong condemnation of the recent actions taken by the Congress against unemployed individuals in Telangana.

He stated, "For 10 years, the unemployed in Telangana have been waiting with bated breath for jobs. The faulty policies of BRS in the job recruitment process have severely harmed the unemployed." He continued, "People hoped their lives would change with Congress, but they are now questioning their decisions. What did you promise before the elections, and what are you doing now? Your true nature has become evident within seven months."

Rajender emphasised that the brutal attacks on the unemployed are a testament to the true nature of the Congress. "Are they thieves, anti-social elements, or drug dealers? Why are they being indiscriminately beaten? Is this why they elected you?" He condemned the attacks on both the unemployed and journalists, stating, "The Bharatiya Janata Party, and I personally, fully support the demands of the unemployed. We urge you to set aside authoritarian policies and address their demands."



Jagan Mohan Reddy will not resign: YV Subba Reddy

PNS ■ ONGOLE



Dismissing the political speculation that former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will resign to his MLA post to contest to Lok Sabha, YSRCP senior leader and MP YS Subba Reddy made it clear that Jagan Reddy will not resign.

Talking to the media here on Wednesday, Subba Reddy brushed aside the speculation that Jagan Reddy would resign to his MLA post and he questioned why Jagan Reddy should resign to his MLA post.

Commenting on the new free sand policy of the alliance government, Subba Reddy said that they hail if sand is provided to the poor at free of cost. He dismissed allegations that corruption took place in a big way in implementing sand policy during the YSRCP regime.

Subba Reddy welcomed the meeting of AP and Telangana state Chief Ministers to resolve issues and emphasized the need of granting Special Category Status to AP for industrial development.

YV Subba Reddy dared for an inquiry on the alleged corruption of TDR bonds. "We have never indulged in corruption. If the new government feels there was corruption in the TDR bonds, an inquiry can be conducted," he stated.

Collector goes on surprise inspection of girl's high school

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Collector A Thameem Ansariya here on Wednesday made a surprise inspection of PVR girl's high school.

The Collector interacted with the students, who were having lunch. The students were asked whether they were erved midday meals as per the menu. The Collector tasted the meal and knew the quality of food. She directed the teachers to display the menu chart publicly.

She examined the records of eggs and groundnuts that the government supplies to the students. The Collector expressed her anger over the poor maintenance of these records. She made it clear to the headmistress that he would not tolerate negligence in the performance of duties. The Collector inspected the construction of additional classrooms and storerooms on the school premises.

Two kg cannabis seized; five peddlers arrested



PNS ■ NELLORE

The police seized 2.2 KGs of ganja and arrested five drug peddlers at Janardhan Reddy colony near graveyard here on Wednesday.

Additional SP CH Sowjanya told the media that on the tip off that some drug peddlers were selling ganja, a police team conducted a raid and arrested five peddlers and seized 2.2 KGs of ganja.

Cases were registered against them under sections 8 (C), r/w,20 (b) of NDPS Act. The arrested were being produced in the court, the ASP said. The Additional SP warned of taking stringent action if anybody involved in ganja transportation, selling and consumption in the district.

INDIA CORNER

Delhi: Smuggler held with 100 turtles, some from endangered species

Delhi Police has arrested a 38-year-old man for allegedly smuggling 100 turtles, 50 of them from endangered species, in the Shahdara area, officials on Wednesday said. Police said they recovered 50 Indian Roofed turtles, 45 Black Spotted Pond turtles, three Indian Eye turtles, and two Indian Softshell turtles from the possession of Ghaziabad resident Bheem. Black Spotted Pond turtle, Indian Eye turtle and Indian Softshell turtle are from endangered species which are covered under Schedule-I of the Wild Life Protection Act. These species need rigorous protection. "On Tuesday, Geeta Colony police station got information regarding the arrival of a smuggler with endangered species of turtles in the area," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said.



The officer said that a team was formed along with the informer to nab the accused.

Six cows die after allegedly eating contaminated millet

Six cows died and as many fell sick after allegedly eating contaminated millet in a government cow shelter here, officials said on Wednesday. Following the incident, two officials were suspended on charges of negligence, they said. District Magistrate Dr Rajendra Paisian said that in a government cowshed in Sharifpur village under Sambhal police station area, health of many cows suddenly deteriorated after allegedly eating contaminated millet.

Six of these cows died and as many fell sick and are undergoing treatment, Paisian said. He said that Gram Panchayat Officer Saurabh Singh and Shivam from the Animal Husbandry department have been suspended with immediate effect. An explanation has also been sought from four other officers, including the Block Development Officer, and if they are found guilty, strict action will be taken against them as well, the district magistrate said.



Election Commission team on 2-day visit to Jharkhand

A six-member team of Election Commission of India (ECI) led by senior deputy election commissioners Nitesh Vyas and Dharmendra Sharma arrived in Ranchi on Wednesday evening to review the ongoing special summary revision of electoral rolls, an official said. Assembly election in Jharkhand is due later this year. Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) K Ravi Kumar said "There is a meeting at CEO office today. The ECI team will review the second summary revision of the electoral roll with the district election officers on Thursday."

The second special revision of the electoral roll started in Jharkhand on June 25 and it would come to an end on July 24. The draft voter list will be published on July 25 and voters could submit their claims and objection for improvement by August 9. The voter list will be published on August 20, an election official said



'This is not time for war'

PM Narendra Modi reaffirms in Austria

PNS ■ VIENNA



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he held "fruitful discussions" with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer during which they discussed in detail the ongoing disputes in the world, including the Ukraine conflict and situation in West Asia, reaffirming that "this is not the time for war".

Modi, who arrived here from Moscow after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday night on a two-day visit - the first by an Indian prime minister in over 40 years, also said India and Austria identified new possibilities to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and prepared a blueprint for cooperation for the coming decade.

"Chancellor Nehammer and I have discussed in detail the ongoing conflicts around the world, whether it is the conflict in Ukraine or the situation in West Asia. I have said before that this is not a time for war. Problems cannot be solved on the battlefield. The loss of innocent lives, anywhere, is unacceptable," Modi said in a joint press statement along with Chancellor Nehammer after their talks.

He said India and Austria emphasise on dialogue and diplomacy for the earliest possible restoration of peace and stability.

"We are both ready to provide every possible cooperation to achieve this," he said, recalling that the historic Vienna Congress was hosted in the hall where they are standing and that the conference provided direction for peace and stability in Europe.

On his part, Nehammer said India is an influential and credit-worthy country whose role is more than important when it comes to the Russia-Ukraine peace process.

Modi invites Austrian companies to invest in India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday invited Austrian companies to invest in India as he highlighted the potential for bilateral collaborations in infrastructure, energy, emerging technologies and other sectors.

Modi arrived here from Moscow after meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday evening on a two-day visit, the first by an Indian prime minister in over 40 years.

Modi and Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer jointly addressed renowned Austrian and Indian CEOs at a round table business meeting in Hofburg Palace here.

"PM highlighted the significant potential for collaboration between Indian and Austrian companies in various sectors, including infrastructure, renewable energy, green sectors, new and emerging technologies, fintech, startups, and innovation, among others," the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said in a social media post. The prime minister invited Austrian companies to invest in India, it added. To foster innovation and entrepreneurship between the countries, the IndiaAustria Startup Bridge was launched in February 2024. Indo-Austria bilateral trade for 2023 (January-December) was USD 2.93 billion. Indian exports to Austria stood at USD 1.52 billion and imports were USD 1.41 billion.

SC: Prosecuting persons will not resolve issue of child marriages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Prosecuting persons involved in child marriages will not resolve the problem which has social dimensions, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while reserving the verdict on a PIL over the alleged rise in underage weddings in the country.

Unimpressed by the Centre's submissions that state-specific programmes like awareness campaigns and training are being undertaken, the top court said "These programmes, lectures do not really change things on the ground".

NGO 'Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action', in 2017, had filed the PIL in the top court alleging that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act was not being enforced in "letter and spirit".

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra heard submissions from the counsel of the petitioner NGO and Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, before reserving the verdict.

"It is not about prosecution only. Prosecuting persons involved in child marriages will not resolve the problem as it has social dimensions," the bench said and asked the counsel for both sides to give suggestions on a way forward to deal with the issue.

"We are not here to criticise anybody. This is a social issue," the CJI said and asked the law officer to apprise as to what the government was doing on it.

At the outset, the additional solicitor general informed the bench about the present status and said states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Assam have witnessed more child marriage cases.

She said northeastern states, sans Assam, have hardly any such incidents.

Five states and UTs including Dadra Nagar Haveli, Mizoram and Nagaland have not reported any case of child marriage, she added.

The law officer referred to the data and said there was marked improvement in the last three years.

Historic, game-changing move: Russia on outcomes of Modi-Putin talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Moscow and the outcomes of his summit talks with President Vladimir Putin were "historic and game-changing" considering the prevailing turbulent geopolitical environment, Russia's Charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said on Wednesday.



The Russian diplomat said the focus of the talks between the two leaders was on expanding India-Russia trade and economic ties.

In his first trip since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Modi paid a two-day visit to Moscow on July 8 and 9 during which he held summit talks with Putin.

"The leaders have decided to strengthen cooperation in all areas. It is a historic and game-changing move, especially given the turbulent environment around us," Babushkin said at a media briefing.

"It has got unprecedented coverage and presumably overshadowed all other events. It seemed that the whole world was watching it," he said.

Babushkin also criticised the US for making certain comments ahead of Modi's visit to Moscow and described the remarks as interference in ties between the two nations.

"It was the conduct of two independent global powers based on mutual trust and respect. The external factors don't play much role when it comes to Russia-India relations," he said.

India and Russia have established foundational convergences in key areas of our cooperation, he said.

The senior diplomat said both sides vowed to expand cooperation in a range of key areas including fossil fuel, nuclear energy and trade.

Highlighting key outcomes of the summit talks, Babushkin said India and Russia decided to go ahead with a bilateral payment system using national currencies.

If you noticed, one of the most important points of the joint statement was that we have decided to go ahead with the establishment of a payment system under the framework of national currency settlement, he said. In the Modi-Putin talks, the two sides set a target of USD 100 billion in annual trade volume by 2030 and vowed to develop a robust bilateral payment settlement mechanism using national currencies.

Sikkim Police forms SIT to find missing former minister

PNS ■ GANGTOK

(SIT) to find 80-year-old former minister Ram Chandra Poudyal who went missing on July 7, an officer said.

The octogenarian politician has been reported to be missing after he left home on Sunday morning.

He had told his family that he would return by the afternoon on that day.

"A Special Investigation Team has been constituted to investigate the missing person case of Ram Chandra Poudyal (80), a resident of Chota Singtam in Pakyong district," the Superintendent of Police (SP) of the district, Karma Gyamtso Bhutia, said.

He said a police team from Pakyong Police Station has been sent to Siliguri in neighbouring West Bengal to look for him.

The missing former minister's family members contacted all relatives and friends to locate him, but no information on his whereabouts could be found.

This prompted them to lodge a missing person case with the local police.

The veteran politician had served as the Deputy Speaker of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and was a minister in the 1970s, besides heading the Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) and The Rising Sun parties.

Future of youth in 'limbo' due to 'anti-edn mindset' of BJP: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said the youth of the country have been completely demoralised by unemployment and claimed their future is in "limbo" due to the BJP's "anti-education mindset".

The former Congress chief's remarks came over a media report, which claimed that the salaries of engineers graduating from the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in 2024 have experienced a decline due to the slowdown in hiring.

"The ill-effects of the economic slowdown are now being faced by the country's most prestigious institutes like IITs. The continuous fall in placements from IITs and the drop in annual package are further hurting the condition of the youth which is facing the peak of unemployment," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on his WhatsApp channel.

The Congress leader claimed that 19% of the students could not get campus placement in 2022 and the same rate doubled to 38% this year.

"When this is the condition of the most famous and respected educational institutions of the country, what will be the plight of the rest of the institutions!" Gandhi said.

"Today the youth is completely demoralised by unemployment - parents are spending lakhs to get professional education, while students are forced to study by taking loans at high interest rates. Then not getting a job or ordinary income is only causing a decline in their financial condition," he added.

Gandhi said this is the result of the "anti-education" mindset of the BJP due to which the future of the meritorious youth of this country is in "limbo".

Does the Modi government have any plan to free the hard-working youth of India from this crisis? he asked.

The opposition will continue to raise the voice of the youth with all its might and will hold the government accountable for this "injustice", Gandhi said.

Nomination process for National Gopal Ratna Award to begin from 15th: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday said the nomination process of National Gopal Ratna Award-2024 will start from July 15 and said a special award for north-east will be given from this year onwards to boost diary development in this region. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is making all efforts for the effective development of this sector to provide sustainable livelihood to the farmers.

Indigenous bovine breeds of India are robust and possess the genetic potential to play crucial role in the national economy.

The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) was launched in December 2014 with a view to conserve and develop indigenous bovine breeds in a scientific manner.

Under this mission, since 2021, this department has been conferring National Gopal Ratna Award every year with an objective to encourage the milk producing farmers, dairy cooperative societies/MPC/FPOs and Artificial Insemination Technicians (AITs).

Bypolls: Sporadic violence reported in Uttarakhand, WB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moderate to brisk polling was recorded in 13 assembly constituencies across seven states where bypolls were held on Wednesday amid sporadic incidents of violence in Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

Voting time was from 7 am to 6 pm.

The electoral exercise, the first since the Lok Sabha polls, will decide the fate of many veterans and some debutantes, including Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's wife Kamlesh Thakur.

The bypolls are being held against vacancies created either due to deaths or resignation of incumbent members. Barring Uttara khand and West Bengal, polling has been peaceful in the rest of the states so far. In Uttarakhand's Manglaur constituency, four people were injured in a clash between supporters of rival parties at a polling booth. Roorkee Civil Line Kotwali incharge R K Saklani told PTI that a report was received about the clash between workers of two parties at booth number 53-54 in Libbarheri in Manglaur.

Some reports claimed there was firing at the booth too. However, police denied the reports.

Purported videos of the clash on social media showed Congress candidate and former MLA Qazi Nizamuddin taking a man in bloodstained clothes to the hospital. He accused the BJP of throttling democracy by sowing seeds of hatred. Another video showed him embracing an injured party worker at the hospital and crying aloud.

Violence erupted at the booth when some people with half their faces covered entered the booth and started stopping people from casting their votes, sources said.



Causal links between poverty, mental illnesses found

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Living in poverty could be causing mental illnesses and vice-versa, according to a study.

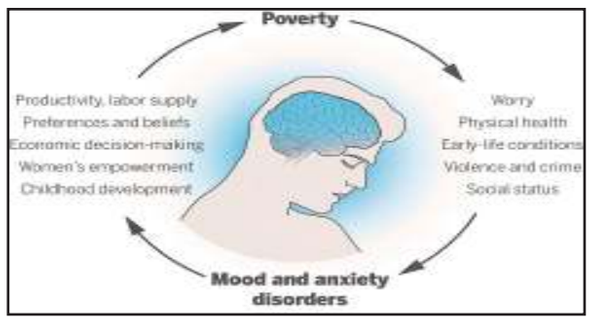
While previous studies have shown a strong correlation between poverty and mental illness, researchers said that they have not been able to discern the cause-and-effect relationship between the two.

While certain mental conditions are known to impact financial stability, the authors found that poverty "can lead to mental health problems". They analysed data from the UK Biobank and the international Psychiatric Genomic Consortium.

"We discovered that schizophrenia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) causally contribute to poverty. Conversely, poverty contributes to major depressive disorder and schizophrenia," said Marco Boks, a psychiatrist at Amsterdam University Medical Center in The Netherlands.

People with ADHD have short attention spans, along with restlessness and impulsivity, while those with schizophrenia harbour a distorted perception of reality, affecting how they think, feel and behave.

For the study, published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour, the researchers determined a measure of poverty, using household income, occupational income and social deprivation.



They then used the genetic information of the participants to distinguish the effects of poverty on mental health and vice-versa. They used the Mendelian randomisation method, which helps understand how a certain exposure (such as poverty) caused a certain outcome (developing a mental illness).

"We were able to capture aspects of poverty shared between the individual, the household, and the area in which one lives. This enabled us to better identify the causal effects of poverty on mental illness," said author David Hill, a statistical geneticist at the University of Edinburgh, UK.

The researchers said using genetic data, they were able to identify poverty as something that can be targeted in order to improve mental health.

They said that by recognising the two-way influence between poverty and mental health, policymakers can develop more effective interventions aimed at breaking the cycle.

"The research provides robust evidence for the need to also look at social factors such as poverty, when you delve into the development of mental illness," said Boks.

Buried under snow for months, bodies of 3 army personnel recovered in Ladakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The bodies of three of the four army personnel, who died after their mountaineering expedition team was struck by an avalanche last October at a height of over 18,300 feet in Ladakh, have been recovered amid challenging conditions, according to defence sources.



The bodies of Havildar Rohit Kumar, Havildar Thakur Bahadur Ale and Naik Gautam Rajbanshi were trapped deep within a crevasse and lay buried under thick layers of ice and large volumes of snow for the past nearly nine months.

A defence source said their bodies were recovered over the last one week.

The body of Lance Naik Stanzin Targais was recovered soon after the incident.

In July 2023, a 38-member expedition team from the Gulmarg-based High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS), an elite training institution under the Army, had set out to conquer Mt. Kun in the Union Territory of Ladakh. The expedition started on October 1 and the team hoped to conquer the peak by October 13, sources in the defence establishment said.

"The treacherous terrain and unpredictable weather in this glaciated region posed immense challenges.

While fixing ropes on a snow wall, the team was struck by a sudden avalanche on October 8 at a height of over 18,300 ft, between Camp 2 and Camp 3 on the Fariabad Glacier. Four members were caught in the deadly slide," the source said.

VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JULY 11, 2024

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Monsoon mayhem

The flooding in Indian cities during monsoon is an annual phenomenon, yet authorities fail to fix it

We have a love-hate relationship with the monsoon season. Every year, it is one of the most eagerly awaited phenomena as it gives respite from the scorching summer and infuses life into the fields. But when it arrives, all hell breaks loose; streets flood, daily life is disrupted, traffic jams occur, and there are unfortunate incidents of loss of lives and property. It's a recurring event that civic authorities fervently wish did not happen. This year, the cities of Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Gurugram have been particularly hard-hit, highlighting ongoing infrastructural challenges and the perennial struggle to manage monsoon impacts.Mumbai, India's financial capital, has a long history of flooding during the monsoon season. The city often finds itself paralysed by waterlogged streets, disrupted transport systems, and submerged homes. This year is no exception. Despite significant investments in infrastructure, including the Brihanmumbai Stormwater Disposal System (BRIMSTOWAD), the city continues to grapple with flooding. The system, designed to handle a high volume of rainwater, often falls short due to various issues such as clogged drains, unplanned urbanization, and inadequate maintenance.



Once known for its pleasant climate and lush greenery, Bengaluru, the Indian Silicon Valley, has seen an alarming increase in flooding incidents over recent years. This monsoon season also it is facing waterlogging and traffic snarls. Key tech hubs and residential areas have been submerged, affecting daily life and business operations. With four of its lakes overflowing, there are chances of more misery visiting the city as two days of heavy downpour are predicted by the IMD. Bengaluru's flooding woes can be attributed to a combination of factors, including rapid urbanization, encroachment on lakes and stormwater drains, and insufficient waste management. Gurugram, a major satellite city of Delhi, has not been spared either. Gurugram often resembles a vast lake during the monsoon. Interestingly, Gurugram is much younger than Mumbai or Bengaluru but faces the same problem of waterlogging and drainage. Indeed, its woes could be attributed to poor town planning and a lack of concern among the authorities who seem to have made it a habit to ignore the issue. The persistent flooding in Indian cities during the monsoon season raises critical questions about urban planning and governance. Despite recurring floods, why do these problems remain unresolved? Fixing monsoon flooding is no rocket science. We have the means and resources to fix it. Existing drainage systems in many cities are outdated and incapable of handling the volume of rainfall experienced during the monsoon. They could be revamped or built afresh. Fragmented governance and lack of coordination between various municipal agencies hinder effective water management. Policies and plans are often implemented in a piecemeal manner, without addressing the root causes of flooding. But then what we learn from the past is that we don't learn anything from it!

PICTALK



Dark monsoon clouds hover above the Taj Mahal, in Agra PTI

Regime change on cards in Nepal



ASHOK K **MEHTA**

The new alliance in Nepal aims to reshape the country's political landscape and introduce significant constitutional reforms to address the long-standing instability



On Friday, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda will seek his fifth vote of confidence in the last 18 months which he will lose as former Prime Minister KP Oli's UML has withdrawn support to the Left alliance. A midnight 7-point deal last Monday between former Prime Minister's Sher Bahadur Deuba's Nepali Congress (NC) and Oli's UML (the largest and second largest parties) will form the fourth government since December 2022 to end the king-maker role or CPN Maoists, the third largest party. A NC leader told me that the arrest one day before the deal of one Bechain Jha, linked to the Bhutanese refugee scandal whose tread-marks lead to apex NC and UML leaders triggered the deal. Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane whom NC had been gunning and UML protecting in Parliament over the Pokhara Cooperative fraud case called the deal: "Oli and Deuba's bid to escape corruption cases". Balen Shah, Mayor of Kathmandu, made snide remarks about GiriBandhu Tea Estate corruption case. Just ten days ago the government had announced eight new envoys including replacing its NC appointed Indian Ambassador, Shankar Sharma who survived an earlier attempt when Oli was Prachanda's senior coalition partner.

The 7-point deal is essentially about power-sharing during the remaining 40 months of Parliament with Deuba offering Oli the first PM as he wants to be premier before the 2027 elections. They have agreed over the number of ministries they will share with UML keeping Finance and NC taking Home ministry. NC and UML are sworn enemies with differing ideologies . Both their leaders are widely experienced and have done stints in jail. While Deuba has been PM five times, Oli has led Nepal twice. Deuba is recognized as India's blue-eyed boy and is favoured by the West, Oli is coveted by China though he is not a red-blooded Communist but a democrat at heart.

Political instability has plagued Nepal since the first multi-party elections in 2008 under interim constitution. 16 PMs have played musical chairs over 16 years, even after the federal, democratic republican constitution of 2015.

The electoral system produces a hung parliament. Removing this malaise is ostensibly the aim of the national consensus government by altering the constitution with a two thirds majority of 184 seats in a House of 275. It will propose deleting Proportional Representation (PR) system for 110 seats, making changes in the Upper House, turning Nepal into a Hindu state and even removing the federal system. These modifications are emerging from the speculation-mill in Kathmandu. But one message is also clear: the two mainline parties do not intend to be sidelined by so-called king- makers with 20 to 30 law-makers.

Prachanda who led the 10 year long people's war and helped introduce transformative constitutional reforms is no greenhorn. He adores power and considers it the ultimate aphrodisiac. Even with his party's dwindling electoral scores, he has managed to capture the limelight. Despite the proposed Left-Centre alliance holding a sizeable majority of 167, Prachanda has refused to resign on moral grounds. He is expecting that since government formation was under Article 76 (2) of the constitution President Ramchandra Paudyal will invoke Article 76(3) to invite Deuba, leader of the single largest party to form a government which will deprive Oli of premiership. Both Prachanda and another former PM Madhav Nepal, formerly UML, despise Oli and would give their left arm to ensure he does not become PM again.

> THE CHINESE WILL BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE BRIEF LONGEVITY OF THE LEFT ALLIANCE, BLAMING INDIA FOR IT. THIS IS THE GRAPEVINE IN KATHMANDU EVEN THOUGH DELHI DOES NOT WANT OLI AS PM

Senior NC leader Shashank Koirala has said a NC -UML coalition will weaken opposition forces. Another NC top leader Shekhar Koirala noted that government formation may legally veer towards 76(3) not 76(2).

This will wreck the midnight deal and ensure that Deuba is first PM with Prachanda ready to offer him PM for the entire remaining period. It will restore the democratic alliance of NC , CPN (M) and smaller parties that ruled for a year till March. As Paudyal is an NC appointee backed by CPN(M], he can be easily asked to follow 76(3) junking 76(2). Many in NC are unhappy with the deal.

Neither China nor India has reacted to the impending fall of Prachanda-led government though news in the Kathmandu market is that India was not happy with the China-inspired Left alliance government. The Chinese Communist Party was keen to unite all Left parties under former President Bidya Devi Bhandari wife of late Madan Bhandari, UML's charismatic leader. But Oli rejected the idea. The Chinese will be disappointed with brief longevity of Left alliance, blaming India for it. This is the grapevine in Kathmandu even though Delhi does not want Oli as PM.

For a national consensus government securing a two thirds majority will not be difficult. The NC and UML together have 167 lawmakers. 17 other lawmakers are needed for amending the constitution in order to bring political stability to Nepal. Already smaller parties are falling in line hoping for political stability.

But key questions remain. What will become of the NC corruption crusade against Lamichhane who was being shielded by Oli and Prachanda? What about UML-driven change of NC-appointed envoys? Will Oli do to Deuba what he did to Prachanda in not honouring a power-sharing deal earlier? Can a government of opposite poles cohabit ? or will it collapse sooner than later?

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

The power of innovative workplace design



AKSHAY **LAKHANPAL**

Strategic workplace design can unlock the full potential of collaboration, enhance organisational culture, and propel companies toward success

In today's fast-paced and dynamic business landscape, the success of an organization depends on its ability to foster collaboration and innovation. It is no longer enough to have talented individuals working in silos; the true potential of a company lies in the synergy of a highly collaborative team. As businesses strive to create an environment that nurtures creativity and teamwork, the importance of innovative workplace design cannot be overlooked.



The Changing Nature of Work: With the advent of technology and globalization, the nature of work has undergone a paradigm shift. Traditional hierarchical structures are giving way to flatter, more flexible organizations. Remote work, distributed teams, and freelancing have become the norm, necessitating a rethinking of workplace design. Companies are recognizing that the physical environment profoundly impacts employees' productivity, engagement, and overall well-being.

Embracing Collaborative Spaces: To encourage collaboration, offices need to offer a variety of spaces that cater to different workstyles and activities. Gone are the days of isolated cubicles; today's workplace design focuses on creating open, flexible, and collaborative environments. These spaces may include comfortable lounges for casual discussions, huddle rooms for quick brainstorming sessions, and dedicated project rooms for in-depth collaborations. Such spaces not only foster teamwork but also promote cross-functional communication, which is essential for innovation.

Technology as a Catalyst for Collaboration: Innovative workplace design goes hand in hand with cutting-edge technology. As organizations embrace digital transformation, integrating technology into the workplace becomes imperative. Smart whiteboards, video conferencing facilities, and collaborative software platforms are now essential tools that facilitate seamless communication and idea-sharing, regardless of geographical barriers. By making these technologies readily accessible, companies can empower employees to collaborate effortlessly and bridge the gap between remote and in-office teams.

Balance between Collaboration & Autonomy: While collaboration is crucial, it is equally important to strike a balance that allows for individual autonomy. Employees should have the freedom to personalize their workspaces and choose an environment that best suits their needs. Some individuals thrive in lively, interactive spaces, while others may require quiet areas for deep focus.

Designing for Well-Being: An innovative workplace design must also prioritize employee well-being. Comfortable ergonomic furniture, adequate natural light, indoor plants, and proper ventilation all contribute to a healthy and inspiring work environment. When employees feel physically and mentally supported, they are more likely to be engaged and contribute positively to the collaborative efforts of the organization.

Impact on Organizational Culture: Workplace design plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture. A collaborative and inviting physical environment signals to employees that their contributions are valued and fosters a sense of belonging. It breaks down barriers, encourages the exchange of diverse perspectives, and promotes a culture of trust and cooperation.

Conclusion: As the business landscape continues to evolve, organizations must adapt their workplace design to unlock the full potential of collaboration.

A collaborative organizational culture is not only essential for staying competitive in the modern world but also for attracting and retaining top talent who seek an environment that encourages teamwork and empowers them to reach new heights.

(The writer is CEO of Space Matrix; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LIBERAL LEADERSHIP IN IRAN

Madam — The outcome of the presidential elections in Iran has left political pundits spellbound. Unseating a hardliner who had dominated the Iranian political landscape for decades seemed improbable. However, the recent polls have upturned the expectations of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's victory, as reformist Masoud Pezeshkian won the presidential election by an impressive margin of 2.8 million votes. This result reflects widespread public unrest due to growing economic disparity, dictatorship, and international sanctions. The untimely death of Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash precipitated this crisis.

To counter the burgeoning inflation, which stands at 40% due to crippling sanctions, Pezeshkian faces the task of establishing amicable relations with dominant forces. While foreign policy remains under Khamenei's influence, areas like domestic affairs might see a sigh of relief from the former's ruthless regime. Hijab policing, internet clampdowns, and women's freedom of expression could witness dramatic changes. It remains to be seen how the new president, a cardiac surgeon, navigates the country through turbulent times and whether he can ease the nation's stress by removing the blockages in its arteries.

Vijay Singh Adhikari| *Nainital*

RISING TERROR ATTACKS IN JAMMU

Madam — Apropos the headline news "The arc of terror is complete: From Kashmir to Jammu, India bleeds" (July 9). In a deadly ambush, terrorists attacked an Indian Army vehicle in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, resulting in the tragic loss of five soldiers, including one junior commissioned officer (JCO), one havildar, one naik, and two riflemen from the 22 Garhwal Rifles. As militants unleashed grenades and gunfire, security forces launched a search operation to neutralize the attackers. With ongoing encounters reported in nearby villages, the situation remains critical. This attack, the second in the Jammu region in two days and the sixth in one month, suggests that militancy is spreading to newer areas. The Kashmir Tigers, a shadow outfit of the banned Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, has reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack.People are worried and want to know when this violence will stop and when our soldiers will not die in vain. Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted that despite spending billions on defense, news of fallen soldiers persists. Jammu and Kashmir Director-General of Police R.R. Swain recently set a deadline of three months for ending militancy in Jammu.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had set a similar target last year after seven Hindu civilians were killed in Dhangri village of Rajouri. However, militancy continues unabated. Local support cannot be ruled out, and intelligence will have to be stepped up by drone surveillance wherever possible. Such cowardly acts by terrorists should not go unpunished. The resolve to counter terrorism is at stake now more than ever.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee |*Faridabad*

PM Modi receives warm welcome in Russia



Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a grand welcome from the Russian government and the Indian diaspora during his two-day official visit to Russia. This visit is significant given the long-term bilateral strategic partnerships and profound trust between Modi and President Putin. Despite pressure from European nations to end the ongoing conflict against Ukraine, the nations have stood the test of time since the Russia-Ukraine war began. Russia, initially underestimating Ukraine, now faces economic sanctions from European countries, threats of terrorism, and near bankruptcy due to the prolonged war backed by NATO nations. The recent 16th summit, highlighting deep trust and cooperation, initiated developments in bilateral trade, economic cooperation, and energy cooperation between the two countries. This will surely carve a niche for the two nations and improve the lasting chemistry between the popular leaders on the global platform.Janga Bahadur Sunuwar, Jalpaiguri

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | *Jalpaiguri*

MAHUA'S CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS

Madam — TMC MP Mahua Moitra seems to have a penchant for being in the news, often for the wrong reasons. The Delhi police have reportedly booked her for a derogatory social media post against National Commission for Women (NCW) chief Rekha Sharma. Moitra passed derogatory comments on a person holding an umbrella over Sharma's head during her visit to the Hathras stampede venue. Moitra allegedly jibed, "She is too busy holding up her boss's pajamas," and challenged the police to take action. Moitra's comments are seen as unbecoming of her stature, and the NCW has taken suo moto cognizance of the remarks. The depth to which politicians plunge is evident. Politicians are adept at creating controversies to stay in the news. They often engage in mud-slinging and stirring the hornet's nest, keeping the atmosphere vitiated.

KV Seetharamaiah | *Bengaluru*

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FIRST COLUMN

RISE IN OFFICE PEACOCKING

This approach can help differentiate individuals and create a culture of excellence



SAKSHI **SETHI**

Post-COVID-19, as organisations navigate the transition back to physical workspaces, they are embracing innovative strategies to bring their employees back to the workplace. One such strategy after coffee badging is 'office peacocking' which involves creating an environment to bring employees back to the office, organisations are decking out their offices with stylish furniture fancy décor, comfortable furniture and stocked pantries, thereby making them excited and aspire about their work and workplace. Shifting from traditional cubicles and florescent lights to vibrant colour schemes, stylish yet comfortable furniture to interactive installations, multiple organisations across the world are investing in elements that make their working space stand out and stimulate a sense of community and belonging. Office peacocking is evident in various forms, serving as a means for individuals to signal their competence, confidence and influence.

The act of peacocking often involves communication, presentation and networking skills, which can be beneficial for personal development. In competitive workplaces, standing out from peers can be crucial for career growth. To be considered for promotions, raises or high-profile projects, employees often need to ensure their achievements and skills are recognized by their superiors. It is the peacocking that can help differentiate an individual from their colleagues. While the need for peacocking is clear, it is important to balance it with other positive workplace behaviours such as ensuring that the achievements of the employees highlighted are genuine and meaningful; recognizing and crediting the contributions of team members; maintaining respect for colleagues and avoiding arrogance or boastfulness and most importantly balancing self-promotion with humility and a willingness to learn and grow.

The world of work is changing rapidly; and businesses/organisations need to adapt to stay ahead as, in competitive workplaces, standing out from peers can be crucial for career growth. By understanding and addressing the need for peacocking in a balanced and constructive manner, individuals can enhance their career prospects while keeping positive relationships and a healthy work environment. While office peacocking can sometimes lead to career advancement, on the contrary, the social demands of an engaging office can lead to burnout from constant participation expectations; lavish office spaces can create a divide and may alienate those preferring simpler environments; excessive focus on aesthetics might divert attention from critical organizational challenges. Not only this the frequent renovations or unsustainable materials might conflict with environmental goals resulting in a risk that physical presence may be valued more than actual work output. The novelty of a redesigned office can fade and diminish its long-term value if not paired with broader improvements. Overall if it comes across as inauthentic, self-serving or disruptive to team dynamics.



By creating a rich and healthy working environment, organisations hope to outshine their competitors and convince their employees that experiences gained in offices offer significant advantages over working from home.Remember, striking the right balance between perks and purpose can the organisations create an environment where employees thrive and succeed; by being aware of and addressing the negative aspects of peacocking, they can create a more balanced and healthy workplace that values both individual achievements and team success and by fostering a culture where peacocking is balanced with genuine contribution and teamwork, organisations can harness the positive aspects of this behaviour to drive success and growth. By using peacocking effectively and responsibly organisations can create a culture of achievement and excellence that drives sustained performance and success.

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

UGC introduces biannual admissions



T V **KATTIMANI**

The dual-session method allows institutions to maintain the quality of education and resources, ensuring each student receives adequate attention and support



The Chairman, of UGC has announced that bi-annual admissions will happen from the session 2024-25. It has been mentioned that the admissions will occur twice once in the July-August session and the other in the January- February session. Since the announcement of the decision, diverse perspectives have been raised among different scholars, academia, and academic bodies. While some experts believe that it will align the Indian higher education system with the global educational system by enhancing international collaborations and providing greater access and more opportunities for students to enrol in their preferred programs, others are addressing the challenges that may come up with the implementation of the process. <

It includes the involvement of additional teaching staff and infrastructure as the number of students will double by the process. Similarly, many universities have vacant posts which are often tackled by contractual teachers and hence the workload is already excessive among the concerned staff which can cause a problem in the execution of the bi-annual admission system.If observed acutely, the system is not new to the Indian Higher Education Institutions. The Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi which is the largest open university with one of the highest enrolled students in the country has been adopting this bi-annual approach since its inception.

The same goes with state open universities like Uttar Pradesh RajashriTondon Open University as well as private Universities like Christ University, Bengaluru. The above – mentioned universities that have adopted a dual-session model for admissions to their various undergraduate and postgraduate programs are already providing various benefits to the students. This strategic approach is designed to effectively manage the high volume of applications while ensuring flexibility and convenience for prospective students.

The dual-session system also introduces significant flexibility into the admissions process. It caters to students who might have missed the first session's deadlines or are awaiting the results of other examinations like late declaration of board results, financial and medical problems, or any other unavoidable circumstances. By offering a second session, now UGC will allow these students another chance to apply, facilitating better planning of their academic pursuits without a break.

A primary objective of the two-session model is to enhance the overall convenience for students. This system allows prospective students to choose the admission session that best matches their academic schedules and individual needs, making the process more accommodating and less stressful. The universities experience a substantial influx of applications each year. By conducting two distinct admission sessions, academic institutions will be able to accommodate this large number of applicants better. Seat availability in various academic programs can fluctuate significantly between different enrollment sessions due to a multitude of factors.

> THE DUAL-SESSION ADMISSION STRATEGY ADOPTED BY UGC IS A THOUGHTFUL AND EFFECTIVE MEASURE TO STREAMLINE THE ADMISSION PROCESS IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

These variations are influenced by the popularity of the programs, the strategic decisions made by institutions, and the behaviour of the applicants. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for prospective students and educational institutions alike.

One of the primary reasons for differences in seat availability between sessions is the popularity of the programs. Highly sought-after programs, such as those in business, engineering, computer science, and medicine, tend to fill up quickly during the first enrollment session.

These programs often attract a large number of applicants due to their perceived value in the job market, the prestige associated with them, and the quality of education they offer. As a result, students eager to secure a spot in these competitive fields are likely to apply as early as possible, leading to a swift depletion of available seats in the initial session.Conversely, programs that are less competitive or specialized might see a more gradual filling of seats. These programs might not experience the same rush of applications in the first session, leading to more availability in the subsequent session.

This can be advantageous for students who may need more time to decide on their course of study or those who missed the first session deadline. Additionally, some students might be strategically applying to less competitive programs in the first session to secure a spot and then attempt to transfer to their preferred program later.Educational institutions also play a role in managing seat availability across sessions. Universities and colleges might reserve a certain number of seats for the second session to accommodate various types of students, such as international students, migrating students, or those who are waiting for the results of prerequisite courses or exams.

This ensures a more diverse student body and provides opportunities for students who couldn't apply or commit during the first session. Furthermore, the strategic decisions of institutions regarding the distribution of seats can influence availability. For example, some institutions may decide to open additional sections of popular courses in the second session based on the demand observed in the first session.

This flexibility helps in managing over-enrollment and ensures that more students get the opportunity to enrol in their desired programs. Applicant behaviour also affects seat availability. Many students apply to multiple programs and institutions simultaneously, holding onto multiple offers until they make a final decision. As they confirm their enrollment in one program, they relinquish seats in others, leading to fluctuations in availability.

This release of seats often happens closer to the second session, allowing late applicants or those on waiting lists a chance to secure a place.In addition, external factors such as economic conditions, changes in job market demands, and societal trends can impact enrollment patterns.

For instance, during economic downturns, there might be a surge in applications for programs perceived to offer better job security, thus affecting seat availability in those programs across both sessions. Hence, the staggered approach ensures that students are more likely to secure admission into their preferred programs gradually or may sometimes lose a year or more waiting for the same.

The dual-session method allows the institution to maintain the quality of education and resources, ensuring that each student receives adequate attention and support. It is a way of managing demand and capacity.

In conclusion, the dual-session admission strategy adopted by UGC is a thoughtful and effective measure to streamline the admission process in Indian universities. It caters to numerous issues faced by students while providing the necessary flexibility and convenience, ultimately supporting a diverse and dynamic student-oriented approach.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor, Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

Union budget 2024-25: High hopes for transformative healthcare reforms

Stakeholders seek investments and policy reforms in the budget to promote equitable access, innovation, and sustainability within the sector

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman prepares to present the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2024-25, the healthcare sector stands poised with high expectations and pressing demands. Amidst the ongoing pandemic recovery and a renewed focus on public health infrastructure, stakeholders are looking towards strategic investments and policy reforms to drive equitable access, innovation, and sustainability within the healthcare sector.



P N **ARORA**

The interim budget underscored the importance of expanding medical education facilities within existing hospitals alongside efforts to promote preventive healthcare. A notable initiative targeted at reducing cervical cancer cases through vaccination for girls aged 9-14 was also announced. Moreover, plans for a comprehensive scheme integrating various mother and child care programs highlight the government's commitment to enhancing healthcare services. The budgetary allocations for flagship schemes like Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana have seen increases reflecting a strategic focus on improving healthcare access and outcomes across the country, mission was increased from Rs2,100 crore in 2023-24 to Rs4,108 crore in 2024-25. Additionally, the introduction of digital health initiatives, such as the U-WIN platform aims to optimize vaccine distribution and strengthen immunization efforts through enhanced data management capabilities.

Now the upcoming budget holds immense significance for the healthcare sector as it navigates through a period of transformation and challenges. The expectations are high for Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to announce measures that not only address immediate healthcare needs but also pave the way for long-term sustainable growth. From infrastructure investments to digital health integration and reforms in insurance and education, the budget is anticipated to set a course that strengthens India's healthcare ecosystem for years to come.

A critical aspect of the healthcare demands revolves around accessibility and affordability. Initiatives like Ayushman Bharat have laid the foundation for universal health coverage. The sector advocates for subsidies or free health check-ups, especially for women and children, aiming to improve preventive care and early detection of diseases.In line with the government's Digital India initiative, there is a strong opportunity to integrate advanced digital health technologies into mainstream healthcare.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics are seen as transformative tools that can enhance medical outcomes, streamline healthcare delivery, and reduce costs. The sector expects incentives and support for domestic manufacturing of medical devices, aligning with the 'Make in India' campaign and reducing dependency on imports.Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer pose a significant health burden in India. Experts expect a need for increased budget allocation for the prevention, treatment, and management of NCDs. This includes supporting research, public awareness campaigns, and accessible treatment options to curb the rising prevalence of these diseases.

The healthcare sector also expects strategic moves to address the improvement in the healthcare system at the grassroots level. Additionally, there is a call for initiatives that support training and reskilling healthcare workers to leverage new technologies and meet evolving healthcare demands effectively. Key priorities include addressing the effort to expand recruitment efforts. These measures are crucial for improving healthcare delivery and meeting the growing demand for quality medical services across the country.In health insurance, stakeholders seek fiscal reforms that promote a more inclusive and sustainable health coverage model. This includes revisiting GST tariffs on healthcare services and products ensuring affordability and accessibility across all socioeconomic segments. Moreover, encourages insurance coverage for preventive healthcare measures rather than solely focusing on reactive medical treatments. Healthcare in India has witnessed a significant surge in medical tourism, marked by a notable rise in foreign visitors. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry states "The Medical Value Travel in India is expected to grow at CAGR of 21.1% from 2020-2027. The MVT market in India was estimated at around $ 6 billion in 2022 and is projected to increase to $13 billion by 2026".

This growth underscores India's increasing prominence in the world as a preferred destination for medical treatments, driven by competitive costs, advanced healthcare facilities, and renowned medical expertise. Hence to continue to maintain the prominence of India's capability in healthcare services and excellence in innovation, it is of utmost importance that the government introduce key policy reforms to further elevate India's stature in medical tourism. We expect that the upcoming budget underlines the clear goal to enhance our healthcare system that ensures every citizen has access to affordable and quality healthcare.

(The writer is chairman Yashoda Super Speciality Hospitals; views are persnal)

MONEY MATTERS

Commercial vehicle sales volume to fall 3-6% : Report

Commercial vehicle sales volume is expected to decline 3-6 per cent in the current fiscal due to a slump in demand, according to a report by CareEdge Ratings. The drop in sales volume is due to a slowdown in demand in both the medium and heavy commercial and light commercial vehicle segments, as well as on account of high inventory levels with dealers, it said in a statement. The muted growth in FY24 was mainly due to the high base of FY23, the transition to BS VI leading to higher vehicle costs and a slowdown in infrastructure projects amidst elections during the latter part of the year leading to higher inventory with dealers, it added.



"The commercial vehicle (CV) industry is expected to experience sluggish growth, with overall sales volume likely to decline by around 3-6 per cent in FY25," CareEdge Ratings Associate Director Arti Roy said. Several factors contribute to this, including general election-related disruptions, elevated vehicle costs, and high channel inventory levels, she added.

Expecting 30-40 mn monthly transactions by March 2025: ONDC CEO

The government-backed Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is expecting 30 to 40 million monthly transactions through the platform by March 2025, its CEO T Koshy said on Wednesday. The open network witnessed 10 million transactions in June, up from over 7 million in March. "In March (2024) it was 7 million plus transactions. Now in June we had 10 million transactions and I think by the end of the fiscal year it should be 30 to 40 million (monthly) transactions," Koshy said at a CII event here. He further said the ONDC platform has 5-6 lakh merchants onboard with the number expected to rise significantly in the coming months. He was addressing MSME Growth Summit organised by the industry body. ONDC was set up with an aim to democratise the country's e-commerce ecosystem. Addressing the summit, Sameer Gupta, Chairman of CII National MSME Council, emphasized the transformative impact of the industry body's initiatives like Digital Saksham.



Tata Motors, Mahindra cut SUV prices to boost demand

Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra have cut the prices of their SUV models to boost demand. Tata Motors has revised the starting prices of its flagship SUVs, the Harrier (Rs 14.99 lakh) and the Safari (Rs 15.49 lakh) and extended benefits of up to Rs 1.4 lakh on other popular SUV variants. "With regards to electric vehicles, never before seen benefits on the Nexon.ev (up to Rs 1.3 lakh), have made it the most accessible it has ever been," Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Chief Commercial Officer Vivek Srivatsa said in a statement.



Complementing the same, the Punch.ev too is being offered with a benefit of up to Rs 30,000, he added. Mahindra & Mahindra said its XUV700's fully-loaded AX7 range now starts at Rs 19.49 lakh, a price cut of over Rs 2 lakh. The price cut will enable more people to experience the range, it added. In a regulatory filing, M&M clarified that there is no linkage between the price cut on certain XUV700 variants and UP EV/hybrid policy.

India, UK committed for FTA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said both India and the UK are committed to the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries. He said that the initial comments made by the new UK government are "very" encouraging.

"The Labour Party is deeply committed as is the Modi government (for the FTA)," he told reporters here.

Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and said he stood ready to conclude an FTA that worked for both sides. The two leaders agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK FTA.

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

In an FTA, two or more trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they also ease norms to promote and facilitate trade in services and investments.

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

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

'Indian exporters conscious of quality standards'

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said Indian exporters are conscious about quality standards and the problem of some spices consignments were "very very" miniscule and need not be exaggerated. He said that the consignments that had some problem were miniscule compared to India's US$ 56 billion worth of food and related product exports.

"I think the media should resist exaggerating one or two incidences... They were company-specific issues which are being addressed between FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) and the concerned authorities," Goyal told reporters when asked about the recent issues with regard to some spices consignments.

Certain products of MDH and Everest were rejected by Singapore and Hong Kong for allegedly containing carcinogenic pesticide 'ethylene oxide' beyond permissible limits.

RBI deputy guv flags concerns over quality of disclosures by some NBFCs

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The deputy governor said the RBI, for some time now, has been supplementing rule-based regulations with principle-based regulations to give regulated entities (REs) a degree of flexibility in their business decision making

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao has flagged concerns over quality of disclosures made by some NBFCs and urged the auditing community to ensure that entities provide appropriate qualitative information to depositors as well as other stakeholders.

"The statutory auditors play a significant role in maintaining stakeholder confidence in audited financial statements and this is particularly important in the case of banking industry where the entire edifice is built on 'trust' and the biggest external stakeholders, i.e., depositors, are fragmented and unorganised," he said.

Rao was addressing the Conference of Statutory Auditors and Chief Financial Officers of Commercial Banks and All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs) here on Tuesday.

He emphasised that the RBI has a strong interest in promoting sound and high quality accounting and disclosure standards for the banking and financial industry as well as in having transparent and comparable financial statements that strengthen market discipline.

The deputy governor said the RBI, for some time now, has been supplementing rule-based regulations with principle-based regulations to give regulated entities (REs) a degree of flexibility in their business decision making.

"The principle-based approach to regulations is founded on the belief that financial reporting reflects the economic reality of a transaction.

Retail inflation for industrial workers eases to 3.86%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 3.86 per cent in May compared to 4.42 per cent in the same month a year ago.

The Consumer Price Index-Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) was 3.87 per cent in April 2024, a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, year-on-year inflation for May 2024 moderated to 3.86 per cent against 4.42 per cent in May 2023.

The All-India CPI-IW for May 2024 increased by 0.5 points and stood at 139.9 points. It was 139.4 points in April 2024.

The food and beverages group increased to 145.2 points in May from 143.4 points in April this year.

The fuel & light segment dipped to 149.5 points in May from 152.8 points in April 2024.

Odisha govt approves 26 projects worth Rs 5,992.92 cr

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Wednesday approved 26 investment projects worth Rs 5,992.92 crore, which are expected to create employment for more than 19,000 persons, an official statement said.

The State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) led by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja has approved a series of projects across diverse sectors including steel, chemicals, renewable energy, textiles, manufacturing, packaging, food processing, IT, infrastructure, and tourism, it said.

These projects will be implemented in 14 districts including Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Kendujhar, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Jharsuguda, Boudh, Koraput, Balasore, Cuttack, Bhadrak, and Puri.

According to the statement, the state government has approved the proposal of GM Iron and Steel Company Limited to establish a 0.23 million tonne per annum (MTPA) integrated steel plant along with downstream and upstream facilities and a 45 MW captive power plant in Mayurbhanj district with an investment of Rs 745 crore.

Four PSU banks pay Rs 6,481 cr dividend to Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Four public sector banks, including Canara Bank and Indian Bank, on Wednesday presented dividend cheques worth Rs 6,481 crore to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for financial year 2023-24.

"Smt @nsitharaman receives a dividend cheque of Rs 2,514.22 crore for FY 2023-24 from Shri Debadatta Chand, Managing Director & CEO - @bankofbaroda," the finance ministry said in a post on X.

Similarly, a dividend cheque of Rs 1,838.15 crore was handed over by Canara Bank MD and CEO K Satyanarayana Raju.

Chennai-based Indian Bank paid a dividend cheque of Rs 1,193.45 crore for 2023-24.

Bank of India too paid a dividend of Rs 935.44 crore and the cheque was presented by its MD and CEO Rajneesh Karnatak. In addition, Mumbai-based financial institution EXIM Bank presented a dividend cheque of Rs 252 crore for 2023-24.

MARKETS SINK BELOW RECORD LEVELS

Sensex tanks over 400 pts on widespread profit booking

PNS ■ MUMBAI



Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under heavy selling pressure to sink below record high levels on Wednesday, tracking deep losses in metal, auto and IT stocks amid widespread profit booking after recent gains.

Rising uncertainty over interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve also added to the weak trend in domestic equities, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened 129.72 points higher to hit a fresh all-time high of 80,481.36. However, the index soon tumbled 915.88 points or 1.13 per cent to trade at 79,435.76. It finally closed lower by 426.87 points or 0.53 per cent at 79,924.77.

The NSE Nifty also hit its record 24,461.05 in opening deals but pared all gains to decline 291.4 points or 1.19 per cent to 24,141.80 intra-day. It dropped 108.75 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 24,324.45.

"The Indian market experienced profit booking ahead of the upcoming earnings season. The expectations are muted, given the moderation in sales growth due to a slowdown in the world economy and consolidation in margins driven by high inflation.

"Additionally, the market is under temporary risk towards high budget expectations, which appears well factored in the last one month's rally," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra tanked over 6 per cent after the company cut the prices of its SUV models to boost demand.

Mahindra & Mahindra said its XUV700's fully-loaded AX7 range now starts at Rs 19.49 lakh, a price cut of over Rs 2 lakh. Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Tata Motors and Kotak Mahindra Bank were other losers.

On the other hand, Asian Paints, NTPC, Power Grid, Adani Ports and Bharti Airtel were the winners.

"The intraday slide in the index has slightly dented sentiment, but resilience in certain pockets limited the damage," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

SBI raises Rs 10,000 crore more via infra bond

PNS ■ MUMBAI

SBI on Wednesday announced raising Rs 10,000 crore through issuance of infrastructure bonds. The proceeds of bonds will be utilized in enhancing long-term resources for funding infrastructure and affordable housing segment, SBI said in a statement.



The fresh funding follows a similar development around a fortnight back, when the country's largest lender had raised Rs 10,000 crore through infrastructure bond issuance. The coupon rate for the latest issue was 7.36 per cent payable annually during the 15 year tenor, the same as the last issuance.

The state-owned lender had launched the issue to raise Rs 5,000 crore, and ended up raising Rs 10,000 crore courtesy the high investor interest and the greenshoe option, it said.

The issue was oversubscribed by 3.6 times, with bids in excess of Rs 18,145 crore being received, it said.

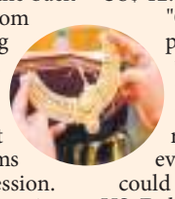
A total of 120 investors, including provident funds, pension funds, insurance companies, mutual funds, corporates, participated in the funding, it said.

SBI chairman Dinesh Khara said the issuance will help in developing a long-term bond curve and encourage other banks to issue bonds of longer tenor.

With the current issuance, the total outstanding long-term bonds issued by the bank goes up to Rs 59,718 crore, the statement said.

Gold price jumps Rs 400 to Rs 75,050 per 10 grams

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Gold price on Wednesday jumped by Rs 400 to Rs 75,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on the back of fresh buying from jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 74,650 per 10 grams in the previous session.

However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 94,400 per kg. In sarafa markets, the yellow metal was trading at Rs 75,050 per 10 grams, up by Rs 400 against the previous close, the association said.

Traders said gold prices saw an uptrend due to rise in domestic demand. In the international markets, spot gold was trading higher at US$ 2,380.50 per ounce, up US$ 12.60 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded positively. The buying was driven by expectations of weak inflation numbers to be release on Thursday evening in US, which could prompt rate cuts by US Federal Reserve in the September meeting," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

Additionally, silver prices was also up at US$ 31.25 per ounce globally.

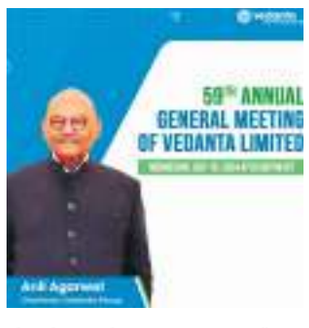
'Vedanta going ahead with demerger of businesses'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal on Wednesday said that the company is going ahead with the proposed demerger of its businesses that will lead to formation of six firms and unlocking of massive value.

The company has received approvals from the majority of its creditors for a proposed demerger of businesses, marking an important step in the company's plan to split into six independent listed companies.

Addressing shareholders during the 59th Annual General Meeting, the Chairman said, "We are going ahead with the demerger of our businesses, which will lead to the creation of 6 strong companies, each a Vedanta in its own right. This will unlock massive value."



Each demerged entity, he said, will plan its own course but follow Vedanta's core values, its enterprising spirit and global leadership.

"As we stand on the brink of an amazing transformation, our josh is high," Agarwal said, adding, "the demerger will lend speed to our journey."

Each entity will have more independence with regard to capital allocation and their growth strategies, the chairman said and added that investors will have the freedom to invest in the industries of their choice, broadening the overall investor base for Vedanta assets.

"For every one share of Vedanta Ltd that shareholders currently own, they will additionally receive one share of each of the five newly listed companies," he said.

Today 70 per cent of Vedanta's top line comes from critical minerals of the future, he said, adding that the company is committed to produce these metals and minerals sustainably.

The company, Agarwal said, had invested over US$ 35 billion in India and remains committed to growth.

"This year, we actively engaged in rapid expansion efforts -- the new 1.5 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) expansion at our alumina refinery in Lanjigarh, operationalising the Bicholim mine in Goa, commencing production at our Jaya oilfield in Gujarat. We also acquired the Athena and Meenakshi power plants in FY24 doubling our merchant power capacity to 5 GW," he said.

Morgan Stanley expects Budget to focus on road map for 'Viksit Bharat'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global brokerage firm Morgan Stanley expects Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's upcoming Budget to focus on the government's road map for 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and spell out the medium-term plan for fiscal consolidation.

"With fiscal prudence guiding the overall fiscal policy stance, we expect the focus to remain on capex expenditure over revenue expenditure and targeted social sector spending with a focus on improving access to physical, social and digital infrastructure," said Morgan Stanley's research report on Wednesday.

Sitharaman is scheduled to present the full Budget for fiscal 2024-25 on July 23, which will be the first major policy document of the new government.

The brokerage firm expects the central government's fiscal deficit target to be retained at 5.1 per cent of GDP in 2024-25 in line with the interim budget (against 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2023-24) and to be on track to attain the target of 4.5 per cent of GDP by the next financial year.



"The fiscal headroom has improved with a larger-than-expected transfer of surplus from the RBI, which, in our view, will help to maintain the momentum on capex expenditure and increase targeted welfare spending. In this context, we see the possibility of a slightly lower fiscal deficit target (tad below 5.1 per cent of GDP), given the support from tax and non-tax revenues," it said.

It also expects the Budget to provide focus on the government's road map for 'Viksit Bharat' (developed nation) by 2047.

In addition, the budget could also give a road map for a medium-term plan for fiscal consolidation beyond 2025-26, it added.

The report said the impact of the Budget on the stock market has been on a secular decline, albeit actual performance is a function of pre-budget expectations (as measured by market performance ahead of the budget).

As of now, the market seems to be approaching the Budget with exuberance and could be dealing with both volatility and a correction post-budget, if history is a guide, it said.

the pioneer
Vijayawada | Thursday July 11, 2024

what's brewing?

SHARON STONE REVEALS HAVING 'ZERO MONEY' POST HER STROKE



Actress Sharon Stone has revealed that she lost a lot of money that she had saved in her bank account following her stroke in 2001. The *Basic Instinct* star talked about how the stroke, which led to a nine-day brain bleed, made her step away from Hollywood.

"A Buddhist monk told me that I had been reincarnated into my same body," Stone recalled in an interview.

The actress said that she "had a death experience and then they brought me back." "I bled into my brain for nine days, so my brain was shoved to the front of my face. It wasn't positioned in my head where it was before."

She added: "And while that was happening, everything changed. My sense of smell, my sight and my touch. I couldn't read for a couple of years. Things were stretched, and I was seeing colour patterns. A lot of people thought I was going to die."

Stone said that this also led to people taking "advantage" of her "over that time", and she lost millions of dollars she had saved in her account, along with other personal items.

"I had $18 million saved because of all my success, but when I got back into my bank account, it was all gone. My refrigerator, my phone -- everything was in other people's names," Stone shared.

"I had zero money," she said. Instead of feeling "bitter" about all the negative things she experienced, Stone said she chooses to focus on the positive, as per reports.

"I decided to stay present and let go," she said.

"I decided not to hang on to being sick or to any bitterness or anger. If you bite into the seed of bitterness, it never leaves you. But if you hold faith, even if that faith is the size of a mustard seed, you will survive." "So, I live for joy now. I live for a purpose."



JANHVI'S ENTHRALLING LOOK FROM *ULAJH* IS OUT NOW!

Junglee Pictures has unveiled intriguing new posters for *Ulajh*, offering a captivating glimpse into a fresh and high-stakes world of diplomacy. Janhvi Kapoor shines in a powerful diplomatic role, exuding an aura of suspense and conspiracy.

The poster also introduces the stellar ensemble cast, including Gulshan Devaiah, Roshan Mathew, Rajesh Tailang and Meiyang Chang, each poised to deliver riveting performances in this high-concept thriller. It captures a moment brimming with intense drama.

Written by the acclaimed duo Parveez Shaikh and Sudhanshu Saria, with dialogues by Atika Chauhan, *Ulajh* has already generated significant buzz with its teaser, promising an exhilarating cinematic journey. The film also stars Adil Hussain, Jitendra Joshi and Rajendra Gupta.

Produced by Junglee Pictures, *Ulajh* is set to release in cinemas on 2nd August 2024.

David Duchovny talks about LOSING ALL THREE *FULL HOUSE* MALE LEAD ROLES

Hollywood star David Duchovny revealed that he auditioned for all three male roles -- Danny Tanner, Joey Gladstone and Jesse Katsopolis -- in the iconic TV sitcom *Full House* in the 1980s.



The roles ultimately went to actors Bob Saget, Dave Coulier and John Stamos, respectively.

"I auditioned for all three parts on *Full House*," Duchovny said on his podcast *Fail Better*. "At first, they had me for, I think, the dad role. Then they had me for the Stamos character. And then they had me for the other guy. I was thinking, 'I've got to get one of these, and it's going to change my life.'" Duchovny added that he had plenty of those pilots that he went up for when he was first out in Los Angeles, and thought each one was going to be the break, as per reports.

"I just needed to be able to pay my rent too."

The actor eventually got his big break in *The X-Files*, where he played the role of FBI Special Agent Fox Mulder.

Duchovny also noted that the style of sitcoms at the time he auditioned for *Full House* was not his strong suit. "I was really bad at that kind of stuff," he said.

"I did not know how to do that sitcom stuff. I don't know what they were thinking, that they thought I was going to exist in that world. I mean, I guess I could have learned, but I wasn't ready for that kind of energetic performance that they need." Duchovny later featured in the dramedy series *Californication* in 2007 and most recently in the 2023 romantic comedy *What Happens Later* opposite Meg Ryan.

Jacqueline Fernandez faces fresh evidence in Conman money laundering case!



Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez was called in by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday, for additional interrogation in relation to a money laundering case involving scammer Sukesh Chandrashekhar.

According to a source, the agency contacted Fernandez in order to confirm some new, crucial evidence they wanted to double check.

According to an ED source, Fernandez was called in by the agency when they found new, important information that they needed to confirm with her. Chandrashekhar is accused of extorting Rs 200 crore from Aditi Singh, the wife of former Fortis Healthcare promoter Shivinder Singh and the *Race 3* actress is suspected of profiting from the crime.

Fernandez's attorney, Aman Nandrajog, refrained from commenting on the circumstances. According to the ED, Chandrashekhar purchased gifts for Fernandez with the "proceeds of crime" or illegal money.

The ED has previously too called in the actress. There were rumours that Chandrashekhar and Jacqueline were romantically involved. He is presently being detained in Delhi's Mandoli jail in relation to an extortion case worth Rs 200 crore. However, the actress has continuously denied having a romantic relationship with Sukesh. The actor has already shown up for interrogation before the agency. She stated in her 2021 statement that she was given gifts from Chandrashekhar, which included two Gucci gym suits, three designer bags, a pair of Louis Vuitton shoes, two pairs of diamond earrings and other goods.

Varun and David Dhawan reunite for *HAI JAWANI TOH ISHQ HOGI*

Actor Varun Dhawan and his father David Dhawan will once again reunite for a romantic comedy. As per the latest updates, the film has been titled *Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hogi*. The film is being produced by Ramesh Taurani Productions.

"It's a quirky title in sync with the world that David Dhawan is looking to create with Varun Dhawan, Mrunal Thakur and Sreelela. It's a fun family entertainer with the love triangle of the trio at the centre. David Dhawan has cracked a concept that's fresh and original and is confident to recreate the magic of comedies on the big screen again," revealed a source close to the development.

The source further added that the film went on floors with a schedule in Mumbai today. "Varun is shooting today with Maniesh Paul and Kubbra Sait. The entire ensemble will be coming together as the journey progresses. Get ready for a typical David Dhawan comedy with colours, music and a big star-cast," the source concluded.

Produced by Ramesh Taurani under TIP Entertainment, *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* is set for an October 2, 2025, theatrical release.

Prior to the comedic adventure, Varun may be seen in the Christmas 2024 film *Baby John*, which is produced by Murad Khetani and Atlee, and the April 19, 2025 film *Sunny Sanskari Ki Dulhania*, which is produced by Karan Johar. The film, directed by Shashank Khaitaan, features Janhvi Kapoor and Varun. For those who don't know, David Dhawan's own film *Biwi No. 1*, which starred Salman Khan, Karishma Kapoor and Sushmita Sen, is known for its 1990 hit song *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai*.

Lakshya unfolds about his eight months of non-stop training for *Kill*

The Lakshya and Raghav Juyal-starrer *Kill* revolves around a soldier who, while on a train journey, has to fight a group of dacoits. The film is known for its intense action sequences and gripping storyline, offering a mix of drama, suspense and high-octane action.



In an interview, Lakshya reflected on the difficulties of shooting, saying, "Nothing was shot linearly. Scenes were filmed out of order and maintaining emotional continuity was very challenging. My character has lost someone and is going through physical and emotional turmoil. It was crucial for all that to be reflected on my face and in my body language."

He further spoke about his character, adding that they went to the original NSG Camp based in Manesar. "We went there and did a lot of study about how a commando moves, how they talk. I mean, these guys are beasts. The way they think. The kind of approach they have towards life and towards their enemies. I had neither heard nor seen this. I had seen it in movies, but in real life, they are the real heroes. I tried very hard to reach where they are. Training started happening. It went on for eight months consecutively, day in, day out. No cheat days, no cheat meals. We just used to prepare and learn fighting, learn choreography. Se-yeong Oh was the action choreographer. He made things very easy for us. There are over 46 killings in the film. So you can imagine how much hard work it took. Every killing is different. Every killing is unique. These guys have a gang of over 40 men.

And all 40 men are killed in a unique way, with a new weapon each time. Every minute little thing was detailed. The lady who did our prosthetics, Zuby Johal, she was so detailed about it that she wanted to know about the depth of the wound, how deep is the wound. If somebody has punched you with a certain force, so a wound of a certain depth will be formed. There is detailing on such a thing, they have specially worked on that."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



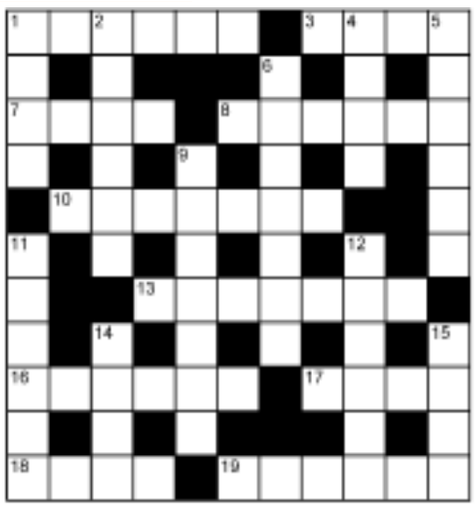
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Noon
3 Costing nothing
7 Contact by telephone
8 Purchasing
10 Rich
13 Very sore
16 A floor covering
17 Large boat
18 A red gemstone
19 Selected

DOWN

1 One of the planets
2 A meal
4 Water from the sky
5 Ninety less ten
6 Going very quickly
9 Less dirty
11 Cup and ____
12 Small trees
14 A nipping sea creature
15 Twirl around

SOLUTION



NANCY



SUDOKU

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	1	6			4			
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7								2
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



the pioneer
Vijayawada

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Thursday
July 11, 2024

'Ray of hope' for a brightening future

AARTI SREENATH

THE MATHRU FOUNDATION HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO ARE LESS FORTUNATE. THE CHAIRMAN TALKS ABOUT HIS MOTIVATION AND EMPATHY FOR THE CAUSE



In the bustling heart of Safilguda, Hyderabad, The Matru Foundation stands as a beacon of hope and empowerment. Founded by the determined and compassionate Prashanth in Hyderabad, this organisation has transformed the lives of numerous destitute, orphaned and blind children, guiding them toward a brighter future. The story of the Mathru Foundation is one of resilience, compassion and an unwavering commitment to uplifting the underprivileged.

Prashanth, now chairman of the Mathru Foundation, hails from the verdant landscapes of Karnataka, where his family is deeply rooted in farming, particularly floriculture. It was during a visit to Hyderabad with his cousin, Archana, that Prashanth's life took a significant turn. The foundation, already established at the time, resonated deeply with him. The bond he formed with the blind children there was instant and profound. When the original founders decided to leave, Prashanth and Archana were approached by one of the children, pleading for them to continue the noble work. Despite their search for a worthy successor, they found no one interested. Thus, they took it upon themselves to keep the foundation's mission alive, legally documenting and registering it in Hyderabad.

Initially, the Mathru Foundation was located on the third floor of a building in Begumpet, but the challenges of accessibility for blind children prompted a move. Prashanth rented a place in Safilguda, ensuring ease of movement and a more conducive environment for the children. This decision underscored the foundation's core values and mission: to empower destitutes, orphans and blind children, providing them with the means to achieve their fullest potential.

The results of these efforts are nothing short of extraordinary. Mathru Foundation's children have proven to be remarkably intelligent and resilient, securing admissions to prestigious institutions like the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIM-A) and Satyabhama University. Notably, three students—Akash, Sharath, and Rahul Mannar—have cleared the highly competitive CAT and earned their places at IIM-A and Adharash is now studying at Satyabhama University. Such achievements stand as a testament to the foundation's commitment to education and empowerment.

Funding this noble endeavour, however, remains a constant challenge. Prashanth explains that while they strive to support the children as much as possible, they largely rely on educational loans due to the children's academic prowess. Prashanth shares, "My main objective is to conduct an eye donation camp, a goal driven by the understanding that unlike blood, eyes can be stored for many years, and nerve donations can restore sight." This visionary approach reflects Prashanth's deep empathy and forward-thinking mindset.

The struggles and challenges of running the Mathru Foundation are manifold. As a part-time worker and farmer, Prashanth juggles multiple responsibilities, from paying bills and rent to covering education costs and staff salaries. Despite these hurdles, his dedication to providing quality food and a nurturing environment for the children remains unwavering. His own childhood experiences, marked by the loss of his parents and the hardships of growing up with limited resources, fuel his empathy and determination. "I skipped meals for years," he recalls, "so I make sure all my children get good, sufficient and quality food, regardless of where they come from."

The Mathru Foundation currently houses 25 children, for a total of 35–40 people when accounting for those pursuing higher education. The foundation's reach extends to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, driven by Prashanth's belief in transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. "Everyone is human at the end of the day," he asserts, emphasising the focus on those who are poor, disabled, blind, or destitute.

Despite the remarkable achievements, the day-to-day reality of funding remains a struggle. The children, dedicated to their studies, face significant challenges in securing the necessary resources for their education and personal needs. Prashanth's appeal is heartfelt: "Any person can just come into our Mathru Foundation, see the children and directly help them. We are always open to that."

Creating awareness and conducting camps are areas where Prashanth admits to having limited knowledge. His focus remains on the work itself, believing that true recognition comes from genuine effort and results. "I'm not very used to social media and branding," he admits, "but when good work is done, recognition follows." At just 29 years old, Prashanth remains optimistic about the future, eager to continue learning and serving.

One of his most memorable experiences is the pride he feels for the children of the Mathru Foundation. "I still can't believe my children actually got through such surreal institutes," he marvels. "They are truly great and hardworking, deserving every inch of appreciation and success." His humility is evident as he credits the children's achievements to their own efforts, claiming he has contributed less than 0.1% of what they have accomplished.

As Prashanth looks forward, his hopes are filled with optimism and a vision of a better future for the children under his care. The journey of the Mathru Foundation is a testament to the power of compassion, resilience and unwavering dedication. It is a story that inspires, showing how one person's commitment can make a profound difference in the lives of many. The foundation continues to be a beacon of hope, guiding its children towards a future filled with promise and potential.

Review

KAKUDA : GHOSTS, GIGGLES AND RITEISH DESHMUKH'S CHARM!

TANISHA SAXENA

The plot : In the quaint village of Ratodi in Uttar Pradesh, there exists a unique ritual where each household must open a smaller door every Tuesday at 7:15 p.m. This tradition is said to ward off the wrath of a ghostly entity named Kakuda. According to local belief, failure to comply with this ritual results in Kakuda delivering a kick to the individual, causing a hunchback. Subsequently, on the thirteenth day, the affected person would meet their demise.

In Ratodi, Sunny (portrayed by Saqib Saleem) marries Indira (played by Sonakshi Sinha) and begins their new life together, only to encounter the curse of Kakuda. The film chronicles how Indira, also known as Indu, navigates this perilous situation with the aid of Victor (played by Riteish Deshmukh), a seasoned ghost hunter.

The plus : Riteish Deshmukh, Sonakshi Sinha and Saqib Saleem deliver stellar performances, each immersing themselves perfectly into their respective characters.

Victor, the eccentric ghost hunter, breaks all stereotypes with his quirky charm and unconventional approach to the supernatural. Sporting tattoos, he stands out in a field dominated by solemn, spooky figures. Unlike his peers, who exude seriousness. Victor brings a refreshing dose of humour to his ghost-hunting expeditions. Deshmukh is a delight to watch play this part in the film. His comic timing and body language enhance the overall narrative of the film.

Saqib Saleem shines as Sunny, portraying a charming, naive character who loves Indira unconditionally. His scenes are particularly heartwarming, especially those where he expresses his affection for Indira. Sonakshi Sinha excels in her role as Indira, portraying a strong woman who bravely challenges the superstitious villagers alongside Victor. Their evolving chemistry adds an intriguing layer to the film as it progresses.

The supporting cast also delivers commendable performances. *Kakuda* seamlessly weaves themes of isolation and jealousy into its narrative, subtly conveying a profound message to its audience.

The minus : While the plot is engaging, certain scares and comedic moments are somewhat predictable, diminishing the impact of some scenes. Additionally, the first half of the film feels slow-paced and drawn-out.

Furthermore, the songs and background score fail to make a significant impression, and the dialogues lack wit. In the horror-comedy genre, a balance of eerie moments and comic relief is essential. However, there are parts in the film where neither the humor nor the spooky elements effectively resonate. There are no spine-tingling moments or belly laughs.

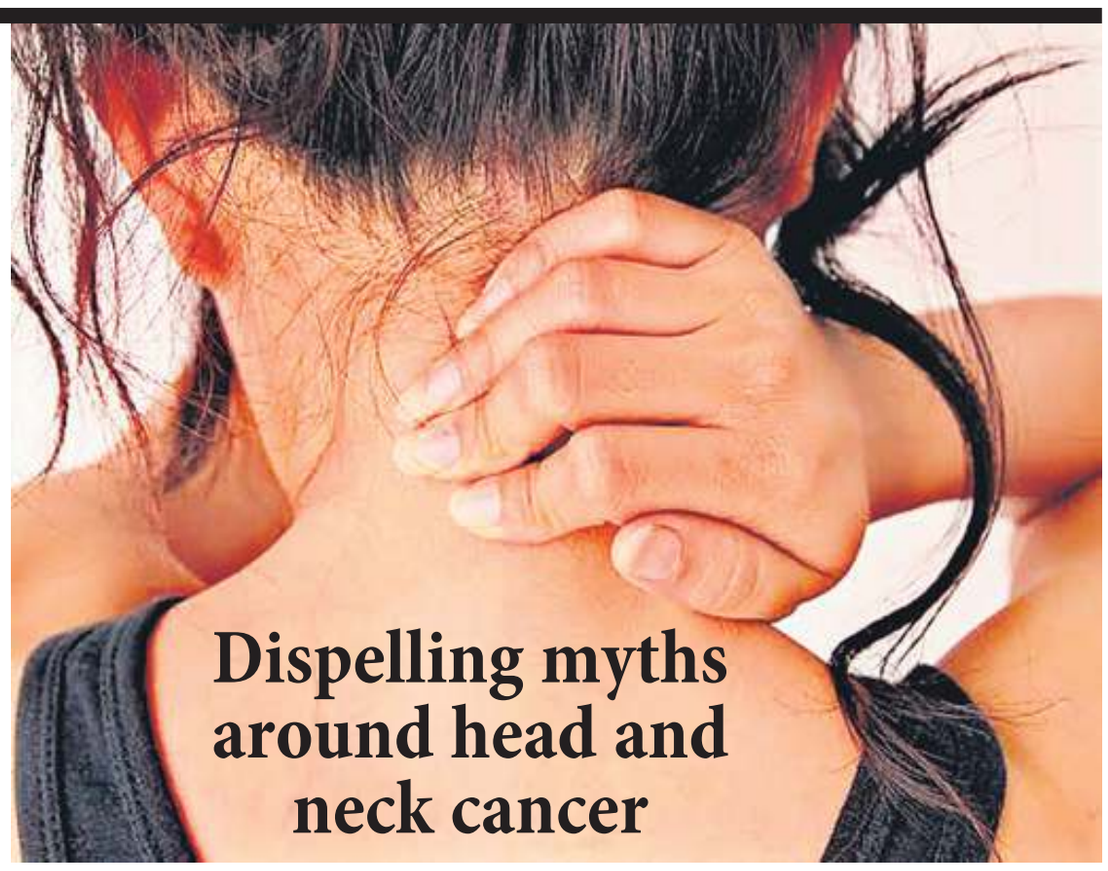
Technical aspects : Visually, the film presents a mixed bag. The village setting, with its lush greenery and winding alleyways, holds great potential to captivate audiences. However, this promise is often undermined by subpar special effects that detract from the immersive experience. Despite the natural beauty and picturesque landscapes, the film's visual impact is diminished by these technical shortcomings, preventing it from fully realising its aesthetic promise.

The lack of immersive audio elements, combined with the inconsistent visual effects, leaves the audience with a less engaging and memorable experience than anticipated.

Verdict : Overall, *Kakuda* makes for a compelling one-time watch. The second half is particularly engrossing, delving into an intriguing backstory.

Directed by : Aditya Sarpotdar
Written by : Avinash Dwivedi & Chirag Garg
Produced by : Ronnie Screwvala
Starring : Riteish Deshmukh, Sonakshi Sinha, Saqib Saleem
Cinematography : Lawrence D'Cunha
Music by : Gulraj Singh
Streaming on : Zee5
Rating : 2.5





Dispelling myths around head and neck cancer

Head and neck cancers encompass a range of malignancies that affect the throat, voice box, mouth, nose, and related structures. This fatal condition is a significant health concern in India. It is among the most prevalent forms of cancer in the nation and contributes significantly to the overall cancer case load. Head and neck cancer is prevalent in India due to a complex interplay of factors. Head and neck cancer is prevalent in India due to a complex interplay of factors. The diagnosis of head and neck cancer can be overwhelming for both patients and their families. As a result, many questions and concerns arise about the disease, its treatment, and its future. As a result, many questions and concerns arise about the disease, its treatment, and its future.

As per GLOBOCAN 2020 data, head and neck cancers are the most common cancer among men and 4th among women in India. These cancers constitute approximately one-third of all cancer cases, and men are affected about twice as often as women. At the stage of diagnosis, lack of access to cancer care facilities, resource constraints, and sociocultural issues contribute to the poor survival of head and neck cancer patients. Here are a few myths we need to debunk:

1) Alcohol does not independently increase the chance of having head and neck cancer, unlike tobacco

Heavy drinking substantially increases the likelihood of developing head and neck squamous cell carcinoma. People who consume three or more bottles of alcohol per day increase their risk of carcinoma twofold compared with non-drinkers. This risk is much higher when alcohol is consumed along with tobacco. Individuals who consume 84 g of ethanol per day and smoke at least 10 cigarettes a day, respectively, are at 35 times higher risk of developing HNSCC compared to those who do not drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes.

2) Chemotherapy should be avoided as it has many side effects

There's often a mistaken belief that chemotherapy must be avoided because of its side effects. It may cause adverse effects that are usually quite temporary and can even be managed. Chemotherapy targets rapidly dividing cells, which include cancer cells, but also damages healthy cells such as those in hair follicles, the skin lining the intestines, or bone marrow.

Further benefits of progress in medical science have included the development of new chemotherapy drugs and anti-nausea medications that greatly diminish the side effects of cancer treatment. Chemotherapy is an essential part of cancer treatment. Often, it is the most effective treatment available. Failing to get chemotherapy when you need it may result in long-term complications and reduced chances for survival.

3) Head and neck cancer always leads to permanent loss of speech

It is untrue that speech loss caused by head and neck cancer is invariably irreversible. It is true that speech can be affected by the disease and its treatment, but these effects are rarely permanent. The extent of the impact depends on a complex interplay of factors.

The tumour site is important, as a little tumour on the tonsil will behave differently from a tumour directly on the vocal cords. The stage of diagnosis also matters; early-stage malignancies typically require less harsh treatment, which lowers their risk of speech damage. Importantly, advancements in treatment options offer hope. Surgeons prioritise preserving healthy tissue during tumour removal and utilise reconstruction techniques to restore function. While radiation therapy can cause side effects like dryness and stiffness that affect speech, these often improve over time, aided by speech therapy.

4) After head and neck cancer therapy, there is little that can be done to control swallowing issues

Speech and swallowing therapists are essential in assisting patients in adjusting to modifications in their ability to swallow. They impart muscle-building workouts, coordination drills, and healthy eating habits. Medications and dietary changes might also help manage swallowing issues in some situations.

5) Young people cannot get neck cancer

There is a widespread misperception that mouth cancer strikes the elderly. It's important to keep in mind that anyone can develop oral cancer, regardless of age, even though the risk does rise with age and instances in people under 40 are less prevalent.

(The author, Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, is a Consultant - Surgical Oncology, at Manipal Hospital.)

the pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JULY 11, 2024

Sunil Gavaskar turns 75: Gave Indian Cricket its Sunny Days

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It is difficult to be consistently relevant in an ever-evolving world. Unless, of course, one happens to be Sunil Gavaskar, who is celebrating the completion of 75 eventful summers in his life on Wednesday.

It's tough for today's young cricket fans, who have grown up watching IPL big hits, to truly understand the significance of Gavaskar, as often they have a shrunken image of him -- a former-cricketer-turned-commentator -- in their mind.

Now, there are too many of them. Or, perhaps, it's the recency bias.

However, Gavaskar, who tackled some of the meanest pace bowlers to have walked on earth, remains a colossus in the minds of his contemporaries, who fondly recall the greatness of the right-hand great.

"Gavaskar made his debut two years after my retirement. But we have already been told by (late) Ajit Wadekar about a talented Bombay boy who could make a lot of runs for India. Didn't he make a lot of runs," said former India batter Chandu Borde.

So, how did Gavaskar tame those fearsome quicks from the West Indies, right from his first series in 1971?

"It's his concentration and a water-tight technique. I have not seen a better stance than that of him, and he watched the ball so closely. Of course, he could play most of the shots but used them wisely. He was a very practical batsman, knew what to do when," said Borde.

Gavaskar scored 774 runs in that series, helping India conquer the West Indies 1-0. 'Lord Relator' immortalised that triumph with a Calypso dedicated to the master batsman.

"It was Gavaskar. De real master. Just like a wall. We couldn't out Gavaskar at all, not at all," he wrote, and to this day it remains a goosebump-inducing number.

Gavaskar is often remembered for his mastery over pacers such as Andy Roberts, Michael Holding, Malcolm Marshall, and Imran Khan, but another less talked about aspect of his batting was the way he nullified spinners.





Gavaskar, who once rated England's Derek Underwood as the toughest spinner he faced, outfoxed some of the wily tweakers of his generation like Abdul Qadir, Tauseef Ahmed from Pakistan and England's John Emburey.

"Sunny had brilliant footwork, and could use soft hands (against spin). Since he used to watch the ball very closely, he could play spinners late and he never really got into awkward positions against them," recalled former India middle-order batter Mohinder Amarnath, himself a slayer of pacers in the 80s.

But occasionally, he wore the enforcer's garb too.

He creamed Marshall for a six to equal the then world record of 29 Test hundreds held by the legendary Sir Donald Bradman.

In fact, Gavaskar's 103, his lone ODI century, against New Zealand during the 1987 World Cup, came off 88 balls.

"Perhaps, the need of that time forced Gavaskar to go defensive while playing for India.

But he could always dominate attacks and he often did that in the domestic circuit. He could pull and hook with as much ease as anyone else," says former Mumbai batter Milind Regge.

Gavaskar carried that versatility and adaptability to the commentary box as well, and added a touch of subtle humour to it. Rewind to the way he teased former England pacer Jade Dernbach, who carried the reputation of an excellent death over bowler, after he was carted around by Indian batters in a T20I.

Pooja Vastrakar will be crucial for India in T20 World Cup: Mandhana

PTI ■ CHENNAI



Pooja Vastrakar's lethal bowling in the T20I series against South African has given India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana the confidence that the pacer can replicate the form in the Women's T20 World Cup in October in Bangladesh.

The 24-year-old quick took eight wickets here with a best of 4/13 in the final game on Tuesday, which helped the hosts thrash the Proteas by 10 wickets to level the three-match series 1-1. The second match was washed out but South Africa played the full 20 overs and Vastrakar grabbed two wickets.

Smriti was in awe of Vastrakar's bowling, which helped India restrict South Africa Women to 84 on Tuesday.

"In the first two matches, the wickets were flat, and for her to come with such figures is amazing. We hope she keeps doing the same things and will be crucial for us in the World Cup," Mandhana told reporters on Tuesday.

"She is brilliant with the ball. It's been a long series for all of us, and being a bowler, I wonder how has she done that (carried on without getting tired)?"

Besides the T20Is, India also played a one-off Test and three ODIs against South Africa.

Mandhana also recalled Vastrakar's performance in the five-match T20I series in Bangladesh in April-May, where she took five wickets -- the joint second-highest number of scalps.

"Even during the Bangladesh T20I series, the way she bowled, especially during the death overs, I struggled to see the ball when she was running in so quickly," added Mandhana.

"We knew she had made a difference about how she has been bowling in the last few months. Coming into the series, we were confident of her."

Mandhana credited the pre-series camp at the National Cricket Academy for the success against South Africa.

"A lot of effort was put in during the batters' camp that we had at the NCA before the series. The number of hours in the camp with the bat helps you.

"Throughout the series, all the players were ready to play and bat across formats, having practiced those scenarios in the camp. I believe in working hard when no one's watching, and that helped me and the team perform well in this series."

The series has also been special for Shafali Varma, who finished among the top three run-getters for her side.

"Shafali bats the best when she doesn't think a lot. You don't give a batter like her a lot of information. The only conversation (I have) from the non-striker's end is when she wants to hurry up, and all I say is 'stay'. As a senior player, my job is to guide her about the bowler, and she adapts.

"Initially, in her career, she was aggressive, but now, she knows which bowler to target. I'm sure, doing this a lot more will help." Mandhana was not in favour of too much shuffling in the batting order in the T20 Asia Cup in Sri Lanka later this month.

"We will have a similar set of conditions during the Asia Cup. But, I think it's a good problem to have since, for a few years, we have wanted to have a few players who can go out and win the matches for us.

"Also, the confidence that the WPL has given has got them in that space. But it's a calculated big call that we have thought about. It's a lot to do with what we feel that can win us a lot of matches rather than just one or two. I won't say that there would be a lot of shuffling."

NOT THE WAY WE WANTED TO END SERIES: LAURA WOLVAARDT: South African skipper Laura Wolvaardt felt that her batters failed to judge the pitch and adapt to the conditions.

"Not the way we wanted to end the series. The pitch felt 'stoppy' when we were batting. Also, I don't think we adapted to the conditions as well as we could have.

"But, it's a tough one since we have been speaking about being a lot more positive as a batting unit, which came off in the first two (T20I) games. It was a tough toss to lose (in the third T20I), but we could have put up 140-150."

"We will take a lot of learnings from the series. We are happy with how we batted in the first two games; we made a lot of big strides. So, I don't want this (last) game to send us backwards," she added.

Suryakumar retains second spot in T20I batting rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI



Star batter Suryakumar Yadav stayed put on second position in the latest ICC Men's T20I batting rankings, which also features Ruturaj Gaikwad, who made significant progress following his exploits in the ongoing away series against Zimbabwe.

Suryakumar is placed second with 821 rating points behind Australia's Travis Head, who has 844 rating points.

Phil Salt of England is paced third with 797 points, ahead of Pakistan skipper Babar Azam (755), Mohammad Rizwan (746) and Jos Buttler (716).

Gaikwad has gained 13 places to climb to the seventh spot in the rankings on the back of a stellar 77 not out off 47 balls in a comprehensive 100-run win for India in the second T20I against Zimbabwe.

With most of India's ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024-winning squad rested for the Zimbabwe tour, the five-game series has allowed India's back-up players to showcase their talent, and with the retirement of stalwarts Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja, the upcoming players can make a good case for a regular place in the side.

Apart from Gaikwad, Rinku Singh and Abhishek Sharma also made solid gains among the India batters.

Rinku, who was among the reserves for the T20 World Cup, jumped four places to reach the 39th spot on the back of an attacking 48 not out from 22 balls in the second T20I.

And after a duck in the first game, all-rounder Abhishek smashed a stunning 100 from just 47 balls in the second game. With this spectacular knock, he entered the rankings for the first time at 75th spot.

Zimbabwe's Brian Bennett gained 25 places to finish at the 96th position courtesy of his two attacking cameos, making 22 off 15 and 26 off nine in the two matches.

In the bowlers' T20I chart, left-arm spinner Axar Patel dropped two places to be the lone Indian in top-10 at the ninth position with 644 rating points.

Fellow left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav also dropped three places to the 11th spot, while T20 World Cup's player-of-the-tournament Jasprit Bumrah also slid two rungs to 14th position.

Besides, there were some movements in the top 10 positions of the bowling rankings, with Adam Zampa (7th), Fazalhaq Farooqi (8th), and Maheesh Theekshana (10th) gaining positions.

India's Ravi Bishnoi, with his six scalps in the first two games against Zimbabwe, jumped eight places to move to the 14th spot.

Blessing Muzarabani also gained eight positions after the first two matches, up to 55th, with his spell of 1/17 instrumental in Zimbabwe winning the first T20I.

India vice-captain Hardik Pandya, meanwhile, dropped a place to the second position in the T20I all-rounders' rankings.

Wanindu Hasaranga of Sri Lanka moved to pole position.

India's Washington Sundar entered the top 50 on the back of his quickfire 27 in the first game, as well as his three wickets in two outings.

Axar is placed 12th in the all-rounders' rankings.

Rachin Ravindra gets central contract from New Zealand Cricket

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Young New Zealand all-rounder of Indian origin Rachin Ravindra's success in the past one year, including the ODI World Cup where he scored tons of runs, has earned him his first central contract.

The 24-year-old figures in the list of 20 cricketers offered contracts on Wednesday for the 2024-25 season following a breakthrough season where he finished as the fourth leading run-scorer with 578 runs.

The ODI success had brought the spotlight on him during the IPL auction where he made his maiden appearance in the lucrative league for Chennai Super Kings this year after being bought for Rs 1.8 crore.

The top-order batter's rise was rewarded in January when he was named the ICC Emerging Player of the Year for 2023. In March, he became the youngest recipient of the Sir Richard Hadlee Medal.

Ravindra, who has his roots in Bengaluru where his grandparents live, said receiving his first central contract was special.

"Growing up, you'd see those contract lists come out each year and think it would be cool to be on that list one day -- and for it to eventuate now is a pinch-myself moment," he told New Zealand Cricket (NZC).



"It's been a really cool past 12 months playing international cricket. I've learned a lot and the hunger is definitely there to keep improving and giving to the Blackcaps. It's such a special group to be in, from players to support staff -- and that's been the most enjoyable part, to be honest," he added.

Besides Ravindra, three more new faces -- Ben Sears, Will O'Rourke and Jacob Duffy -- figure in the list of 20 players offered contracts by NZC.

"Playing a game you love with your mates for a living is something very special, and I hold it close to my heart," added Ravindra.

Ravindra has scored 519 runs in seven Tests, including a century, while he has three ODI tons in 25 games.

Sears, who played alongside Ravindra at the 2016 ICC Under-19 World Cup, featured in 11 T20Is for New Zealand during the 2023-24 season, claiming 13 wickets at an average of 22.

The pacer was also a travelling reserve in the New Zealand squad for the recently-concluded T20 World Cup in the West Indies and USA.

Diksha, Aditi set to tee off in Evian C'ships with busy season looming

PTI ■ EVIAN-LES-BAINS (FRANCE)

Diksha Dagar will tee off at the Amundi Evian Championships, one of the Majors in women's golf, this week as she gears up for one of her busiest stretches of her career that also includes the Olympic Games in Paris.

Diksha will play seven events in eight weeks with two Majors and the Olympics besides the Women's Scottish Open and a Ladies European Tour event, among others.

Also playing in the two Majors, including this week's Evian, is Aditi Ashok, who will also play the Olympics and the Women's Scottish Open.

Aditi, who was agonisingly one spot away from a medal at the Tokyo Olympics, plays her third Games, while Diksha is ready for her second.

The left-handed Diksha is coming off a T-14 finish at the Aramco Series London, and has been showing signs of coming back into the kind of form that saw her finish third on the LET order of Merit.

Currently 14th on the Order of Merit, she has had three top-10s, four top-20 and two top-25 finishes, a good but modest run for Diksha, who has high expectations from her ever-improving game.

Her father, Naren Dagar, who travels with her, says, "Since the time she made her debut on LET and won and then added a second win last year, she has had numerous close runs with more titles, including at her home event, the Hero Women's Indian Open. We feel that she is capable of winning more in bigger event. She is becoming better at her game, has become stronger mentally and physically."

With low rounds becoming more frequent, Diksha shows no fear of big events and could get a breakthrough any week to add to her twin wins on LET.

She plays the Evian Championships this week, followed by the Dutch Ladies and has a week off before the Olympics, followed by the Women's Scottish Open and the AIG Women's Open and the KPMG Irish Women's Open.





"This is one of the most important stretches in European Women's golf," adds Dagar.

Aditi, who won the season-ending Andalucia Championships on LET in 2023, has not had a top-10 in 2024 and her best was T-17 at the Meijer LPGA Classic this season. However, she has missed only four cuts in 14 starts, though many of her finishes have been on the lower half of the leaderboard after the cut.

The thought of another Olympics will fire her up as she knows the impact she had while finishing fourth in Tokyo.

Some of the world stars in the field include No. 1 Nelly Korda, Lilia Vu, Jin Young Ko, Amy Yang and Celin Boutier and Charley Hull.

Hull, a six-time professional tournament winner, achieved her career-best finish of tied-third in this championship two years ago and is still looking for her first Major title.

However, despite having finished T23rd, T19th and T16th in the first three Majors of the year, the Chevron Championship, the US Women's Open and the KPMG Women's PGA Championship respectively, she is not keen to set a target for this week's Major.

Hull has three runners-up finishes in Majors, with one in each of the AIG Women's Open, the US Women's Open and the Chevron Championship.

With the Amundi Evian Championship and the AIG Women's Open still to be played in 2024, she will have two more chances to shine in the Majors this summer as well as in the Olympics at Le Golf National next month.

the pioneer
Vijayawada | Thursday July 11, 2024

'Solomon Master carried me to my vanity after I hurt my leg'



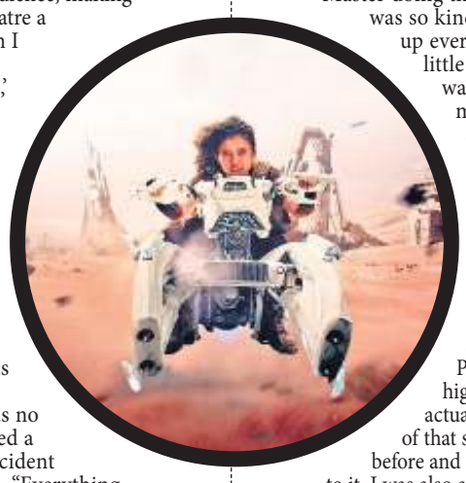
Speaking with *The Pioneer*, Anna Ben—who just gave a fantastic performance in *Kalki 2898AD*—shares details about her character, preps and other movie-related information

AARTI SREENATH

In a cinematic landscape as varied and vibrant as India's, Anna Ben stands out as a beacon of talent and versatility. Known for her roles in films like *Kumbalangi Nights*, Anna has captivated audiences with her nuanced performances. In an exclusive conversation, she opened up about her experience playing Kyra in the multicultural and futuristic sci-fi film *Kalki 2898 AD*, offering insights into her preparation, the film's unique blend of mythology and science fiction and her interactions with co-stars.

Anna's portrayal required her to navigate a unique and multicultural setting. She shared, "Nagi Sir gave me small pointers on what Kyra is like. She's an extrovert, very optimistic and has a unique POV and human relationships. Even though she's working for a bigger cause, she has her own perspective on life and how she sees human relationships. That key element works in every other setup in the film because that's the essence of the film at the end of the day—how human relationships are and how people value kindness and love, and that will prevail. So, I think he had that idea in her and that was Kyra. That is how I came to this very positive outlook."

Kalki is a fascinating blend of mythology and futuristic science fiction, a combination that intrigued Anna Ben. Despite her excitement, she confessed, "Honestly, I only knew Kyra's arc. I got a brief on the film being a futuristic sci-fi setup, but apart from that, I didn't know about the in-depth story of how mythology is involved. I didn't really know about most of the cameos; I only knew it once I was watching the film in the theatre with the audience." This limited knowledge allowed her to experience the film's surprises along with the audience, making the final viewing in the theatre a thrilling experience. "When I watched it, I was like, 'Oh, there's Vijay, there's Mrunal,' and I jumped and clapped because it was so exciting to see them in those characters. Especially because I did not see that coming. I knew certain characters were coming up, but I didn't know who was playing certain things. It was a fantastic experience."



Every film has its moments of challenge and camaraderie, and *Kalki* was no different. Anna Ben recalled a particularly memorable incident during an action sequence. "Everything about *Kalki* was very memorable because it was all very new for me—the whole world setup and green screen. The most memorable one would be when we were shooting an action sequence. I worked with Nick and Solomon Master. We had this one sequence, which was a little bit riskier compared to what I did in the beginning. They were very prepared with everything—ropes and everything. While I was doing it, like any other action film, you get hurt at some point because it involves a lot of physical strain. There was this one point where I hit my leg on a truck when I was landing. It started hurting so bad that I could not open my eyes. I remember Solomon Master running towards me and he was so scared. He carried me across to my vanity. I was feeling so embarrassed because it was just too funny to see Master doing that. Everybody on the set was so kind to me. They really took up everything and made my life a little bit easy, ensuring that I was all right. That meant so much to me as an actor and as a person working. What I've observed in Vijayathi's set is that they really take care of you and prioritise your good health. That's something that stayed with me even after the shoot."

Sharing screen space with seasoned actor like Deepika Padukone was another highlight for Anna Ben! "I was actually nervous because of a star of that scale; I've never met her before and I was really looking forward to it. I was also a little anxious to see how things would be. But she was so warm and very, very professional. It was so nice to see how she handles a set, even with a lot of people around her. She always takes charge, talks about her character and interacts with the director and crew."

The visual aesthetics and distinctive costumes in *Kalki* played a crucial role in bringing the characters to life. Anna Ben emphasised the importance of costumes in helping actors get into character, especially in a sci-fi setting. "As actors, we really depend on costumes to get into character, especially in a sci-fi setup. It's very hard for you to not feel like Kyra when you are wearing all the gear and makeup. That was one thing I was so excited about. It was such a wonderful costume setup. Not just for me; each character had very distinctive costumes and accessories. We had a lot of fun doing it. Archana, the costume designer, did so much research on each character and how each element should be. If you see Bachchan sir's character, there's a definite quality to it. You can see that in any Marvel character too. It's very visible in your head because it's so detailed. The setup in general was mostly green matte, so a lot of things were in our heads more than anything, mostly in Nagi Sir's head. He was giving all of us pointers and telling us, 'Okay, there is an explosion happening behind you; there's a sand dune in front of you; this bike is actually moving at this speed; so imagine all that and how your head would fall back.' He gave us so much detail to work with."

As Anna Ben looks to the future, her enthusiasm for diverse roles and genres shines through. "I want to try everything. I think I'm a little greedy like that as an actor. I feel like I've only started. Action is something I want to do more of because it's so much fun. I really enjoy doing stunts and everything. It's such a great feeling, and I love working towards it—how you prep for it, hit the gym, get in shape, get into a routine, learn the choreography. It's very intimidating and exhilarating at the same time. Anything that has a process where it's brand new for me is exciting."

Anna Ben's journey in *Kalki* is a testament to her dedication, versatility, and passion for storytelling. As she continues to explore new horizons, audiences can look forward to more compelling performances from this talented actress.



Kannappa showcases legendary 'Bow of Thinnadu'

Vishnu Manchu has successfully blended in the big scale spectacle in his upcoming epic actioner, *Kannappa*. An integral part of the titular character is the Bow of Thinnadu, a weapon as extraordinary as the warrior who wields it.

In the world of Kannappa, the Bow of Thinnadu goes beyond the role of a mere weapon. It's a tangible reminder of courage, a hat tip to exceptional craftsmanship, and a symbol of the unbreakable bond between a father and his son. Crafted by the skilled hands of Nadhanatha, Kannappa's father, the bow becomes a cherished family heirloom. The genius extends beyond the bow's exquisite design. Its functionality is equally impressive. With a deft maneuver, the bow of Thinnadu transforms into a pair of formidable swords. This ingenious design grants Kannappa unparalleled versatility on the battlefield, allowing him to adapt to any situation with lethal grace. The bow's story is as intriguing as its design. A young Kannappa, barely five years old, is faced by a ferocious tiger in the heart of the forest. Armed only with a simple stick, he displays remarkable courage in defending himself. Witnessing his son's bravery in the face of danger, Nadhanatha is deeply moved. To honour Kannappa's valour, he crafts a special bow - a symbol of strength forged from the very bones and teeth of the defeated tiger. The film's art director in New Zealand - Chris made the bow from scratch, in keeping with the film's vision and how Vishnu Manchu briefed him. And the bow is a mark of the film's grandeur and took weeks to put together to perfection. The makers shot over two months in New Zealand where most scenes with the bow were executed.

Vishnu says, "The Bow of Thinnadu becomes an extension of Kannappa himself. He wields it with unwavering pride, safeguarding his tribe and maintaining order within the sacred forest. Its story inspires courage in young hearts and ignites a sense of wonder in all who hear it. I am so glad we could make it exactly how we had thought. I am grateful to Chris and his team for giving us the exact replica of what we wanted."

'The concept in *Operation Raavan* has never been explored before'

WITH THE *OPERATION RAAVAN* TRAILER BEING RELEASED, OFFERING A GLIMPSE INTO THE WORLD OF THE SUSPENSE THRILLER, DEBUTANT DIRECTOR VENKATA SATYA SPEAKS TO THE MEDIA ABOUT DIRECTING THE FILM, ITS INSIGHTS AND GETTING ACTRESS RADHIKA ONBOARD FOR IT



PNS | HYDERABAD

Rakshit Atluri's upcoming film is titled *Operation Raavan*, produced by Dhyan Atluri as a new age suspense thriller and directed by debutant Venkata Satya. Sangeerthana Vipin plays the lead heroine in the movie, which is slated for a grand worldwide theatrical release on August 2. The film's trailer was released recently and it has been getting positive reviews so far.

Actor Vishwak Sen has come in support of the film by launching the film's trailer. Debutant director Venkata Satya is glad that he is making his directorial debut with this movie. This debut is even more special because he is directing his son in the film. Explaining why he chose to direct this film, he said, "There are always people who question the need for such films. I am going to show you things that you have never seen in any movie before in *Operation Raavan*. These concepts have never been portrayed in Telangana, Andhra, or even America. Not even Rajamouli has touched on such topics on screen. These are your thoughts. The impact of your thoughts determines whether you are good or bad. Your thoughts define who you are."

He went on to inform, "I made *Operation Raavan* based on this principle. It's the first time these ideas are being visualised on screen. Directing my son did not influence me much. As a director, my focus remains on the story I wish to narrate. Rakshit has delivered a commendable performance. We harbour two kinds of thoughts: good and bad. If bad dominates good, we experience misery. Conversely, if good thoughts are overwhelmed by bad, we turn into malevolent individuals. Rama embodies goodness, while Ravana represents evil thoughts. Whether I have successfully conveyed this idea as a director will be evident from the audience's response on August 2."

Speaking about how he managed to get actress Radhika on board, he shared, "Radhika played a pivotal role in our movie. It was challenging to approach her and explain the storyline. However, once on set, she performed exactly as directed. I am a director's actress; if the director is satisfied with the shot, that's sufficient. Among all the films she has worked on, *Operation Raavan* will likely remain the most memorable. Our movie stands apart. It's completely distinct."



KIRAN ABBAVARAM'S PERIODIC THRILLER TITLED *KA*

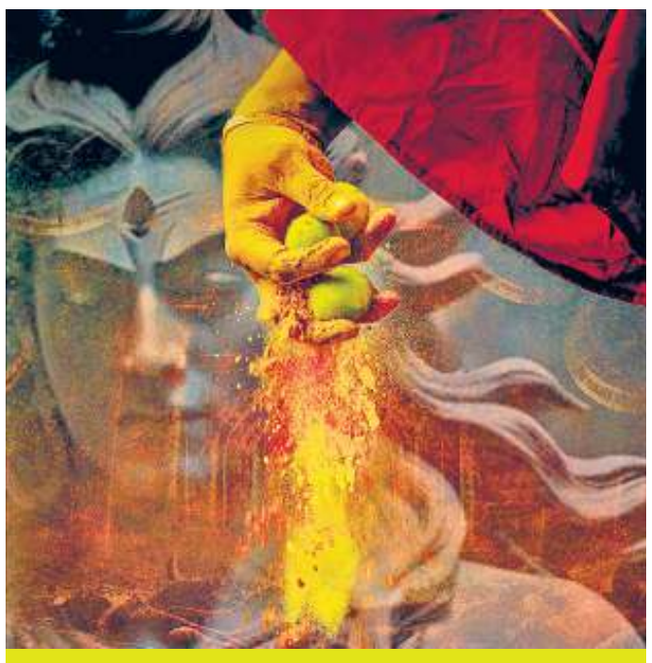
The young and dynamic actor Kiran Abbavaram, known for his string of successful films, is set to make a grand return with his next project. After a year-long break, Abbavaram is gearing up to captivate audiences with an epic period action thriller. The intriguing pre-announcement poster, featuring a vintage postcard design, has already sparked curiosity.

On Wednesday, the film's title was revealed alongside a striking poster. Entitled *KA,* the poster showcases Kiran Abbavaram from behind, his flowing hair adding to the anticipation. The zodiac symbols surrounding the title "?" on the poster add an extra layer of intrigue, hinting at the film's historical theme. This teaser suggests a promising comeback for Abbavaram.

Produced by Chinta Gopalakrishna Reddy under the banner of Srichakraas Entertainments, *KA* boasts a substantial budget. The film is helmed by the talented debutant directors Sujeeth and Sandeep.

With principal photography completed, *KA* has entered the post-production phase. The release date will be announced soon, and the film is slated to hit screens in Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Telugu. The music for the film is composed by the skilled Sam CS, while the cinematography is managed by Danial Viswas and Satheesh Reddy Masam. Art direction is overseen by Sudheer Macharla.

Featuring a highly talented team and promising a fresh cinematic experience, *KA* is shaping up to be an exciting addition to Kiran Abbavaram's filmography.



Anil Vishwanath's *Polimera 3* announced

The much-awaited announcement is here: the next installment of the blockbuster horror thriller franchise, *Polimera 3*, was announced on Wednesday. The film will be written and directed by Dr. Anil Vishwanath and produced by Vamsi Nandipati, who has been associated with blockbusters like Kantara, the 2018 movie, and *Polimera 2*.

The film will be bankrolled by Vamsi Nandipati Entertainments in association with Bhogendra Gupta. The announcement video raises expectations for the thrilling third part of the *Polimera* universe. Makers have revealed that Anil Vishwanath has completed the script work, and the team will now focus on pre-production activities. Actor Satyam Rajesh will play the lead role, supported by an ensemble cast including Baladitya, Kamakshi Bhaskarla, Getup Srinu, Rakendu Mouli and many others. Gyaani will be scoring the music. With meticulous attention to technical excellence and production standards, producer Vamsi Nandipati aims to deliver a spine-chilling cinematic experience. *Polimera 1* created a sensation with its thrilling twists and powerful storytelling on OTT platforms, while *Polimera 2* thrilled audiences in theaters, becoming a blockbuster.

Sitar from *Mr Bachchan* shines with its lyrical brilliance!

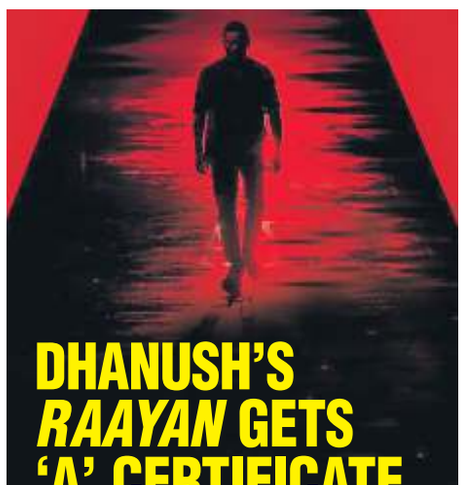
Director Harish Shankar, known for his exceptional musical taste, has consistently delivered hit soundtracks before his films even hit theatres. His upcoming film *Mr. Bachchan*, starring Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja, continues this trend with a diverse music album. Following a promotional tease, the makers have now released the lyrical video for the first single, *Sitar*.

Once again collaborating with Harish Shankar, composer Mickey J Meyer delivers a captivating track that begins with evocative sitar sounds, blending classical influences with enchanting beats. This marks Meyer and Shankar's third collaboration following Subramanyam For Sale and Gaddalakonda Ganesh. The song features mesmerising lyrics by Sahithi, rekindling their successful partnership after the chartbusters *Kevvu Keka* and *Asmaika Yoga*.

The track, featuring the voices of Saketh Komanduri and Sameera Bharadwaj, shines with its lyrical brilliance. Charulatha Mani's classic raga adds a touch of tradition, while Harish Shankar's direction ensures the dance sequences, with their compelling back pocket and hip movements, are truly captivating. In the video, Ravi Teja appears youthful and stylish, while Bhagyashri Borse dazzles as a glamorous diva. Their chemistry is both alluring and sparkling, with Ravi Teja's graceful dance moves complementing Bhagyashri's captivating performance. Sekhar Master's choreography adds elegance to the visuals.

Cinematographer Ayanka Bose has captured the vibrant and spectacular beauty of the Kashmir valley, making *Sitar* an immediate hit that promises even greater allure on the big screen. The film also features Jagapathi Babu and Sachin Khedekar in significant roles. Produced grandly by TG Vishwa Prasad under the banner of People Media Factory, with Vivek Kuchibhotla as co-producer, *Mr. Bachchan* is tagged with the tagline "*Naam Tho Suna Hoga*." Brahma Kadali serves as the production designer and Ujwal Kulkarni is the editor. The release date for the film will be announced soon.





DHANUSH'S *RAAYAN* GETS 'A' CERTIFICATE

Raayan marks Dhanush's landmark 50th movie and his second directorial effort. Alongside Dhanush, the film features Sundeep Kishan and Kalidas Jayaram in key roles.

Raayan has completed its censorship review with an A rating, reflecting its intense action content.

With a runtime of 2 hours and 25 minutes, the film promises to deliver high-octane action sequences, showcasing Dhanush in a gritty, intense role. As the release date approaches, the makers are gearing up for an extensive promotional campaign.

The cast also includes Aparna Balamurugan, SJ Surya, Selvaraghavan, and Dhushara Vijayan. The music for *Raayan* is composed by the acclaimed AR Rahman, with the first two tracks already becoming hits. Cinematography is by Om Prakash, editing by Prasanna GK, production design by Jacki and action choreography by Peter Hein.

Raayan is set to release worldwide on July 26, with the Telugu version being distributed by Asian Suresh Entertainment LLP.

Nagarjuna unearths *Bahishkarana*

Telugu actress Anjali is venturing into the world of crime thrillers with her upcoming web series, *Bahishkarana*. This six-episode series, set to premiere on ZEE5 on July 19, 2024, promises a captivating journey into the heart of a village embroiled in a high-stakes revenge drama.

The web series has already generated immense buzz with its intriguing posters, glimpses and a powerful teaser that showcased Anjali's intense expressions and captivating presence. In the midst of all this, movie lovers got super thrilled when King Nagarjuna released the powerpacked and intense-filled trailer of *Bahishkarana* and wished the makers all the best. He lauded the efforts of entire cast and crew to come with a quality webseries that is extremely impactful!

The recently released 2 minute 14 second trailer further amps up the anticipation, starting with a charming and innocent rustic romance, showcasing Anjali's natural charm, before taking a shocking turn, revealing the darkness lurking beneath the surface.

The trailer hints at a forbidden love affair, challenging societal norms and prejudices, that ignites a narrative rich in emotional depth and dramatic twists. The story unfolds amidst the village's gory happenings, showcasing how the oppressed people rise against injustice and seek their revenge.

Beyond its thrilling plot, *Bahishkarana* delves deeper into the themes of transformation, destiny and the powerful impact of love and revenge. Directed by Mukesh Prajapathi and produced by Prashanti Malisetti under the banner of Pixel Pictures Pvt Ltd, the series promises a riveting narrative, beautifully woven into a rich tapestry of human emotions and societal dynamics.

