



Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN



8

TO DO OTT



**- KC Venugopal,
AICC Organising General Secretary**



-PAGE: 3

-PAGE: 5

-PAGE: 8

-SPORTS

WEATHER SYSTEM LIKELY TO MOVE NORTHWARDS AND WEAKEN



At many places in the affected districts of

2

2

2

2



was told.
Finally,
K C
Venugopal,
DK Shiva
Kumar,
Manikrao Thakre
convinced the CM
position aspirants-Mallu
Bhatti Vikramarka, N Uttam
Kumar Reddy and others.
Revanth Reddy's oath-taking cer-

It is learnt that DK Shiva Kumar cited his own case while convincing senior leaders Uttam Kumar Reddy and Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, who had argued that Revanth Reddy joined the party a few years ago and hence it was not proper to neglect 'original and senior leaders'. Shiva Kumar said he had settled for the Deputy Chief Minister position, while accepting the candidature of Siddaramaiah for the CM position only for the sake of the party, though he too was "original Congress leader" and had been in the party from the beginning of his political career.

Of particular interest was the BJP-allied JSP candidate in Kukatpally, with high expectations surrounding their performance. The results in the eight contested constituencies in Telangana—Ashwaraopet, Umadevi (2,281 votes), Khammam Miryalal, Ramakrishna (2,281 votes), Kothagudem Suren (1,922 votes), Vira Sampath Naik (2,172 votes), Tandoor Shankar Goud (3,971 votes), Nagar Kurnool (1,827 votes), and Laxman Goud (1,876 votes). Kodada Mekala Satish Reddy (1,827 votes) was the only candidate

Remarkably, Jana Sena candidate Prem Kumar, who contested from Kukatpally, garnered 39,830 votes with a 15.88% vote share.

However, this fell significantly short of the anticipated support from the large number of Andhra Pradesh settlers in Kukatpally, who have historically shown favour towards the TDP.

It's worth mentioning that the former chief minister and TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu and his associates had allegedly looted public funds from the state exchequer through shell companies and by raising fake invoices. Naidu is accused number 37 (A37) in the case and he is currently out on bail.

Addressing the enthusiastic gath-



Minister for Labour, Gummanur Jayaram, highlighted the success of the Navaratna welfare schemes designed to uplift the downtrodden. He praised Chief Minister Jagan for

Commending CM Jagan's administration, Minister Usha Sri Charan remarked, "The YSRCP government has opened new avenues for underprivileged women, facilitating their entry into entrepreneurship by providing financial aid through various welfare schemes. Additionally, the government supports the future of our society by granting Rs 15,000 annually to students."

Running government won't be a smooth affair for Cong in TS

Of course, the Congress is enjoying blissful moments for coming to power in Telangana, India's newest state that was granted by the grand old party a decade ago despite stiff resistance shown by people in the residual Andhra Pradesh.

Whatever be the reason for granting statehood to Telangana, the party, wittingly or unwittingly, ruined its own interests in the process. Against odds, the Congress leadership stood by the people of Telangana. The Congress then merely had an assurance from the erstwhile Telangana Rastra Samiti (now Bharat Rashtra Samithi) to merge with the Congress out of gratitude for creating the separate state. The TRS went back on the assurance after the passage of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act - 2014 in Parliament. Subsequently, the two parties



contested separately on the plank of being 'achievers' of Telangana State. People reposed confidence in TRS and gave it the reins of power in the first ever elections of 2014 in TS. In subsequent elections too, TRS utilized Congress-TDP alliance as a weapon and whipped up Telangana sentiments, saying the tie-up would throw up rulers with Andhra roots whose actions would be detrimental to the interests of TS. So, people again believed TRS in the 2018 polls.

Over two terms, BRS had to face several challenges resulting in anti-incumbency factor, including tell-tale flaws in the Kaleswaram LIS, whose costs had escalated abnormally from Rs. 30,000 cr to Rs.1.00 lakh crore. The sinking of the pillars of the Medigadda barrage of KLIS confirmed people's worst fears.

The party was in such state that it could not confidently project its CM face. Nor did the Congress high command take a call on picking the chief minister immediately after receiving the one-liner resolution sent to it by the Congress Legislature Party, though TPCC president A Revanth Reddy had been regarded as the natural choice for the position.

The Congress is once again in the limelight, after languishing politically for a decade. The party was in such state that it could not confidently project its CM face. Nor did the Congress high command take a call on picking the chief minister immediately after receiving the one-liner resolution sent to it by the Congress Legislature Party, though TPCC president A Revanth Reddy had been regarded as the natural choice for the position. Talking of party tradition, Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy was selected as CLP leader when the Congress came to power in

2004 in the combined AP. He was Leader of the Opposition in the previous term and the party allowed him to continue in the same post. Normally, CLP leader will be the chief minister when the party is in power. The presence of Backward Class leader D. Sreenivas as PCC chief did not give scope for caste equations. Discounting talk that a BC leader may be given chance to take the reins of the state to address statehood demand for Telangana, YSR sought clarification from Congress supreme Sonia Gandhi, who then cleared all suspicions in his mind. In



Karnataka also, then PCC president SM Krishna was made CLP leader after the party's victory in the 1999 elections. Assembly elections were held in Andhra Pradesh along with the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress made it in Karnataka by securing 38% of the votes polled in the state; while in AP, the party could not come to power despite getting 43% of the votes, leav-

ing YSR and party cadre in deep distress. In Kerala, during the 2001 elections, then CLP leader A. K. Antony was allowed to continue in that post only to head the government there. In the recently concluded Karnataka Assembly polls, as PCC president D.K. Siva Kumar led the Congress party to an impressive victory. Contrary to expectations, due to the presence of former chief minister Siddharamaiah in the race, DK was convinced to wait for his turn in due course. DK settled for Deputy Chief Minister's post.

Telangana Rashtra Samithi also got a similar mandate in 2014, bagging just three seats more than the half way mark (60). To avoid instability, the TRS leadership subsequently attracted TDP and Congress legislators. So, the slender margin that that the Congress now has (four seats more than the half way mark) may be quite inspiring for the

BRS, should it aim to destabilise the Congress government. The 'wait and watch' attitude of the newly elected BRS legislators suggests that they are not yet ready to be only the principal opposition in the TS Legislative Assembly. KCR may make his son and former IT Minister K Taraka Rama Rao or nephew and former Health Minister T. Harish Rao as Leader of Opposition in TSLA. BRS will thus become the biggest opposition party in TSLA with its strong contingent of 39MLAs. In the combined Andhra Pradesh also both Dr.YS Rajasekhara Reddy (Congress) and N. Chandrababu Naidu (TDP) had played the role of LoP with 90+ seats each.

Now that the Congress has an opportunity to rule Telangana, it should create a conducive atmosphere to make people feel that Telangana is in the safe hands of a national party. KCR

would do well to remember the Karimnagar LS byelection in 2006. Exactly on 4th December, 2006, Karimnagar LS bypolls was held, making KCR subsequently a hero for T-movement. He won the election with a huge margin of 2 lakh votes. Fast forward to 2023, KCR had to lose power besides facing defeat at the hands of a new candidate from BJP in the Kamareddy Assembly seat. He managed to win in Gajwel, but tasted electoral defeat after 40 years. In a way, KCR's fate is similar to that of his political mentor NT Rama Rao, who lost power and his Kalwakurthy seat in the 1989 polls.

Despite odds, KCR will have a chance to play politics with the Congress government in TS. He might contest in the Lok Sabha polls in 2024 and prefer to be in national politics more prominently, even if the BRS notches up a single-digit tally then.

Tirumala dams full: Bhumana

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala's reservoirs overflow with Srivari blessings, as TTD Chairman Bhumana Karunakara Reddy announced that the region's drinking water needs for the upcoming year have been abundantly met due to the recent heavy rains.

Accompanied by TTD JEO Veerabrahmam and other officials, Chairman Reddy inspected the brimming reservoirs in Tirumala, a result of incessant heavy rains triggered by the Michuang cyclone effect.

Addressing the media after the inspection, Chairman Reddy revealed that concerns over water scarcity had surfaced fifteen days prior. In response, TTD had initially decided to tap into the Kandaleru reservoir. However, the tide turned with the commencement of the Srinivasa



Divyanugraha Homa on November 23 at the Sapta Go Pradakshina Mandiram. Over the last two days, Tirumala received a substantial 24 cm of rainfall, a testament to the benevolent blessings of Sri Venkateswara Swamy.

Chairman Reddy assured that TTD officials are vigilantly monitoring the situation, having opened the gates of the Gogarbham, Papa Vinasanam, and Akashaganga dams during

the early hours of Tuesday. Present during the inspection were CVSO Narasimha Kishore, CE Nageswar Rao, SE-2 Jagadeeshwar Reddy, EE (Water Works) Srihari, EE5 Surendranath Reddy, VGO Nanda Kishore, and others.

In response to recent allegations of poor-quality food being served at the Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba Annaprasadam complex in Tirumala,

TTD Chairman Bhumana Karunakara Reddy emphatically ruled out any compromise on the standard of food provided to devotees.

Addressing media concerns, Chairman Reddy highlighted that the TTD has consistently ranked among the leading religious institutions offering high-quality Annaprasadam to devotees worldwide. Refuting claims made by a section of protesters on the hill shrine, he stated that only around 15 individuals out of the 700 pilgrims in the dining hall had raised concerns about the food quality.

"The TTD will never compromise on quality. Those who complained sought to intimidate others, which is inappropriate in a pilgrim center. TTD is always ready to rectify any lapses," affirmed Chairman Karunakara Reddy.

'Continuous training, revision mandatory for teachers'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Skill Development and Training Department Principal Secretary and School Education Department Commissioner S Suresh Kumar has said that the teachers also need to improve their skills in accordance with the changes taking place in the education sector.

He has clarified that good results can be achieved in the technical education system only through continuous training and revision. He inspected the Atal Faculty Development Programme sponsored by the All India Council of Technical Education being conducted at DhaneKula Institute of Engineering Technology in Vijayawada on Tuesday. The programme will be held till December 9 under the theme: "Advancement on VLSI Design and Fabrication from Theory to Practice". Meanwhile, Suresh



Kumar said that for skill development and improving the quality of college education, educational institutions and industry should become partners. Talking about the faculty development programme, he asserted that special workshops and special sessions industry experts and experienced academicians were essential.

He said that the training would help to facilitate mutual exchange

of knowledge for innovation of new technologies in the field of education. The Principal Secretary suggested integrating new technologies in existing courses and improving networking opportunities with industry experts to guide curriculum development.

Suresh Kumar inspected the Technology Business Incubator established in the college in col-

laboration with the Government of India and the Dronix Laboratories established in collaboration with Israel.

Examined the modern technology and research projects of the college and made suitable suggestions. College Chairman Rabinathan Tagore, secretary, Correspondent Bhavani Prasad and other faculties with officials were present.

Eco-friendly tortoise beach to come up in Vizag

The beach also envisages to attract tourists and boost local economy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a significant step towards environmental conservation, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) and the State Forest Department are collaborating to establish an eco-friendly turtle beach at Sagarnagar, along the Kailasagiri-Rushikonda stretch.

The project, dubbed Tortoise Beach, will encompass 5 acres near Sagarnagar Beach and feature an Olive Ridley Turtle Conservation Centre, supported by a substantial investment of \$15 crore.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Visakhapatnam Mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari said: "This project reflects our commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development. Tortoise Beach will not only conserve Olive Ridley Turtles, a vulnerable species but also attract tourists and boost the local economy."

In addition to the conservation centre, the project will include a range of amenities for visitors, including coffee shops, toilets,



shacks, furniture, and a cutting-edge High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) floating bridge/walkway. Meticulous landscaping will also be undertaken to create a harmonious blend of nature and infrastructure. The \$15 crore investment will be allocated towards the establishment of the conservation center, necessary infrastructure, and ongoing maintenance. The Tortoise Beach project is expected to significantly boost tourism in the region. The inclusion of well-planned facilities and attractions ensures a comprehensive experience for visitors, combining environmental education with recreational opportunities. "We are excited to

partner with the GVMC on this important project," said a representative of the State Forest Department. "Tortoise Beach will be a valuable asset to Visakhapatnam and a model for eco-friendly development."

With the collaboration formalised, the project is now moving into the planning and execution phase. Stakeholders, including environmentalists, local communities, and wildlife enthusiasts, are eager to see the realization of this eco-friendly initiative.

The Tortoise Beach project stands as a testament to the power of collaborative efforts in promoting environmental sustainability.

Michaung...

Continued from Page 1

In the wake of the severe cyclonic storm, several paddy fields were inundated at Sarvepalli in Nellore district. Special officer Hari Kiran went to observe Sarvepalli Reservoir. He also surveyed some affected places in Nellore town.

The services of ward and village volunteers came in handy for the state government. In Tirupati district, volunteers restricted movement of people near an overflowing bridge at Athuru village.

They shifted cyclone-affected people from an ST Colony in R Mallavaram village in Renigunta mandal to a nearby high school and also served food to them, among other relief activities.

Power restoration...

Continued from Page 1

According to reports, Cyclone Michaung made landfall near Kavali, resulting in heavy rain and gale in Nellore, Guntur, Prakasham, and Krishna districts, with moderate rains reported in Chittoor, Kurnool, West and East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, and Vizianagaram.

Discussing Generation and Substation Outages, Vijayanand explained that Krishnapatnam Unit 2 and Unit 3 experienced tripping due to electrical and coal feeding problems caused by adverse weather conditions. Precautionary measures, such as hand-tripping the lines connected to 132KV SS Chendodu due to water logging, were implemented to ensure safety. Approximately 7 Nos 220 KV feeders, 6 No's 132KV feeders, and 100 MVA PTRs were affected, as stated by the Special Chief Secretary.

Stressing the government's commitment to uninterrupted power supply, Vijayanand highlighted the high alert status of power utilities and the foolproof arrangements in place to respond to emergencies.

Cyclone hits air, rail...

Continued from Page 1

Airport director M Lakshminanth Reddy said that 14 flights have been cancelled due to cyclone storm Michaung to various destinations like Hyderabad, Bangalore, Shirdi, Chennai, and others destinations. He said that on Wednesday a few flights have been cancelled due to rescheduling issues and the passengers should make anote of it.

Meanwhile, air services have been suspended at Rajahmundry Airport due to the cyclone. Officials said 18 flights were cancelled. 15 flight services have been cancelled from Tirupati Airport at Renigunta on Tuesday due to the Michaung cyclone.

The entire coastal belt of Andhra Pradesh is on high alert in view of Michaung which is set to cross the coast near Bapatla on Tuesday afternoon.

The Met Office has forecast strong winds with a speed of 90-100 kmph gusting to 110 kmph in the region. Officials said that the sea is rough and the coast may see tidal waves of up to 1 to 1.5 meters. On the other hand, dozens of trains were either cancelled or diverted by the railways and APSRTC cancelled a few services to the cyclone-affected districts on Tuesday.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Navami: Dec 06 12:37 AM to Dec 07 03:04 AM

Dashami: Dec 07 03:04 AM to Dec 08 05:06 AM

Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: Dec 06 03:37 AM to Dec 07 06:28 AM

Hasta: Dec 07 06:28 AM to Dec 08 08:54 AM

Rahukalam: 12:06 PM to 1:29 PM

Yamagandam: 7:59 AM to 9:21 AM

Variyam: 03:43 PM to 05:29 PM

Gulika: 10:44 AM to 12:06 PM

Amritakalam: 10:25 PM to 12:12 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Rain

Temp: 28°

Humidity: 90%

Sunrise: 6:22 AM

Sunset: 5:34 PM

Updated: November 28, 2023 5:00 PM

Declare SI results: HC to AP govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday allowed the Andhra Pradesh State Level Police Recruitment Board (APSLPRB) to declare the results of a written test held for the selection of police officers.

A single-judge bench had earlier stayed the release of results of the police job aspirants through an interim order. The matter of physical measurement tests of Sub-Inspector (SI) aspirant candidates came up for hearing today. The disqualified aspirants had filed a batch of petitions through their counsel Jada Sravan Kumar. The counsel submitted in the court that the candidates who were qual-

ified in physical measurement tests for SI posts in 2014 were declared ineligible in the second test in 2023.

The APSLPRB has measured the height of applicants twice with scanners and many of them failed to qualify the test required for the selection of Sub-Inspectors. The officials of the recruitment board took the physical measurement of the disqualified aspirants under the supervision of the honourable judge. Subsequently, the high court heard the matter and set aside the interim order thus paving the way for the recruitment board to declare the results. Meanwhile, the petitioners are considering approaching the Supreme Court.

JSP's poor...

Continued from Page 1

Political experts suggest that the lacklustre showing by the JSP in Telangana could lead TDP Chief Chandrababu Naidu to reconsider an alliance with JSP in Andhra Pradesh, given Pawan Kalyan's disappointing performance.

Contrary to these speculations, sources within the TDP camp have dismissed the rumours as false and baseless. They firmly assert that the TDP-JSP alliance will endure for the 2024 polls and emerge victorious. According to them, Pawan Kalyan enjoys significant voter support in Andhra Pradesh, emphasising that the voting patterns in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh differ. The party intends to finalise its manifesto under the joint leadership of Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan soon.

Increase in human trafficking cases in AP: NCRB report

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A total of 2,250 cases of human trafficking were registered in 2022 in Andhra Pradesh as compared to 2,189 cases in 2021, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). It shows an increase of 2.8 per cent.

A total of 6,036 victims have been reported to be trafficked, including 2,878 children and 3,158 adults. During the year, 6,693 victims were rescued from clutches of traffickers and 5,864 persons were arrested.

According to NCRB's 2022 report, AP stood in the seventh spot in the number of victims trafficked (all purposes) in India. Odisha State was in the first place with 1,120 persons victims, followed by Maharashtra in the second place (805 persons), Bihar in the third spot (751 persons), Telangana in fourth place (704 per-

sons), Delhi in fifth place (687 persons), Rajasthan in sixth place (461 persons) and AP in seventh place (293 persons). In 2021, AP was in the fifth spot.

According to the NCRB data, AP stood in third place in India in 2022 in terms of the number of victims trafficked only for sexual exploitation. Maharashtra was in first place (784 victims), Telangana in second place (646 victims) and AP in the third place (260 victims). In 2021 also, AP was in third place with 223 victims.

Human trafficking cases in Andhra Pradesh have decreased during the past four years in AP -- 245 cases in 2019, 171 cases in 2020, 168 cases in 2021 and 163 cases in 2022. Chargesheets were filed in 99.8 percent human trafficking cases in 2022.

Continued from Page 1

He emphasised the importance of providing compensation for reported casualties and livestock loss within 48 hours. Enumeration activities are slated to commence once the storm subsides.

The Chief Minister stressed the significance of efficient distribution of ration through the village, ward secretariat, and volunteer system.

Officials were instructed to ensure the quality of facilities provided to those seeking refuge and to take precautionary measures to prevent any errors in facility setup.

Special Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad (Revenue and Disaster Management), CCLA Secretary A Md Imtiaz, and senior officials from the Chief Minister's Office were present.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT

No. 96/2023-24 E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE Date: 04-12-2023

Online tenders are invited for the works "Mandal wise packaging of works for Providing drinking water facilities to all needy habitations through 100% FHTCs with SS LPGD service level in (02) Habs. of Adilavaram-II Mandal with an estimated cost of Rs. 729.39 Lakhs under JJM Programme. Tenders can be downloaded from e-market place i.e. www.tender.approcurement.gov.in from 06.12.2023.

R.O.No: 11916CLADV11/2021-22 Dt. 05.12.2023

RWS & S, Gollapudi, Vijayawada

Sd/- Chief Engineer-IV

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Paddy farmers bear the brunt of cyclone

Heavy damage to crops in six districts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The incessant rains accompanied by heavy gales under the influence of the Michaung cyclone caused heavy damage to crops in six districts.

Horticulture crops including papaya, banana, mango, tobacco, chilli, and vegetable crops were badly damaged. Banana plants fell to the ground in hundreds of acres in Kadapa district. The betel nut leaf crop was also damaged in the Kadapa district.

The worst affected by the Michaung cyclone are paddy farmers. The paddy crop was damaged in lakhs of acres, according to sources in six districts. The paddy farmers in these districts were preparing for harvest and the incessant rain damaged the standing crop. The farmers who have already harvested their paddy crop were seen saving their produce by wrapping plastic sheets.

The farmers were seen trying to save their paddy crops from being drenched in rainwater. In all these districts, paddy crop harvesting was being taken up and the harvested paddy produce was left at the fields for drying purposes. The farmers did not have time to shift the harvested crop to safer places. Tobacco, groundnut and chili crops were damaged in hundreds of acres in Prakasam district and they were seen marooned.

In the Konaseema district, banana crops were damaged while the paddy crops on thousands of acres were submerged in rainwater. Civil supplies



minister Karumuri Nageswara Rao visited some of the fields affected by the cyclone storm at Duvva and Varigedu villages in the Tanuku constituency. He interacted with the farmers and assured them of purchasing the soaked paddy.



69,700 ha of crops in Krishna damaged

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the aftermath of the Michaung Cyclone, the Krishna district has witnessed substantial rainfall over the past three days, resulting in considerable agricultural losses. More than 69,700 hectares of crops, including paddy, maize, cotton, sugarcane, and others, have incurred damage within the district.

Under the guidance of Krishna District Collector P Raja Babu, the authorities of the Krishna District Agriculture Department have compiled a comprehensive report detailing the impact of the Michaung cyclone. This report has been promptly forwarded to the State government for necessary action.

Approximately 69,700 hectares of crops have suffered damage, with 68,392 hectares of paddy, 212 hectares of cotton, 162 hectares of maize, and 854 hectares of groundnut among the affected crops. The paddy cultivation has been severely impacted, causing distress among farmers who now face the second loss of their crops in the ongoing Kharif season.

Authorities have indicated that a thorough assessment of crop damage will be initiated once the rainwater recedes from the agricultural fields. The preliminary report highlights that 25 Mandals in the district were adversely affected by the



cyclone. Paddy, in particular, bore the brunt of the cyclone, marking the second instance of farmers losing their crops during the Kharif season due to heavy rains.

Farmers in the combined Krishna district had commenced harvesting their paddy crops before the cyclone hit. They had chosen to dry the grains on roads, real estate venture plots, and other vacant spaces. Unfortunately, the Michaung cyclone brought incessant rainfall over the past two days, leading to the saturation of hundreds of tons of paddy grains. Additionally, numerous paddy crops across the district found themselves submerged in rainwater.

According to the preliminary report submitted to the state

government by Krishna district authorities, 69,700 hectares of crops suffered damage. The heavy rains severely impacted Avanigadda, Nagayalanka, Koduru, Mopidevi, Challapalli, Vuyyuru, Pamidimukkala, Machilipatnam, Gannavaram, and other areas.

Within these Mandals, 68,392 hectares of paddy crops were damaged. However, the agricultural department authorities said that during the assessment of crop damage, only losses exceeding 33 per cent, including sand casting, would be taken into consideration. Besides, other crops such as groundnut, blackgram, maize, and cotton suffered damage in 854 hectares, 80 hectares, 162 hectares, and 212 hectares, respectively, due to the heavy rainfall.

Govt takes steps to protect livestock hit by cyclone

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the aftermath of the devastating Michaung Typhoon, the State Animal Husbandry Department of Andhra Pradesh has swiftly mobilised relief efforts to assist affected cattle and their keepers. The Department has issued comprehensive instructions to District Animal Husbandry Officers and staff in the typhoon-struck districts, outlining a detailed plan of action to ensure the well-being of livestock.

As a top priority, immediate response teams were formed to rescue cattle stranded in low-lying areas, which were particularly vulnerable to the typhoon's flooding. The teams carefully relocated the animals to safer, elevated grounds, taking measures to shield them from further harm.

Following the typhoon, veterinary teams have been deployed to provide essential treatment to cattle, identify casualties, and submit a detailed report to the government by December 7, 2023. This comprehensive assessment will help the Department gauge the full extent of the impact on the region's livestock population.

The State Animal Husbandry Department has called upon the expertise of Veterinarians, Veterinary Assistants, and Gopalmitras to facilitate relief

operations. Veterinary camps have been organized in the affected districts, ensuring the availability of necessary medicines and complete compound feed for different livestock.

To further protect the health of cattle, vaccination teams are actively working to inoculate them against strep throat, leprosy, and distemper in sheep and goats. These preventive measures aim to minimise the risk of disease outbreaks in the aftermath of the typhoon.

In tandem with relief efforts, the Animal Husbandry Department is spearheading the burial of dead cattle using scientifically approved methods

to prevent infectious diseases. This crucial step helps safeguard the health of surviving livestock and the environment.

Recognising the importance of access to clean water for cattle, the Department has directed district officers to collaborate with the Panchayat Raj Department to guarantee the availability of safe drinking water in water tanks across affected regions.

The Animal Husbandry Department is urging cattle breeders to take precautions to prevent the entry of insects into their sheds, reducing the risk of disease transmission. This includes measures such as using mosquito nets and maintaining proper hygiene within the sheds.



IIMV, CVC collaborate to enhance public procurement practices

103 professionals from various sectors trained

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a groundbreaking partnership, the Indian Institute of Management-Visakhapatnam (IIMV) and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) have joined forces to offer comprehensive capacity-building programmes in the field of public procurement.

This unique initiative has already successfully trained 103 professionals from diverse sectors, including public sector undertakings, banks, insurance companies, and other government organisations. The training sessions, conducted in three cohorts, aim to foster transparency, equity, accountability, and efficiency in the realm of public procurement.

"The CVC has urged us to diversify the course content based on the outstanding feedback" stated Prof. M Chandrasekhar, Director of IIMV. "We will be introducing programmes in the procurement of works, and a comprehensive training calendar for the next six months will be prepared."

Highlighting the significance of these programmes, Prof. Chandrasekhar emphasised the critical role officers play in public procurement. "In the realm of public procurement, officers hold a position of immense responsibility," he maintained. "As custodians of public trust, their actions will have far-reaching implications, shaping the efficiency, fairness, and accountability of government spending."

He further elaborated on the training's core principles. "It is essential that these officers embrace vigilance as their guiding principle and adhere to a steadfast commitment to logical reasoning, rational thought, evidence-based analysis, and a normative approach," he explained. "The training programmes at IIMV cover all these concepts to build the capacities of officers and senior executives to navigate the procurement landscape with precision."

The commitment of IIMV to organise these capacity-building programmes for the greater public good is reinforced by the positive impact witnessed across different Central public sector enterprises whose senior officials participated in the training programmes. The success of the initiative affirms IIMV's dedication to advancing the skills and knowledge of professionals involved in public procurement for the benefit of society at large.



"We will be introducing programmes in the procurement of works, and a comprehensive training calendar for the next six months will be prepared."

Despite govt's assurance, farmers face problems in selling paddy

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO
■ VIJAYAWADA

Despite directives from the State government instructing officials to procure paddy grains without considering moisture percentage, compliance with these orders has been lacking. Consequently, farmers in the combined Krishna district are grappling with substantial losses due to the impact of Cyclone Michaung.

Approximately 2.50 lakh hectares of paddy was cultivated during the Kharif season in the combined Krishna region, comprising Krishna and NTR districts. The Agricultural department anticipated a yield of 12 lakh metric tons of paddy for this ayacut. However, the projected production is expected to decrease due to the effects of Cyclone



Michaung, authorities report.

While the prescribed moisture content for purchasing paddy is 17%, the government, considering the aftermath of the Michaung cyclone, has decided to procure even higher moisture content. Unfortunately, these directives have not been implemented at the Dr YSR Rythu Bharosa Kendras, and rice millers in the

Krishna and NTR districts are refusing wet paddy. Consequently, farmers are experiencing delays of a week to ten days in selling their paddy grains.

Naveen, a young farmer from Nunna, expressed concern as authorities rejected his paddy with 23% moisture. Despite harvesting his crop a week ago, the agriculture

Minister for Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Karumuri Nageswara Rao, on the other hand, has directed officials to procure paddy grains without considering moisture levels in light of the Michaung cyclone. He urged rice millers to buy paddy grains from farmers without imposing restrictions.

department has yet to make the purchase, causing significant challenges in drying the paddy grains over the past seven days.

Veeraiah, another farmer from Ramachandrapalem in the Gannavaram mandal of the Krishna district, alleged that agriculture department officials have neglected to purchase paddy, making it difficult

for farmers to dry their yields. He added that many fields are submerged in rainwater, leaving no space for drying the paddy grains.

Meanwhile, young farmer Madu Sivaramaiah claimed that the state government has not supplied tarpaulin pattas for several years, causing difficulties in protecting paddy grains. Despite the shortage of

pattas, the government has not addressed the issue, he lamented.

Minister for Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Karumuri Nageswara Rao, on the other hand, has directed officials to procure paddy grains without considering moisture levels in light of the Michaung cyclone. He urged rice millers to buy paddy grains from farmers without imposing restrictions. To date, 1.07 lakh metric tons of paddy have been purchased offline, with Rs. 800 crores credited to farmers' bank accounts out of the total Rs. 1,140 crore allocated, he disclosed. Emphasising the importance of procuring paddy even with moisture exceeding 20%, the minister underscored the government's commitment to supporting farmers during this challenging period.

Lakshmisha visits rehab centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Special Officer and Gram/Ward Sachivalayam Director, G Lakshmisha, visited the rehabilitation centre at Gilakaladindi near Machilipatnam on Tuesday to assess the impact of the Michaung cyclone that crossed the Bay of Bengal coast at Bapatla. Despite the cyclone's passage, its effects persisted in the district.

During his visit, Special Officer Lakshmisha assured

the people seeking shelter in the rehabilitation centres that the State government would provide support. He engaged with the victims, shared a meal with them, and enquired about the facilities available at the center.

Lakshmisha said that individuals could continue seeking refuge in these centres until the normal situation was restored in the district. Health camps, directed by the State government, were set up in all rehabilitation centers to address the needs of those affected.



Scaffolding of building collapses; no casualties

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heavy rain, accompanied by severe winds, resulted in a scaffolding collapse from the fifth floor of a building under construction in the Bhanu Nagar area of the city. The incident resulted in damage to a nearby house. Luckily, no casualties were reported as the house in question was unoccupied.

Promptly responding to the situation, the police, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, and the Fire department swiftly arrived at the scene to initiate debris removal procedures.

Sivaji hails AICC's decision to make Revanth CM TS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) vice-president Kolanukonda Sivaji welcomed the decision of AICC to finalise the name of A Revanth Reddy as Chief Minister of Telangana state.

In a statement he on Tuesday, Kolanukonda Shivaji welcomed the AICC's decision to select Revantha Reddy for the Chief Minister's post after consulting senior Congress leaders.

"AICC president Mallikharjun Kharge after taking majority legislative opinion and consulting the senior leaders announced the name of Revantha Reddy for the Chief Minister's post of Telangana state. The people of Telugu state have been anxiously waiting for the AICC's decision since December 3," Shivaji said.

Kolanukonda Shivaji thanked AICC president



Mallikharjuna Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi for deciding to make Revantha Reddy the Chief Minister of Telangana state.

Revantha Reddy being the Chief Minister of Telangana state will help to bolster the Congress party in Andhra Pradesh, Shivaji hoped. He exhorted the Congress cadres in Andhra Pradesh to draw inspiration from Revantha Reddy and strive hard to strengthen the Congress in AP in the next 100 days.

Actor Nani supports 'Eco Vizag' initiative

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



Tollywood hero Nani has thrown his weight behind the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's (GVMC) Eco Vizag campaign, aimed at fostering eco-friendly practices and sustainable living in the city.

Expressing his commitment to environmental causes, Nani shared his enthusiasm for the Eco Vizag initiative.

In a statement, he said, "I am thrilled to extend my support to the Eco Vizag campaign by GVMC. It's heartening to see efforts being made to create awareness about sustainable practices and environmental conservation. I believe that small, conscious choices can collectively make a significant impact on our surroundings."

The Eco Vizag campaign, spearheaded by GVMC CM Saikanth Varma, is a comprehensive drive to promote green living, waste reduction, and overall environmental consciousness among the residents of Visakhapatnam. The initiative encompasses various activities, including tree plantation drives, waste management programs, and awareness campaigns to encourage citizens to adopt eco-friendly habits in their daily lives.

GVMC Commissioner expressed gratitude for Nani's support and highlighted the importance of celebrities endorsing causes that contribute to the betterment of society.

Vehicular movement stopped on Ghat Road in city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the incessant rains due to the Michaung cyclone, Sri Durga Malleawaea Swamy Varla Devasthanam authorities stopped the vehicle movement on the Ghat Road on Tuesday. Keeping the past experiences of falling the boulders from the Indrakeeladri, the temple authorities have taken this decision.

Also, the temple authorities requested that devotees use the



way of Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam to visit the temple. After the relief from rain, the Durga Ghat road will be restored for vehicle movement, the authorities said.

IRCTC announces 'Punyakshetra Yatra' to Puri & Kashi

Package to cover religious destinations including Gaya, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Prayagraj

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has unveiled a special nine-day package tour named Punyakshetra Yatra -- a spiritual journey to Puri and Kashi -- from December 9 to 17. Chandramohan Basha, IRCTC Area Officer, released a statement on Tuesday, providing details of the pilgrimage.

The comprehensive package

tour encompasses significant religious destinations, including Gaya, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Prayagraj. Pilgrims participating in the tour will have the opportunity to visit prominent temples and historical landmarks, enhancing their spiritual experience.

The itinerary includes visits to the Vishnu Padam Temple in Puri, Kashi Viswanath Temple, Visalakshi and Annapurna temples, Ganga Harati, and



Sarnath monuments in Varanasi. Additionally, the tour covers significant sites in Ayodhya such as Ram Janmabhoomi, Hanuman Garhi, and a special Harati ceremony at River Sarayu. In Prayagraj, pilgrims will explore the Triveni Sangam, Hanuman Mandir, and Shankar Viman Mandapam.

The boarding stations for this pilgrimage are Pendurthi and Vizianagaram. The pack-

age prices vary based on accommodation preferences, including single, double, or triple sharing basis.

For detailed information and booking enquiries, interested individuals can reach out to the IRCTC office at Gate No. 1 at Visakhapatnam railway station. Alternatively, contact numbers 8287932318 and 9281495847 have been provided for further assistance.

Steps taken to mitigate cyclone impact: Minister

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Municipal Administration Audimulapu Suresh has reiterated that all steps were taken to tackle the cyclone impact efficiently and assured of extending all help to the farmers.

The Minister, along with special officer PS Pradyumna and Collector AS Dinesh Kumar, visited a relief camp set up on the premises of Sathya Sai school on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Audimulapu Suresh asked the officials of the Revenue, Municipal, SW, R&B, Panchayat Raj, Electricity, Irrigation, Civil Supply, and the Police to work in coordination.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy ordered the



officials concerned to focus on providing satisfactory services to all the victims, he recalled.

"After the impact of the storm subsides, the crop damage will be assessed. The government will support all the affected farmers. The government provides compensation in the same season itself for the

crops that have been damaged," the Minister made it clear.

Special Officer Pradyumna said that people in the affected areas have been shifted to the rehabilitation centers in advance. He suggested that people should also fully cooperate with the authorities. The administration has taken nec-

essary measures depending on the situation; he said adding that the details are being known from the field level from time to time.

Collector AS Dinesh Kumar said that official machinery had taken relief operations to full level and the people living in vulnerable places had been put on alert. Those living in huts and dilapidated houses were shifted to the relief camps and food and drinking water were being provided to them.

Tahasildar and EOPD level officers were appointed as in-charges to the relief camps, he added.

SP Malika Garg said that steps were taken to remove uprooted trees from the road. The marine and R&B teams were kept ready to swing into action if needed.

Swapnil inspects drainage points in Vja

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In anticipation of the impending Michaung Cyclone, Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar, the Municipal Commissioner of Vijayawada, took measures to bolster the city's drainage system. A comprehensive inspection of critical drainage points was conducted on Tuesday to assess the ongoing efforts aimed at fortifying the infrastructure.

The primary focus of the inspection was on the deployment of JCBs for the removal of debris from drains at K and R Junction, ensuring unobstructed outfall for rainwater during potential cyclonic conditions. Commissioner Pundkar underscored the significance of timely maintenance and efficient drainage to mitigate waterlogging challenges associated with the approaching cyclone.

Addressing the media during the inspection, Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar reported that JCBs have been strategically positioned at nine centres to swiftly clear outfall drains, thereby preventing water stag-

nation. The commissioner urged residents in low-lying areas to relocate promptly, highlighting the availability of three rehabilitation centers for each circle. Information about designated rehabilitation centers can be obtained through local volunteers or VROs.

Expressing concerns about public health, Commissioner Pundkar appealed to all citizens to consume only boiled water until the cyclonic conditions subside.

Furthermore, he advised residents to stay at home, particularly cautioning against allowing children near drainage areas to avert accidental mishaps.

Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar also conducted inspections at key locations such as Pulleti Kalava and ESI Hospital Junction Gunadala to ensure the effectiveness of drainage systems. During the examinations at various sites, the Commissioner instructed officials to arrange Oil Engines for rapid water drying, minimizing the likelihood of rainwater accumulation on roads.



Breaches to canals, tanks will be plugged: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy has said that the breaches to canals and irrigation tanks would be plugged with the funds of FDR.

The minister along with MLA Ramireddy Prathap Kumar Reddy visited some of the cyclone-affected areas in the Kavali constituency on Tuesday. He saw the Dagadathi-Chennuru main road which was damaged in the cyclone rains in Dagadathi mandal. He also visited the ST colony at Viswanatharaopet in Bogole mandal and spoke to the

dweller. He directed the officials to provide the colony dwellers with food and other essentials.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister announced that the reconstruction works of breached tanks, canals, and damaged roads would be taken up with the funds of FDR.

He claimed that due to the measures taken in advance by the district administration in the wake of the cyclonic storm warning, there was no loss of life or property in the district. He said that some fields were marooned and horticultural crops were slightly damaged.



YSRCP complains against TDP for enrolling T-voters in Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP leaders on Tuesday complained to the State Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena regarding the enrolment of Telangana voters in Andhra Pradesh violating Section 17 of the Representation of People Act, 1950, as no person shall be entitled to be registered in the electoral roll for more than one constituency. The YSRCP leaders Minister Meruga Nagarjuna, Government Whip Lella Appireddy, MLA Malladi Vishnu, and others submitted a representation to the Electoral Officer against the TDP for enrolling Telangana voters in AP.

On this occasion, Lella Appireddy lashed out at Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar former SEC. He criticized Ramesh Kumar, who is an intellectual under the guise of an ex-IAS officer, as the secretary of an organization called Citizen for Democracy, and is acting against democracy and against the consti-



tution. The former SEC was working as a TDP activist under the guise of an IAS officer and dared to remove the mask and work with a TDP. If you have guts and courage, talk about Chandrababu's illegal activities, said Appireddy. He alleged that everyone knew how many irregularities Nimmagadda committed while working as Election Commissioner and recalled how he worked in favor of TDP. He asked Chandrababu to answer about the irregularities related to the registration of voters in Hyderabad.

Minister Meruga Nagarjuna said that Chandrababu is good at managing systems.

He said that those who voted in Hyderabad are ready to vote in AP which is not good in democracy. He informed that under the leadership of Chandrababu in Pragati Nagar in Hyderabad, new voter registration is being done through a special drive for voters in AP. For this, TDP leader Chandrababu explained that banners are being tied in Pragathi Nagar, Hyderabad and registration is being done. Chandrababu, who is an opportunist, is accused of doing this intentionally. The Election Commission should give special instructions to the Collectors not to allow a vote in AP those who voted in Telangana.

MLA Malladi Vishnu said that TDP is resorting to illegal activities by bringing people who are not from AP and enrolling them here as voters which is against the rules and unconstitutional. He asked the Election Commission to stop these illegal activities and instruct all officials to be vigilant and protect democracy.

DC inspects inundated Eluru GGH

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh visited the Government General Hospital here on Tuesday and inspected the stagnated water on the hospital premises.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the GGH was constructed about 8 decades ago and the water stagnation is taking place often when there is heavy rain.

He said that steps were taken to drain out the water stagnated on the GGH premises using motors.

The Collector said that he would send proposals to the government to resolve the problems permanently.

Later talking to the media persons, the Collector said



that heavy rains might lash the district during the next two days under the influence of the Michaung cyclone.

"The official machinery has been put on high alert in the district to avoid loss of life and property. People living at low-

lying areas are being shifted to the safer places for which Rapid Action Teams were formed comprising Tahsildars, MPDOs and other officials," the Collector said.

The teams monitor the removal of uprooted trees and

shifting people to safer places and providing transport to them and sanitation in the rain-affected areas.

Collector Venkatesh said: "Till Monday, one lakh metric tonnes of paddy produce has been purchased from the farmers and another 10,000 metric tonnes of paddy has also been procured. The farmers can sell their paddy produce at the RBKs," The Collector made it clear, adding that the farmers need not worry about selling their paddy produce.

Municipal Commissioner S Venkat Krishna, RDO SK Khajavali, district hospital services coordinating officer Pal Satish Kumar, and hospital superintendent A Vijay were among those who accompanied the Collector.

10 shields for the Vja railway division

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



South Central Railway Vijayawada Division bagged the prestigious General Manager's 'Overall Efficiency Shield' for its excellent performance in the year 2023. The overall Efficiency Shield for 2023 is jointly presented to the Vijayawada and Secunderabad Divisions SCR Zone. The 68th Railway Week Awards- Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar-2023 for excellence in various fields was announced in which Vijayawada Division bagged 10 shields out of a total of 35 shields in various categories.

Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division, SCR explained that Vijayawada Division bagged 10 Efficiency Shields for its best performance during the year 2023.

'1.5L MT of paddy purchased'

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector P Prashanthi has said that 1.50 lakh metric tonnes of paddy produce has been purchased from the farmers and 22 relief camps were set up for the cyclone rain victims.

Talking to the media here on Tuesday, the Collector said that so far 1.50 lakh metric tonnes of paddy had been purchased from the farmers and the rest of paddy produce was shifted to the agriculture market yard.

Some of the farmers saved their paddy produce from getting drenched by covering it with plastic sheets, she said.

She stated that as per the IMD forecast the district would receive heavy rains from midnight on Tuesday.

As there is a possibility of stagnating water in the villages due to heavy rains, steps were being taken to drain out the water using MGNREGA workers.

The irrigation officials would visit at the field level and take measures to drain out the



stagnated water using the Rs 2 crore funds released by the state government on war footing, the Collector said.

"As many as 24 villages which are located in low-lying areas were identified and 20 relief camps were set up for the villagers. Some victims were already shifted to the relief camps and all needed facilities are being provided to them," she asserted.

As per the government's order, Rs 2,500 would be given to each of the families who are

shifted to the relief camps when they leave the camps after normalcy returns, the Collector informed.

Collector Prashanthi said that Rapid Action teams were formed comprising the staff of the Panchayat Raj, R&B, and fire control departments to take up operations in the cyclone-affected areas including providing transport and draining out stagnated water from the residential colonies. The pregnant women were already shifted to the government hospital as a precautionary measure, she said.

The Collector made it clear that all steps were taken to avoid loss of life in the cyclone. Steps were also taken to shift the livestock to safer places, she added.

Collector Prashanti said that educational institutions declared holidays on Monday and Tuesday. A decision would be taken after reviewing the situation on Wednesday to declare a holiday to the educational institutions, she announced.

Restoring power supply on a war-footing: EPDCIL

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Prithvithej Immadi, CEO of EPDCL, has announced that efforts are underway to rapidly restore the power supply system that suffered extensive damage in the aftermath of Cyclone Michaung. As per directives from Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Minister of Energy Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, and Energy Secretary K Vijayanand, regular reviews are being conducted with authorities to expedite the restoration process.

In a proactive approach, essential materials such as poles, transformers, and equipment have been pre-positioned at section offices across all divisions and teams of personnel have been assembled. B. Ramesh Prasad from Rajahmundry Circle and AVV Surya Pratap from Eluru Circle, Directors of Operations and Projects respectively, are directly overseeing the restoration efforts.

The impact of the cyclone has been significant, particularly in Rajahmundry circle, where swift action is being taken. In Rajahmundry town



and 153 villages, a war-like effort has led to the repair of 40,080 services, including electricity poles, severed power lines, and fallen transformer structures. Complaints registered through the call center are promptly communicated to field staff to ensure a speedy resolution of power outages.

The damage assessment in five circles under APEPDCL reveals the primary impact in Rajahmundry circle. Among the notable statistics are 10 repaired out of 10 damaged 33/11 K.V. power substations, 143 repaired out of 143 damaged 11KV feeders, and significant progress in restoring poles, transformers, and vari-

ous lines.

As many as 256 special teams are diligently working to restore 40,080 service connections, 332 agricultural connections, and other essential infrastructure. The CMD emphasised that steps are being taken to ensure power supply is restored to the remaining areas by Wednesday.

To bolster restoration activities, 60 personnel from Eluru circles under APEPDCL have been dispatched in five teams to Nellore circle under APSDCL with necessary supplies.

Consumers are urged to exercise caution around severed power wires, fallen poles, and damaged transformers. For information related to power outages, a toll-free number 1912 is available. Additionally, control room phone numbers for Corporate Office (9440816373), Srikakulam (9490612633), Vizianagaram (9490610102), Visakhapatnam (7382299975), Rajahmundry (7382299960), Eluru (9440902926), and relevant section offices are provided for reporting issues and seeking assistance.

5.30 lakh MT of paddy procured: Minister Karumuri

PNS ■ ELURU



Minister for Civic Supplies Karumuri Nageswara Rao has said that 5,30,000 metric tonnes of paddy has been purchased so far from the farmers across the state.

The minister visited Duvva in Tanuku mandal and Varigedu in Attili mandal on Tuesday. He saw soaked paddy produce and spoke to the farmers.

Later talking to the media, the minister said that so far 5.30 lakh metric tonnes of paddy produce had been purchased from the farmers and the same was being shifted to rice mills. He said that 1.07 lakh tonnes of paddy was sent online and 10,000 metric tonnes of paddy was preserved in godowns. He said that the Chief Minister ordered the officials to purchase all paddy produce from the farmers.

"The government has so far purchased Rs 1100 crore worth paddy from the farmers of which Rs 880 crore has been credited into the accounts of farmers," the Minister made it clear.

CRIME BEAT

15 hurt as private bus collides with RTC bus



NARASARAOPET: As many as 15 passengers were injured when a private travel bus collided with an APSRTC bus at Petturivaripalem village in Narasaraopet mandal on Tuesday. Police said that the RTC bus was going to Vijayawada from Vinukonda. A speeding private bus going to Bangalore collided with the RTC bus. As many as 15 passengers of both the buses were injured in the accident. The private travel bus driver drove the bus at high speed in a reckless manner resulting in it colliding with the RTC bus. After the accident, the private bus driver fled the scene. The police registered a case and shifted the injured passengers to the GGH in Narasaraopet.

A mini-bus, 3 cars damaged as tree falls on them



TIRUPATI: A massive tree uprooted and collapsed on a mini-bus and three cars at Panchajanya guest house at the hill shrine Tirumala on Tuesday. Due to incessant rain accompanied by gales, the massive tree uprooted and fell on four vehicles. No one was hurt in the incident as nobody was there when the incident took place. Later the forest staff removed the uprooted tree and cleared the road. The TTD is not allowing pilgrims to visit Papavanasanam Dam, Srivari padalu, and Silathoranam in view of incessant rains.

VISAKHAPATNAM: Vizag is facing a serious issue as the number of chit fund scams has been alarmingly increasing here. A total of 24 cases have been reported between 2021 and 2023, involving a staggering amount of Rs 6,48,76,651 in fraudulent activities. Despite the arrest of 72 individuals involved in these scams, the recovery of lost funds has been inadequate,

CONCERN OVER RISE IN CHIT FUND SCAMS

leaving many victims in financial distress. "The modus operandi of these chit fund scams is quite deceptive," stated City Police Commissioner Ravi Shankar. "Fraudsters lure unsuspecting individuals with promises of lucrative returns,

24 cases reported between 2021 and 2023, involving Rs 6,48,76,651

often operating without proper authorisation. They collect substantial deposits from these victims and then vanish, leaving them with significant financial losses." These fraudulent activities are a clear violation of the Chit Funds Act

of 1982, along with the AP Chit Funds Rules of 2008. In response to this surge in chit fund scams, City Police Commissioner Ravi Shankar, acting under the directive of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, has initiated a comprehensive plan to tackle this growing menace.

150 Civil Asst Surgeon posts to be filled

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for the post of Civil Assistant Surgeon Specialists to fill 150 vacancies under the control of Director of Secondary Health (APVVP) through Walk-in-Recruitment on Regular and Contract Basis. Eligibility criteria and detailed guidelines are available on the web site <https://hmfw.ap.gov.in> & <http://cfw.ap.nic.in> Interested candidates are requested to attend through Walk-in-Recruitment at the office of Director of Secondary Health (Formerly APVVP), H.No.77-2/G, Lakshmi Elite Building, Pathur Road, Tadepalli, Guntur Dist.

Collector for registration for all eligible youth as voters

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a significant step to promote civic participation and empower the youth, District Collector Dr. A. Mallikarjuna has issued a directive for the registration of every individual, who has completed 18 years of age or is due to turn 18 by January 2024, and is currently enrolled in government and private colleges within the district.

Presiding over a video conference from the camp office on Tuesday, the District Collector engaged with a wide range of officials, including Revenue Divisional Officers (RDOs), Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), Booth Level Officers (BLOs), Mandal Parishad Development Officers (MPDOs), and college principals.

Emphasising the importance of civic responsibility, Dr. Mallikarjuna stressed the need to create awareness among the district's youth, particularly those approaching the age of 18, regarding their role in the electoral process. He

urged them to actively participate in registering as voters and exercising their democratic rights.

The District Collector proposed considering both those who have recently turned 18 and those set to reach this milestone by January 2024 for voter registration. To facilitate this process, he called for the organisation of awareness seminars within respective colleges.

Dr. Mallikarjuna assured that essential information, including details about polling booths, BLOs, and the voter registration process, would be provided to the concerned colleges. He directed officials to ensure the completion of this process within the next three days, expressing optimism about achieving positive outcomes by raising awareness through college sessions.

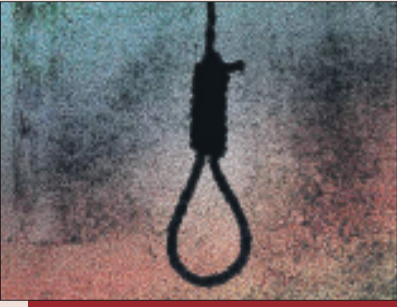
The meeting clarified that voter registration could be completed through both physical and online methods. Individuals facing challenges with physical registration were encouraged to utilise the voter helpline app for a seamless registration process.

Calls for organisation of awareness seminars in colleges

INDIA CORNER


Sikkim tops suicide rate chart in country with 43.1% rate

The picturesque Himalayan state of Sikkim has reported the highest suicide rate per one lakh population in the country, the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) stated. According to the report, Sikkim registered a 43.1 per cent suicide rate, followed by 42.8 per cent in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 29.7 per cent in Puducherry, 28.5 per cent in Kerala and 28.2 per cent in Chhattisgarh. The national average was 12.4 per cent, with a total of 1,70,924 suicides reported across the country in 2022. Sikkim reported 293 suicide cases in 2022, 27 more than 2021, an increase of 10.2 per cent in the suicide rate, according to the report. A total of 226 men and 67 women died by suicide in Sikkim, with unemployment (83 suicides) being the biggest reason for people taking the extreme step in the Himalayan state last year. Sikkim has a population of over 6.10 lakh, according to Census 2011.



Railway employees can now apply for leave through mobile app

The Railway Board has simplified the leave application process for its employees by making changes in the leave module of its mobile app, HRMS (Human Resources Management System). The leave module, which was launched on August 1, 2023, for digitising the process of leave, now offers a facility for employees to apply for leaves through this mobile application. "In order to further improve the user interface for employees, facility for applying for certain types of leaves have been provided in the Mobile App of HRMS with immediate effect," said a written communication from the Railway Board dated November 4, 2023 issued to all railway zones. It added, "It may be noted that as of now, the mobile app feature will only be available for applying the leave and process of sanction needs to be done either through the web portal 'HRMS' or through mobile browser."



Court grants bail to "honeytrapped" former IAF official

Delhi court has granted bail to a former Indian Air Force official who allegedly shared secret information with Pakistan's ISI-backed intelligence operatives after being "honeytrapped" in 2015. The judge noted that the accused has already spent more than half the maximum sentence prescribed for the alleged offence. Additional Sessions Judge Aparna Swami granted the relief to Ranjith K K, who was a Leading Aircraftman, a junior ranking official below a corporal, with the Indian Air Force (IAF) posted in Bhatinda. The judge noted the submissions made by advocates Akash Vajpai and Javed Ali, who while appearing for the accused said a close scrutiny of the case file reflected that no delay in trial can be attributed to the accused. "As per the record, all the material witnesses have been examined. At present, 12 witnesses are left to be examined."



TN seeks Rs 5,000 cr central aid as rains wreak havoc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The DMK on Tuesday demanded an immediate central assistance of Rs 5,000 crore to provide relief to the people and rebuild infrastructure in Chennai and nearby districts hit by incessant rains caused by cyclone Michaung. The demand was made by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP and Parliamentary party leader T R Baalu in Lok Sabha and Tiruchi Siva in Rajya Sabha. Party MP Kanimozhi drew attention to the issue at a press conference in the national capital, saying the DMK-ruled state is facing an unprecedented situation. "In two days, we had 33 cm of rainfall. We faced such bad rains for the first time in the last 47 years. This was worse than the rains we faced in 2015," Kanimozhi told reporters. Chennai is facing the brunt with many areas submerged. The nearby districts are also impacted and the losses are



much more than Rs 4,500 crore, she said. "We have demanded a central assistance of Rs 5,000 crore immediately," she added. Kanimozhi said the state government has made all preparations to tackle the situation. Shelter homes and medical relief camps have been set up. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is also extending help. She said the water is being drained out using huge motor pumps.

The government is moving fast to help the needy and ensure there is no spread of disease, she said. Raising the issue through a zero-hour mention in the Rajya Sabha, Tiruchi Siva informed the members about the situation in the affected areas. "Roads have become rivers because of non-stop running waters and rivers have become like seas... all the water bodies are overflowing. Many tanks have been breached," he said. Roads have been badly dam-

aged due to the fury of nature and essential supplies have been hampered, he said. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and the entire Cabinet, municipal corporation officials, fire department, sanitation workers, doctors, rescue teams and electricity department have been working on a war footing to rescue people and provide relief material, he said. As a precautionary measure, electricity supply was suspended, Siva said. He said that while the state government is doing everything in its means, the damage to infrastructure is so huge that it cannot be repaired at the earliest. "The state government has requested an interim relief of Rs 5,000 crore." "I urge the Union government (that) considering the condition of Tamil Nadu and five districts, kindly release Rs 5,000 crore as initial interim relief which would help the State government in their efforts to safeguard the people of Tamil Nadu," he said.

ASKS KARNATAKA CM SIDDARAMAIAH

What's wrong in increasing budget for minorities

PNS ■ BELAGAVI (KARNATAKA)

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday wondered what was wrong in increasing the state budget allocation for minorities. Speaking to reporters, the chief minister also clarified that in his speech during an event organised by a Muslim organisation he had said his government would protect all the communities in the state including Muslims. "What is wrong with that?" Siddaramaiah sought to know about a query on his statement to increase the annual budget for minorities from Rs 4,000 crore to Rs 10,000 crore. He accused a section of the media of misquoting him as saying that his government will protect only Muslims.

56 Indian varsities feature in QS World University rankings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University tops the chart among 56 Indian universities that have made the cut in QS World University Sustainability rankings, officials announced on Tuesday. DU is followed by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay and Madras. Overall, the University of Toronto has ranked at the top, followed by the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) and The University of Manchester at the second and third spot. The QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024 features 1,397 institutions across 95 countries and territories, more than double the number featured in last year's pilot edition. Evaluating universities based on social impact, environmental impact and governance, the rankings provide a unique and detailed framework to assess how universities are taking action to tackle the world's most pressing global challenges.



"India, as one of the world's largest emitters of carbon dioxide, faces a formidable challenge and shoulders immense responsibility for meeting its commitment to achieve net zero by 2070. In this context, the role of Indian universities is pivotal as they continue to expand in number and improve in quality," QS Senior Vice President Ben Sowter said. "While there are commendable achievements in certain areas of the ranking, there are also areas for improvement. The performance of institutions like VIT and the University of Delhi in

Environmental Education and Institutional Sustainability is noteworthy and these achievements are crucial for India's climate action plans. However, challenges related to Environmental Research and Equality remain. "To align with the nation's environmental commitments, universities need to amplify their research capabilities, foster diversity and inclusivity and invest in high-impact environmental research. Furthermore, as India seeks to enhance its inbound and outbound student mobility, carbon offsetting within the sector will become increasingly necessary," Sowter added.

'One flag, one PM, one Constitution' not a slogan: Amit Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday asserted that the concept of "one flag, one prime minister, one constitution" was not a political slogan and the BJP firmly believes in the principle and finally implemented it with regard to Jammu and Kashmir. Responding to a remark by TMC's Saugata Roy in the Lok Sabha that "ek nishan, ek pradhan, ek samvidhan (one flag, one head, one constitution)" was a "political slogan", Shah wondered as to how can a country have two prime ministers, two constitutions and two flags. He said Roy's remarks were "objectionable". While responding to a remark from the opposition benches, Shah said, "Whosoever did it was wrong. Narendra Modi has corrected it. Your approval or disagreement does not matter. The entire country wanted it." This



comment was made in an apparent reference to the abrogation of provisions of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. He went on to state that "one symbol, one head, one constitution" was not an election slogan. "We had been saying since 1950 that a country should have one PM, one flag and one constitution and two will not do and we have done it." Soon after Roy ended his speech on the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said while the TMC leader mentioned Syama Prasad Mukherjee, he should have also recalled his sacrifice. Roy said he had taught in a college named after Mukherjee and "ek nishan, ek pradhan, ek samvidhan" was his slogan and it was a "political slogan". Shah then rose to hit back at the TMC member.

Just 11.75% women in police forces in country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There are just 11.75 per cent women in the police forces in the country despite the central government's repeated efforts to enhance the strength of the women police to 33 per cent, the Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued advisories on May 21, 2014, May 12, 2015, June 21, 2019, June 22, 2021 and April 13, 2022 to all the state governments and Union Territory administrations to increase the representation of women police to 33 per cent of the total strength. He said all the state governments and Union Territory administrations have been requested to create additional posts of women constables and sub-inspectors by converting the vacant posts of constables and sub-inspectors. The aim is that each police station should have at least three women sub-inspectors and 10 women police constables, so that a women help desk is manned round the clock, he said in a written reply to a question.

Chidambaram accuses govt of steering jobless growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former finance minister P Chidambaram on Tuesday hit out at the government and accused it of steering a jobless growth, questioning if its policies are in favour of the rich. Taking part in a short discussion on the economic situation in the country, the senior Congress leader said despite India becoming a large economy, growing at the fastest rate in the world with the largest FDI inflows, the growth is not seen on the ground. He said India's worker population rate -- the number of

workers to the total population -- is 46 per cent which is quite low but acceptable given the various circumstances in the country. "Of the worker population, that is 46 per cent of the total population, male workers are 69 per cent but female is only 22 per cent. Of the worker population, less than 50 per cent actually work," he said. Effectively, he said, "It means that only 23 per cent of the people work. This is more or less constant in the last nine and half years of the BJP government. Why, I ask, if we have such scintillating growth, why

is this number not improving?" Citing official periodic survey data, he said the unemployment rate in the age group 15-24 is 23.22 per cent; 42 per cent among graduates under the age of 25; 23 per cent among graduates between the age of 25-29 and nearly 10 per cent in graduates between the age of 30-34. Stating that one out of four graduates will be unemployed and even until the age of 35 one out of ten will be unemployed, Chidambaram asked, "Why is this spirited growth, scintillating growth not turning into jobs?"

Keeping in mind most employment in this country is self-employment 57 per cent, he said even regular-wage employees have declined from 24 per cent to 21 per cent. "Apart from the quantity, the quality of employment is also poor," he added. On price rise, he said even today the CPI inflation is above the tolerance limit of 4-6 per cent of the RBI and food inflation is 9.2 per cent. "What does the combination of high unemployment and high prices mean? It means that the impact will be felt in cut in domestic consumption,

cut in household consumption," Chidambaram asserted. Stating that the net financial assets of households have plummeted to the lowest level of 5.1 per cent, he said, "It means that people are consuming less, people are borrowing more, they are liquidating their household assets and savings and their net financial savings has come down to a historical low, 50-year low of 5.1 per cent. The consequences of such developments are felt in child malnutrition and their education and mental ability, he said.

82% rise in medical colleges since 2014, MBBS seats up by 112%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of medical colleges rose by 82 per cent in the country, and MBBS seats have increased by 112 per cent since 2014, the Rajya Sabha was told on Tuesday. In a written reply, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said the number of postgraduate medical seats rose by 127 per cent in the same period. The number of medical colleges rose from 387 in 2014 to the current, the minister said. MBBS seats went up from 51,348 to 1,08,940 while PG



seats surged from 31,185 to 70,674, in the same period, she said. Additionally, the construction of 157 medical colleges have been approved, 108 of which are functional, under a

centrally sponsored scheme for the establishment of new medical colleges attached with existing district/referral hospitals' with preference towards underserved areas and aspirational districts where there is no existing government or private medical college, Pawar said. The construction of colleges have been approved in three phases and funding for it has been shared between the Centre and state governments 90:10 for northeastern states and special category' states and 60:40 for the rest, she added.

Sonia won't make me PM: Pranab told daughter in 2004

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"No, she will not make me the PM," was Pranab Mukherjee's cryptic response in a reference to Sonia Gandhi when he was asked by his daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee about his chances of becoming the prime minister in 2004. Sharmistha recalls her father's reply after Sonia Gandhi's decision to withdraw from the prime ministerial race in her upcoming book "In Pranab, My Father: A Daughter Remembers". In the book, the former Congress spokesperson who quit politics in 2021 provides a glimpse into the illustrious life

of her father, where she also says that he did not have any rancour against Sonia Gandhi for not making him the prime minister, and definitely not against the man chosen - Mamohan Singh. Through her father's diary entries, personal stories narrated to her and her own research, Sharmistha uncovers new, hitherto unknown facets of his political life - his unfulfilled ambition of becoming India's prime minister arising out of his inability to emerge as the 'number one person' to earn Sonia Gandhi's trust, the personality cult around the Nehru-Gandhi family and Rahul Gandhi's lack of charisma and



political understanding among other things, according to the book's publishers Rupa Publications. Mukherjee served as India's finance minister and subsequently became minister for External Affairs, Defence, Finance and Commerce. He

was India's 13th president (2012 to 2017). He died on August 31, 2020 at the age of 84. As the president of the single largest party Congress to win the Lok Sabha elections in 2004, Sonia Gandhi was tipped to be the prime minister and had the full support of the coalition partners. But she renounced her claim to be the prime minister - a decision that took the nation, including her own party colleagues and coalition partners, by surprise. In the chapter titled "The PM India Never Had", Sharmistha also writes: "Following Sonia's decision to withdraw from the

prime ministerial race, there was intense speculation within the media and political spheres. "The names of Dr Manmohan Singh and Pranab were being discussed as the top contenders for the position. I did not have the chance to meet Baba for a couple of days as he was terribly busy, but I spoke to him over the phone. I asked him excitedly if he was going to become the PM. His response was blunt, 'No, she will not make me the PM. It'll be Manmohan Singh.' He added, 'But she should announce it fast. This uncertainty is not good for the country.'"

The author goes on to add that if her father harboured any disappointment about not being named the prime minister, it did not reflect in his diaries. He told a journalist that he did not have any expectation from Sonia Gandhi to make him the prime minister. "If there's no expectation, there's no disappointment as well," the book, which will be launched on Mukherjee's birth anniversary on December 11, says. "It is generally believed that Pranab had a chance to become the PM earlier in 1984 as well, after Indira Gandhi's assassination, and not just in 2004," it adds.

Over 294 kidnapping cases daily in country in 2022; maximum in UP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 1 lakh kidnapping and abduction cases were registered across India in 2022, an average of over 294 daily or more than 12 every hour, with the maximum FIRs being lodged in Uttar, according to the NCRB. In 2022, the average rate of crime per lakh population for the country was 7.8, while charge sheeting in such offences stood at 36.4, according to the report. As many as 1,07,588 kidnapping and abduction cases were reported in the country in 2022 while the figure last year was 1,01,707 and 84,805 in 2020, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, said in its annual crime report. A total of 1,10,140 people, including 21,278 males, 88,861 females and a transgender were reported kidnapped or abducted during 2022, out of which 76,069 -- 13,970 males and 62,099 females -- were children and 34,071 -- 7,308 male, 26,762 female and a transgender -- were adults, it stated.

During 2022, a total of 1,17,083 kidnapped or abducted people -- 21,199 male, 95,883 female and one transgender -- were rescued out of which 1,16,109 people were rescued alive and 974 were found dead, the NCRB said. Delhi registered 5,641 FIRs of kidnapping and abduction in 2022, 5,527 in 2021 and 4,062 in 2020, according to the report of the NCRB, which is tasked with the collection and analysis of crime data. However, the national capital recorded the highest rate of crime of 26.7 per lakh population and the worst charge sheeting rate of 7.8 among all states and Union Territories across the country, the NCRB data showed. Uttar Pradesh lodged a maximum of 16,262 cases in 2022, up from 14,554 in 2021 and 12,913 in 2020. However, the crime rate in the state stood at 6.9 and the charge sheeting rate was 43.7, both better than the national average, the NCRB data showed. Maharashtra logged 12,260 cases in 2022, up from 10,502 in 2021 and 8,103 in 2020. The crime rate stood at 9.8 and the charge sheeting at 20.9.



Sensible approach

Cong will do well not to dwell on the Assembly poll debacle and heed PM Modi's sound advice

The Assembly poll results in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have bruised the Opposition, particularly the Congress. The defeat in the Hindi heartland raises questions about its strategy, also triggering concerns about its impact on the winter session in its weakened avatar. The rout has prompted its leaders, workers and supporters alike questioning the efficacy of their campaign strategies and leadership choices. The winter session of Parliament comes immediately after the declaration of results, making it important for the Congress to register its presence on the political landscape. So it might resort to pandemonium, walkouts, sloganeering and entering the well to disrupt proceedings. The defeat may also affect the morale of Congress members, leading to potential rifts and groupism. Causing further embarrassment to the Congress, Trinamool's Mamata Banerjee and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav — already unhappy with the party over its indifference in attending



a seat-sharing meeting with the INDIA bloc members ever since the last round of State elections was announced as it reportedly wanted to focus on the polls — have declared that they have no plan to attend today's INDIA all-party meeting at Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's residence.

The Congress, as the principal Opposition party, is supposed to play a crucial role in shaping House discussions, debates, legislative agenda and steering the bloc. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a balanced approach in Parliament, despite the heated post-election atmosphere, underscores the need for constructive debate. The Congress would do well

to introspect rather than finding fault with the system or blaming the BJP for the results. Following the rather surprising verdict, Modi has urged the Opposition MPs not to vent their anger in Parliament. The call for restraint comes at a time when tensions are high, and there is a risk of disruption. The appeal for a dignified and constructive approach to parliamentary proceedings highlights the importance of maintaining decorum and focusing on the nation's priorities. Unfortunately, however, the PM's own party has other ideas. Amit Malviya, the BJP's IT cell head, mocked, "Where is Rahul Gandhi hiding?" Malviya, and for that matter the huge troll army at the BJP's disposal, would do well not to provoke the Congress as that will result only in more acrimony. It is crucial for all political parties, including the BJP and the Congress, to prioritise the nation over partisan interests. The Assembly election results should serve as a catalyst for introspection, reform and improvement rather than leading to a confrontational stance. The session presents the Congress with an opportunity to reevaluate its strategy and leadership and connect with the electorate. It can be a platform for the party to articulate a clear vision for the future, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity.

PICTALK



A farmer carries harvested rice as a herd of wild elephants gathers in a field in search of food, in Nagaon

PTI

Why did Gehlot lose despite his welfare schemes?

The BJP encashed the alleged massive corruption in the welfare schemes launched by Gehlot and people trusted Modi's guarantee

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is ready to return to power in Rajasthan and in the elections held on 199 seats, BJP has won 114 seats and Congress 70 seats. But this is evident from the fact that the difference between the two parties appears so big. This marks a continuation of a three-decade-old trend of voters in the desert state changing governments every five years. This marks a major turnaround in the fortunes of the party, which was divided into factions and was struggling to counter the welfarist agenda of the Ashok Gehlot-led government. To win in Rajasthan, the BJP targeted the Gehlot welfare model and ensured victory by controlling the internal strife in the party. The only hindrance was the lack of unity in its organisation and the Rajasthan unit was mired in infighting. Rani Basundhara proceeded step by step to convince Raje and bring unity to the party and addressed the leadership issue by fighting as a unit and without announcing any chief ministerial face.

Modi's guarantee card Modi had previously mocked



the growing Revadi or 'freebie' culture in Indian politics, mocking the Congress' guarantee in Karnataka and even speaking on the issue in Parliament. However, several surveys conducted by the BJP found that people were voting based on day-to-day economic issues and that the Congress' promised welfare schemes in Himachal and Karnataka were key factors in its victory.

Thus, the BJP went to the polls armed with a number of welfare schemes, both existing schemes — such as Madhya Pradesh's Ladli Behna scheme, which was announced in March this year — and the annual financial assistance for women in Chhattisgarh in the manifesto. As promises were made. Also many concessions for youth and farmers. The Prime Minister also used his personal credibility by offering the 'Modi Guarantee' to differentiate BJP's welfare schemes

from those of Congress. There was the issue of recruitment exam paper leak, which was used by BJP leader and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to target the youth constituency. Rajya Sabha MP Kirori Lal Meena and the state leadership held several protests on the issue. Earlier this year, when Meena was on hunger strike, Bashundhara Raje had also given her support to him. The BJP brought together these issues, from paper leaks to crimes against women to unemployment, during a street protest in September — 'Nahi Sahega Rajasthan' — to craft a unified script and capitalise on the anti-incumbency wave. Can be picked up. Since Rajasthan has a mental tendency to elect a different government every five years, the BJP's only real fear was a welfare scheme-based loss by Gehlot at the last moment, but the CM lost that advantage too by retaining most of its sitting MLAs, which became a boon for the BJP. To turn the incision of Gurjars in BJP's favour. In 2018, the Gujarat community was seen supporting the Congress and rallied with

the Meenas to make then-state chief Sachin Pilot the chief minister. Eight Gujjar candidates of the Congress won, giving the party a total of 25 seats in East Rajasthan. The BJP was reduced to three seats in the region, with the remaining seats going to independents and the BSP, which later supported the Congress. This time, the BJP had been working on a multi-pronged plan for some time to win back the Gujjar votes, as evidenced by Prime Minister Modi's attempt to capitalise on Congress's attempt to humiliate Rajesh and Sachin Pilot at rally after rally. This not only brought many Gujjar leaders into the organisation but also kept the issue of Pilot's "insult" alive in the Gujjar belt to draw community voters away from the Congress. State BJP leaders acted at Modi's behest, for example, Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria, a two-time MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, said Pilot had "no chance of becoming chief minister because Gehlot would never allow it".

(Writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

the Meenas to make then-state chief Sachin Pilot the chief minister. Eight Gujjar candidates of the Congress won, giving the party a total of 25 seats in East Rajasthan. The BJP was reduced to three seats in the region, with the remaining seats going to independents and the BSP, which later supported the Congress. This time, the BJP had been working on a multi-pronged plan for some time to win back the Gujjar votes, as evidenced by Prime Minister Modi's attempt to capitalise on Congress's attempt to humiliate Rajesh and Sachin Pilot at rally after rally. This not only brought many Gujjar leaders into the organisation but also kept the issue of Pilot's "insult" alive in the Gujjar belt to draw community voters away from the Congress. State BJP leaders acted at Modi's behest, for example, Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria, a two-time MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, said Pilot had "no chance of becoming chief minister because Gehlot would never allow it".

(Writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

Only right education can ensure world peace

The quality of school education deserves maximum attention, particularly in terms of teacher education and recruitment, vocational skills and interest identification

The strife-torn world aspires to witness days of no wars, and no violence for future generations. One could safely state that even those who are busy fighting the Ukraine-Russia war, or Israel - Palestine war; or busy in violence in the name of fundamentalism and terrorism, must be somewhere inside willing to give a tension-violence-war free world to their future generations. Probably some select ones could still be under the illusion that their Truth is the only Truth, and all others who do not toe the line must be brought within the fold by even by violence would like their generations ahead to continue in the tradition of violence their Goal — certainly a utopia — stands achieved!

One needs a really tough-nut optimist to even imagine that wars and violence could vanish from the face of the earth in the near future. However, the faith in human ingenuity and trust in the powers of love to create an environment of hope and inspire people to work for global peace. The way out is only one; follow the path of knowledge, and be conversant in applying the skill of discrimination to separate right from wrong, light from darkness, real from false, and Truth from Untruth! This is not the oft-quoted cliché! It is the only alternative available to human beings for the very survival of the human race on the planet Earth, and the planet itself.

The mute question before India and Indians is: are we preparing ourselves to become the soldiers of peace and harmony within the boundaries of India, and then establish that the only way is the Indian way that respects diversity, universality of the human race, and responsibility of human beings to care for every human being, and most importantly, the nature that sustains humans so long it is treated in the appropriate manner! In the third decade of the third millennium, it is evident that as the world moves ahead in its dependence on knowledge, the emergence of an enlightened and cohesive people; and a strong, prosperous, enterprising, nation would prominently depend on good quality



education and dynamic skill acquisition which are the two of its most powerful pivots. India's achievements in education in the post-independence period are indeed praiseworthy. From a literacy rate of around 18%, in 1947 we are now touching 80%! Initiatives taken at the policy level, support extended to the community and adequate comprehension of their key role by teachers, academics, scholars and people have contributed to reaching the present position. Credit must also go to three major policy formulations in education - 1968, 1986 and 1992 - that have taken a comprehensive view of the emerging needs of the nation, changing national and international scenarios and aspirations of the young of India. Each one of these confronted the inherited legacy of a transplanted alien system of education and made an attempt to move away from it. It has not been an easy task. However, India is now well-equipped with the necessary experience and expertise and has successfully formulated a policy that is 'rooted to culture and committed to progress'. It envisages India's prominent role in global human endeavours to create new knowledge and explore every possibility of its use for the benefit of humanity. The NEP-2020 is essentially an articulation of the fundamen-



THE WAY OUT IS ONLY ONE; FOLLOW THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE AND BE CONVERSANT IN APPLYING THE SKILL OF DISCRIMINATION TO SEPARATE THE RIGHT FROM WRONG

tal role of education in 'achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development'. It responds with the confidence of an alert and active nation to achieve the SDG-4 that seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote; lifelong learning opportunities for all". The challenge before the academia of the nation is how to ensure quality education on a universal scale, dynamic skill acquisition and effective personality development. This would require high levels of competence, commitment and performance from every teacher irrespective of his level or stage in the hierarchy. The NEP-2020 offers basic support by permitting flexibility in the choice of subjects of study and encourages multidisciplinary. Every learner could pursue the subject areas of his interest, he could study music and mathematics, or chemistry and philosophy. Flexibility and learner's interest shall dominate the system. As the quality of school education paves the path for quality enhancement at higher levels, it deserves maximum attention, particularly in terms of teacher education and recruitment, vocational skills, individual attention and interest identification, and assessment procedures. It shall have to fully transform itself to ensure that ideas, imagination,

curiosity and creativity with which every child is blessed with is never impeded, but dexterously nourished. Hopefully, education shall get all the resource support in future, and the dilution of quality in certain aspects of education shall be redressed early. Only then the Indian education attract global attention and appreciation and shall not be 'just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for complete realisation and liberation of Soul'. True Indian education imbued with the legacy of 'Worlds but one family' could pave the path for global brotherhood in the world of today that is suffering in innumerable ways. The first step in India could be the transformation of elementary schools! Yes, if teachers are given the autonomy - and responsibility — to present a model of regularity, punctuality, discipline, honesty, integrity, empathy, broad vision, commitment to the profession, value-based conduct, and growing up in competence, the multiplier impact would be tremendous. That could transform work culture in every other sphere of life. For that, the nation must trust the teacher and look after him!

(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A MEMORABLE PERSONALITY

Sir — On December 5, 1950, Sri Aurobindo left his body in Pondicherry. His far-sighted views on many issues are still relevant and deserve our attention. He had the foresight about the necessity of a socialist revolution for evolutionary progress. He wrote, "There is to be equality of opportunity for all, but also of status for all, for without the last the first cannot be secured; even if it were established, it could not endure (The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development - page 201). On October Revolution he said to AB Purani that he was one of the influences that worked to make it a success (Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo - Page 474).

We cannot deny the contribution of the October Revolution towards human evolution. That brute capitalism made poor children die young after working as chimney sweepers, gives us enough reason to tip our hats to his foresight. Let us recall a line from William Blake's poem, "The Chimney Sweeper: When my mother died I was very young", "So your chimneys I sweep & in soot, I sleep." As a result of the October Revolution, many socialist states emerged to take care of the potentialities of every human being. Human evolution again discarded the dictatorship of the proletariat of socialism as it had earlier thrown out the laissez-faire liberty of market players. However, the contribution of socialism to human evolution can never be denied as modern welfare states have come to balance between the liberty of capitalism and the equality of socialism.

All modern welfare states including the United States of America have accepted the ideas of socialism in their policy of giving social security to the people like health care and handsome allowance for the unemployed. A true welfare state is more inclined to socialism than far-right capitalism.

Sujit De | Kolkata

BJP's spadework succeeds



Like every election season, this one too was filled with tall promises, speeches, and the blame games of netas. As in the past, it steered clear of all the noise and brought a fresh

lease of life bereft of the poll issues. As all attention now moves to the CM designates in states, we love to see the outcome across the five states. Unlike the 2023 World Cup cricket final (trigger warning: may revive trauma), where the match still had to be played to know the result, the result here is already decided.

A range of exit polls have given their verdict on what they see as likely to happen in the five Assembly elections. With the BJP emerging as an impossible opponent to dislodge, is Madhya Pradesh the new Gujarat? The BJP has always won a higher vote share than the Congress this millennium. The thumping victory in MP made its model most amicable for its governance. The exit polls have gone awry but exact poll results proved BJP's supremacy in state elections.

CK Subramaniam | Chennai

DRUG ADDICTION

Sir — Today the country's youth are falling into the swamp of drugs. One of the reasons for this is lack of stamina. Young people today lose their morale very quickly, which leads to depression and then falling into the trap of drug addiction. Parents should teach their children to fight situations and make them strong. The second big reason is that addiction has become popular nowadays. In many films, the actor is shown smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, as a result of which young people are also inspired to become addicted to drugs. The biggest weakness of young people is accepting drugs as a fad by falling into bad company. Young people need to empower themselves and share any problems with their parents.

Ashraf Nawaz | Hyderabad

SOIL POLLUTION: A CAUSE OF CONCERN

Sir — Soil pollution has received a different level of attention than water and air pollution. The chemicals emerging from industrial and agricultural practices cause land degradation. Untreated waste and waste waters have also destroyed

thousands of species of fish, birds and plants. Though soil has the innate property to filter out contaminants, it can do so only to a limited extent, the rest trickle out into the atmosphere. Direct contact with contaminated soil is a plausible reality. More than ninety per cent of people's food is accrued through soil and, therefore, its conservation is crucial for the eco chain. The crippling effects of soil pollution, including congenital health disorders, infective diseases and non-contagious diseases like cancer, have worried the health professionals. No doubt, environmental scientists have in their armoury various remedies to combat soil contamination like surface leaching, bioremediation, thermal remediation, mycoremediation and phytoremediation. Nonetheless, on December 5, World Soil Day, the responsibilities of an individual as an active contributor to the prevention and elimination of soil pollution cannot be overlooked.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

GET ON THE HAPPINESS TRAIN!

Happy people see the humour and magic in each moment



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

As per 'World Happiness Report' (WHR) released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a global initiative of the United Nations, India stands at rank 126th in the global happiness ranking list with a Happiness score of 4.036, classifying it as one of the world's least joyful nations. Isn't it startling & unpleasant? There is no doubt in it that happiness is an aspiration of every human being, and it can also be a measure of social progress. It is the art of living, the very purpose of our existence & the true index of quality of life. Without happiness, life is dry and meaningless. With happiness, life immediately becomes fulfilling and wonderful. Being happy is not about how well you're doing in general, but rather if you're doing better than expected. For example, say you go to an ice cream parlour where the desert ice cream was the best you've ever had in your life. Now, according to the happiness equation, you would be happier if you had expected it to be just average, as opposed to assuming it would be as delicious as it was. However, it doesn't mean that having low expectations is the path to happiness. Happy people usually keep themselves happy because they know the little ways to appreciate themselves and to see the humour and magic in each moment.

Each one of us wishes to be happy all the time and we pursue this goal of ours in various ways, whether it be through leisure, careers, wealth, relationships or whatever the means, the tendency of the soul is towards being happy. However, in this quest to be happy, we end up making others unhappy and at times also make ourselves unhappy. In such a situation, we should ask ourselves, "Why do we lose our happiness?" What makes us take the wrong path and lose our inner state of buoyancy? When we pursue limited, superficial or false goals, it is very easy to lose happiness, firstly, because we are not being true to the self, and secondly, because we may build up false expectations that are not met through our goals and activities. Remember! Happiness gained through relationships and possessions has seeds of sorrow because they are sown with expectations that stem from greed, selfishness, attachment or ego. Hence before getting yourself involved in anything, we need to ask ourselves, "Will this bring me happiness?" Very few people know about the fact that human beings in their most powerful stage have a good stock of happiness. It is only when we contravene the spiritual and natural laws, we lose happiness & start making others around us unhappy. The repercussions of anger, attachment, greed, ego and desire lead us to loss of peace and happiness. The more we are driven by these forces, the more we will spend the stock of our happiness. Hence awareness and application of spiritual truths is the only way out to sustain & increase our stock of happiness. We need to go within ourselves to tap the eternal source of happiness and for that firstly we need to be true to the self, know the self and be the self.

Once we have understood the happiness that comes from within and as a result of the manner in which we conduct our lives, and ourselves then it is possible to understand how to share that happiness with others. Increasing the happiness of others brings happiness to the self, but this cannot be an escape - that is, it is not a substitute for creating internal happiness. Benefiting the self on a spiritual level will definitely bring internal happiness & resolve past karma. So what are you waiting for? let's get on the happiness train & reach our final destination of "Happy Nation".

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

Cut out red tapism in public sector share sale



UTTAM GUPTA

The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape undermines the chances of the Government selling CPSU shares to willing investors

In the Budget for 2023-24, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had set a target of Rs 51,000 crore for proceeds of the sale of Union government shareholding in central public sector undertakings (CPSUs). As per available indications, the government may fall short of this target by Rs 30,000 crore.

An overwhelming share of the shortfall is due to delays in the disinvestment plans of IDBI Bank (the government plans to sell 30.48 per cent of its stake as well as 30.24 per cent shareholding of LIC aggregating to a total stake sale of 60.72 per cent) and state-owned NMDC Steel. Whereas, in the case of IDBI Bank, this is due to delays in the vetting process for potential buyers by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), The sale of NMDC Steel is hamstrung due to elections in Chhattisgarh where the company's main plant is located.

The shortfall in proceeds during the current fiscal year is in sync with the trend seen since 2015-16 when the Modi - government started disinvestment with a particular focus on 'strategic' sale (a sophisticated nomenclature for a share sale that reduces its holding in the CPSU to below 50 per cent or privatization). Barring two years viz. 2017-18 and 2018-19 when the actual proceeds exceeded the target, in the remaining six years, the achievement was far short.

Even during 2017-18 and 2018-19, the government could achieve the target primarily because of the two big-ticket sales of its shares in one CPSU to another viz. (i) sale of its 51.11 per cent shareholding in Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) to the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) during 2017-18 that yielded Rs 37,000 crore; (ii) sale of its 52.63 per cent stake in Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) to the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) during 2018-19 yielding Rs 13,000 crore. These sales can't be termed as strategic as the purchaser being another CPSU namely ONGC/PFC, the Government continues to have effective ownership over the divested entity viz. HPCL/REC.

It makes no sense to fix a target for proceeds from share sales. This is because unlike tax revenue, which can be projected with a degree of certainty, the same cannot be said about proceeds from disinvestment. In this case, a lot depends on the market scenario and, in particular, the perception of investors about the company in which share-sale is contemplated. In cases where the strategic sale is mooted, the Government faces a bigger challenge as apart from a favourable market, it needs bidders with deep pockets. The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape further undermines the chances of the Government kicking the ball rolling just around the time when the strategic investors are ready to put in their bets.

The Niti Aayog identifies companies for disinvestment which are then considered by the Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD), a long-drawn process by itself, which takes it to the Alternative Mechanism (AM) - a group of ministers, including finance, road transport & highways, administrative reforms, etc., - for approval. After AM's approval, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) moved a proposal for in-principal approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs



“

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO REMAIN IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT EVEN AFTER STRATEGIC SALE. THIS IS AMPLY REFLECTED IN A STATEMENT IN SITHARAMAN'S BUDGET SPEECH FOR FY 2019-20

”

(CCEA). Taking all these approvals is a time-consuming process and by the time these are in place, the market scenario could become adverse. At a fundamental level, disinvestment of the government's shareholding in a PSU is tantamount to the sale of assets. Therefore, receipts arising therefrom can only be treated as 'capital receipts' (CRs). While preparing the budget, it won't be advisable to plan for receipts from this source in the same manner as it is done for revenue receipts (RRs) which are receipts generated from the day-to-day business activities e.g. dividends on shares held by the government.

The government should only provide for proceeds from share sales in CPSU on an 'actual' basis after it has happened instead of making provision at the time of presenting the budget. Having delinked from the budgetary process, it should take up disinvestment in CPSUs as an independent exercise guided by the broad principle of where it shouldn't be in.

In an approach outlined in the Budget for 2021-22, the government divided CPSUs into two broad categories i.e. strategic and non-strategic. The strategic group covers atomic energy, space and defense; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services. The non-strategic category includes all other sectors such as industrial and consumer goods, hotel and tourist services, trading, and marketing.

While, the government wants to sell CPSUs in the strategic sector with the caveat that at least one (and a maximum of four) will be retained in the public sector, it will privatise 'all' undertakings in non-strategic sectors. All loss-making undertakings in the latter category will be closed. Based on this template, it is working on a detailed action plan which is fine. But the process is hamstrung because of a host of legacy issues.

For instance, despite the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) and Niti Aayog recommending the privatisation of all nine CPSUs in the fertiliser sector (it falls in the non-strategic category) coming under the administrative control of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, the latter has opposed it. The ministry feels that with control over fertilizer PSUs gone, the government won't be able to ensure adequate availability of this politically sensitive agri-input in every nook and corner of the country.

The strategic sale of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) hasn't happened nearly four years after it was initially mooted in 2019-20. A prime reason is the government's intent to regulate the prices of petrol and diesel (despite the price of these fuels having been deregulated way back in 2010/2014) which it can do by asking the three oil marketing CPSUs including BPCL to do its bidding. Its ability to influence prices will be hampered if BPCL is privatised.

The government wants to remain in the driver's seat even after strategic sales. This is amply reflected in

Revolutionising agriculture with the 'natural produce on wheels' project

The 'natural produce on wheels' project has been a resounding success in Himachal Pradesh, showcasing that natural farming can reshape agricultural practices in the region

A truck arrives at the Agriculture Department of Himachal Pradesh in Baluganj, Shimla. Two women, Nirmala and Sumana Devi, members of Narishakti Mahila Krishi Samooch from Nerwa village, Tutu Block, Shimla, step out, bringing fresh seasonal vegetables. These vegetables, including tomatoes, radishes, French beans, and even fruits like guava and kiwi, have been collected on the same day from the doorsteps of local farmers, primarily by women. Representing their group, the two women, along with Lokesh Bhanot, Farmers Produce Officer (FPO) from the agriculture department, move to the vegetable market or 'subzi mandi'. Bhanot, who surveyed the market rates the



SARITA BRARA

previous evening, displays the rates on a blackboard, and customers make on-the-spot purchases. The vehicle then heads to another selling venue at the state Secretariat complex, carrying the produce along with a cashier.

Upon reaching the venue, vegetables and other products are unloaded and arranged. Several women, mostly regular customers, are already waiting to buy these fresh, chemical-free, and locally-grown products. "The vegetables are fresh, have a longer shelf life, taste better, and, importantly, they are chemical-free, not harmful to our health," says Sunita, a regular customer. Other customers echo similar sentiments, expressing a preference for naturally farmed, more nutritious produce.

Beyond fresh vegetables, products from forest areas, such as anna dana (dried pomegranate seeds), amla (Indian gooseberry), kachina, Bauhinia variegata, and wild honey, are also available. The villages, falling under forest areas, allow people to collect and sell forest produce.

The farmers are paid according to the rates fixed by the FPO. Another pickup van from Basantpur Block brings vegetables from villages in that area, forming a network of women farmers participating in the 'natural produce on wheels' project. Three blocks in Shimla district, Totu, Mashobra, and Basantpur, were selected for this initiative, involving 5,000 farmers, including 8% women, practising natural farming. They are

all small and marginal farmers. Four women Self-Help Groups with 20 members are involved in this pilot that aims to procure fresh produce directly from farmers' doorsteps and sell it at the HP Secretariat & Agriculture Directorate Boileauganj, Shimla. This alleviates the need for middlemen, ensuring farmers receive fair market prices.

The project operates twice a week, and its success may lead to increased frequency based on customer response. For farmers, it is a win-win situation; they receive market prices without intermediaries, transport costs are shared among them, and all produce is sold on the same day.

A survey conducted a year ago identified areas and farmers engaged in natural farming.

Farmers undergo a two-day training program, and their products are certified and graded by the agriculture department. Initiated earlier this year, the 'natural produce on wheels' project addresses the challenge of lower yields in natural farming. Farmers cultivate only a portion of their land using the kitchen garden model, maximising the output on smaller plots.

Natural farming, a chemical-free traditional method, relies on nature's laws, avoiding external inputs like chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The process minimises human intervention, making it distinct from organic farming. Pesticides used are prepared by farmers using cow dung, cow urine, garlic, red chilli, and buttermilk.

While organic vegetables are often costly, products from natural farming are more affordable for daily consumption. A survey indicates that natural farming reduces cultivation costs by 46% and increases profits by 22%. In comparison, organic farming relies on expensive inputs, contributing to higher market prices. The positive impact of natural farming extends to disease incidence. Scab and marssonina incidences in Natural Farming orchards are notably lower than in chemical farming, suggesting its potential to improve crop health. Most women involved in the project own small agricultural plots, not exceeding 6 to 7 bighas of land. Their husbands typically work in various professions, and two

women from each group manage the pickup of produce. "We spend half of our day in our agriculture fields or with livestock, managing sowing to harvesting on our own," shares one woman. The pickup service provided makes it feasible for them to sell their produce without the challenges of transportation. The 'natural produce on wheels' project has seen success, with products selling out quickly, and the demand continues to grow. It exemplifies a sustainable model, benefiting farmers, consumers, and the environment, showcasing the potential for natural farming to reshape agricultural practices in the region.

(The writer is an independent senior journalist, views are personal. Charkha Features)

MONEY MATTERS

Inox India, Stanley Lifestyles get Sebi's nod to float IPOs

Cryogenic tank maker Inox India and luxury furniture brand Stanley Lifestyles have received capital markets regulator Sebi's go ahead to raise funds through initial public offerings (IPOs). The two companies, which filed their preliminary IPO papers with the capital markets regulator in August and September, obtained observation letters from the watchdog during November 29-30, an update with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed on Tuesday. In Sebi's parlance, obtaining its observation letter means its go ahead to launch the IPO. Going by the draft papers, Inox India's IPO is entirely an Offer For Sale (OFS) of up to 2.21 crore shares by its existing shareholders and promoters. Since the issue is completely an OFS, the Vadodara-based company will not receive any proceeds and all the funds will go to the selling shareholders. Inox India, one of the leading cryogenic tank manufacturers, has over 30 years of experience offering solutions across the design, engineering, manufacturing, and installation.



US-based Panattoni to invest Rs 110 cr in India

US-based Panattoni, a global leader in industrial and logistics real estate development, will invest Rs 110 crore by March 2025 to develop a warehouse park in Delhi-NCR, its first project in the Indian market. In July last year, Panattoni announced its foray into India and said the company would invest USD 200 million to develop four industrial and logistics parks as it seeks to tap the growing demand for warehousing spaces across major cities. On Tuesday, the company announced its inaugural project in India with the Phase 1 launch of 'Panattoni Park NH71' in Delhi-NCR. "We have acquired 17-acre land to develop our first project in Delhi-NCR. The construction work will start in the first quarter of the next calendar year. It will take a year to complete the project," Panattoni India Managing Director Sandeep Chanda told PTI. The total cost to develop 3.6 lakh square feet of area would be around Rs 110 crore, he said, adding that the company has tied up with some institutional investors to meet the cost.



Gold nosedives Rs 1,050 to Rs 63,250 %10g

Gold nosedived Rs 1,050 to Rs 63,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, retreating from its all-time high due to weak trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal settled at Rs 64,300 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also tumbled Rs 1,700 to Rs 78,500 per kilogram. "Gold prices plunged on Tuesday in the Delhi markets trading at Rs 63,250/10 grams, down by Rs 1,050, following a bearish trend in the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the futures trade, February contract of gold climbed Rs 46 to Rs 62,415 per 10 grams on the MCX. However, silver's March contract declined Rs 389 to Rs 75,779 per kilogram on the bourse. In the international markets, gold and silver were quoting lower at USD 2,037 per ounce and USD 24.50 per ounce, respectively.



Banks write off Rs 10.57 lakh crore in 5 years

NPA recovery worth Rs 7.17 lakh cr: FinMin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Banks have written off Rs 10.57 lakh crore during the last five financial years, of which Rs 5.52 lakh crore was in respect of loans pertaining to large industries, the government informed the Parliament on Tuesday. "As per RBI data, scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) have written off an aggregate loan amount of Rs 10.57 lakh crore during the last five financial years," Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. The scheduled commercial banks have also recovered Rs 7.15 lakh crore of non-performing assets (NPAs) during the five-year period. "Comprehensive steps have been taken to recover NPAs,



enabled by which, SCBs have made an aggregate recovery of Rs 7,15,507 crore (RBI provisional data for FY 2022-23) in NPA accounts, including written-off loans, during the last five financial years," he said. In reply to a separate ques-

tion, Karad said: "Scheduled commercial banks have written off an aggregate amount of Rs 5.52 lakh crore in respect of loans pertaining to large industries and services during the last five financial years (FYs), i.e. from FY 2018-19 to FY 2022-

23." He also said that this includes Rs 93,874 crore written off by all the banks on account of fraud during the five-year period. Karad said banks regularly evaluate the impact of write-offs as part of the exercise to clean up their balance sheet, avail tax benefit and optimise capital, in accordance with the said guidelines and policies of the respective boards. "Such write-off does not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers to repay and therefore, write-off does not benefit the borrowers. The borrowers of written-off loans continue to be liable for repayment and banks continue to pursue recovery actions initiated in written-off accounts through various recovery mechanisms available to them..." Karad said.

Indian Chamber of Commerce unveils first overseas office

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Marking a milestone in its international expansion strategy, the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has inaugurated its first overseas office in Italy. The ICC said this strategic move underscores its commitment to fostering robust trade relations between India and Italy and expanding opportunities for Indian businesses in the European market. ICC has appointed Vas Shenoy, a businessman and seasoned geopolitical strategist and analyst, as Chief Representative for Italy who will play a major role in driving the chamber's engagement with the Italian business community and government entities. ICC President Ameya Prabhu said, "The opening of our first overseas office in Italy marks a pivotal step in ICC's global expansion strategy."

'21,791 fake GST registrations; see suspected tax evasion of Rs 24,000 cr'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said GST officers have detected 21,791 fake GST registrations and over Rs 24,000 crore of suspected tax evasion during a two-month-long special drive. In a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha, the minister said to safeguard the interest of honest taxpayers and avoid extreme hardship to taxpayers, instructions have been issued from time to time, directing officers to exercise due caution and care in the exercise of powers such as summons, provisional attachment of property, blocking of tax credit etc. "A total of 21,791 entities (11,392 entities pertaining to state tax jurisdiction and 10,399 entities pertaining to CBIC jurisdiction) having GST registration were discovered to be non-existent. An amount of Rs 24,010 crore (state - Rs 8,805 crore + Centre - Rs 15,205 crore) of suspected tax evasion was detected during the special drive," Sitharaman said.



The minister was replying to a question on the number of entities identified as having fake registrations, and the total amount of evasion detected during the special drive against fake GST registrations conducted by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) from May 16 to July 15, 2023. To a query on whether the government has considered the challenges faced by e-commerce enterprises in obtaining GST registrations, especially operating in virtual spaces, Sitharaman said that considering the special nature of e-commerce operators,

a simplified procedure for registration of e-commerce operators has already been notified. It provides that when an e-commerce operator applies for registration in a particular state or Union Territory where he/she does not have a physical presence, he/she can apply for registration by giving details of the principal place of business located in another state or Union Territory. Further, amendments have been made in GST Rules to strengthen the registration process, including biometric-based Aadhaar authentication, for high-risk registrants, along with the verification of the original copy of the documents. A pilot project for this was launched in Gujarat. In July, the pilot project was extended to Puducherry and in November to Andhra Pradesh. Also, details of bank account, name and PAN of the registered person are required to be furnished within 30 days of the grant of registration or before filing of the statement of outward supply, whichever is earlier.

Number of MFI loans extended by lenders dips



PNS ■ MUMBAI

The number of microfinance loans extended by all lenders declined in the September quarter, but an increase in the average ticket sizes helped in the quantum of lending to grow, a report said on Tuesday. The industry's self-regulatory body Microfinance Industry Network (MFIN) said the overall loan portfolio grew to Rs 3,76,110 crore at the end of September, up from Rs 3,55,977 crore in the previous quarter and Rs 3,00,974 crore in the year-ago period. The financiers made loans of Rs 76,054 crore in the September quarter as compared to Rs 71,916 crore in the year-ago period, but the number of loans declined to 1.69 crore from 1.81 crore. The average loan size increased to Rs 45,124 at the end of September as against Rs 39,725 in the year-ago period, and Rs 43,298 in the quarter-ago period, the report said. MFIN's chief executive and director Alok Misra said the industry added 1.9 crore unique borrowers in the first six months of the new fiscal, helping the wider agenda of financial inclusion.

Stock markets continue record run, Sensex scales 69K peak

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty soared to new lifetime highs on Tuesday, fueled by robust buying in power, banking and utility stocks, extending their rally for a sixth consecutive session. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 431.02 points, or 0.63 per cent, to close at a new record high of 69,296.14. As many as 20 Sensex scrips closed with gains. The broader index Nifty also climbed 168.50 points, or 0.81 per cent to hit its lifetime high of 20,855.30 with 32 of its components closing in the green. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged by more than Rs 2.5 lakh crore to cross Rs 350 lakh crore on Tuesday. Analysts said the positive sentiment was fuelled by unabated inflow of foreign funds on the back of robust sentiment built up over



favourable macroeconomic data in the previous week and the results of assembly polls of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh that raised expectations of longer political stability in the country. Also, investors are expecting the Reserve Bank to maintain the status quo on the interest rate in its bi-monthly monetary policy decision to be announced on Friday, they said. Among major Sensex movers, Power Grid rose the most by 4.46 per cent, NTPC by 3.89 per cent, SBI by 2.31

per cent and ICICI Bank by 2.28 per cent. Other gainers included Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan and Maruti. On the other hand, Hindustan Unilever, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finance remained laggards with losses of up to 1.49 per cent. Foreign institutional investors purchased shares worth Rs 2,073.21 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. "The domestic market extended the gains and hit fresh highs despite cautiousness among global peers ahead

of key US job data this week. The aura of the state election results and other positive factors like above-expected earnings and GDP growth data are supporting the return of FII flows to the Indian market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. "The RBI's monetary policy meeting is expected to be status quo. However, the commentary on economic growth, foodgrain prices and inflation trajectory will be closely watched," he added. The market rally was also fueled by gains in Adani group stocks which Adani soared up to 20 per cent following a report that the US agency found short-seller Hinderburg Research's allegations of corporate fraud against the conglomerate were not relevant. Adani Energy Solutions and Adani Green Energy zoomed 20 per cent each to close at Rs 1,082.60 and Rs 1,348 apiece.

'Frameworks to cast safety, trust as obligation on SM platforms'

PNS ■ NEWDELHI

The government has been developing regulatory frameworks that cast safety and trust as obligation on digital platforms, Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Tuesday, adding that this approach will continue to be finetuned going forward. Today's world is dealing increasingly with complexity, commercial power, toxicity, and harms that have crept into the internet because innovation was allowed to go "so far ahead" without creating proper guardrails, the Minister of State for IT

and Electronics said at the India Internet Governance Forum -- IIGF'23. "So safety and trust as an obligation cast on platforms, is a framework that our government has been developing since 2021 and we will continue to fine-tune this... there is nothing that is going to be collegial, best-effort, self-regulatory framework that we have seen for so long." "Instead, we are transitioning into an era where governments have an obligation to ensure internet is safe and trusted for all those 1.2 billion Indians... and the same thought process is creeping to other democracies as well," he said.

Chandrasekhar also touched upon the issue of deepfakes. "As the PM recently pointed out and put the spotlight on an issue like deepfakes, which is misinformation powered by AI, these are all challenges we will have to immediately square up to, and not let it get so far ahead that the regulation is playing catch-up," he said. The government is driving a consultative approach to policy-making on technology, the minister said, adding that building blocks of key frameworks such as Digital Personal Data Protection legislation,

Zevo launches refrigerated EV with Machphy Solutions



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Tech-enabled EV mobility platform ZEVO on Tuesday unveiled its refrigerated electric vehicle (REV), in collaboration with Machphy Solutions for the temperature-controlled last-mile delivery segment. Under the partnership, the company plans to deploy its REV's across 10 cities in the first year, targeting sectors such as pharmaceutical, quick service restaurant (QSR), seafood, dairy, and FMCG in the temperature-controlled last-mile delivery segment. The Indian market's growing demand for frozen goods and pharmaceutical has increased the

need for temperature-controlled logistics (TCL), the company said. "Our partnership with Machphy Solutions signifies a groundbreaking leap towards revolutionising the cold chain logistics landscape. Our REV directly addresses the urgent demands of our industry, propelling us into a sustainable future," Aditya Singh Ratnu, Founder & CEO of ZEVO India, said. The company said its REV is tailored for EV operators, offering lightweight, corrosion-resistant features without relying on expensive lithium batteries to maintain the required payload temperature.

Govt reviews progress on curbing deepfakes

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Tuesday met social media platforms to review progress made by them in tackling misinformation and deepfakes, and asserted that advisories will be issued in the next two days to ensure 100 per cent compliance by platforms. New, amended IT Rules to further ensure compliance of platforms, and the safety and

trust of online users are actively under consideration, Chandrasekhar said in a post on X. "Held the 2nd #DigitalIndiaDialogues on Misinformation and #Deepfakes with intermediaries today, to review the progress made since the Nov 24 meeting. Many platforms are responding to the decisions taken last month and advisories on ensuring 100 per cent compliance will be issued in the next 2 days," Chandrasekhar, who is Minister of State for IT and Electronics, said in the post.

'75,000 GW solar power potential by 2050 possible'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Solar power generation capacity can go up to 75,000 gigawatts by 2050 globally with long-duration storage capacity, a report by the International Solar Association (ISA) and LDES Council, said. The report released on Tuesday by ISA and the Long Duration Energy Storage (LDES) Council unveils a bold vision for the future of renewable energy, showcasing the pivotal role of Long Duration Energy Storage in realizing ambitious solar targets. The report, presented at COP28 in Dubai, emphasized the transformative potential of combining solar energy with



LDES to ensure continuous, reliable, and affordable renewable energy, a statement said. The report emphasized the necessity of LDES to fully realize the potential of solar installations for complete decar-

bonization and achieving a solar capacity of 75,000 GW by 2050. It presented a case study of isolated island utilities in the US, demonstrating the financial viability of LDES in areas

with limited interconnectivity and high local fuel costs. The combination of solar, wind, and LDES emerges as the most cost-effective solution for achieving 100 per cent renewable energy. The LDES Council estimates that LDES will become a USD 4 trillion industry by 2040, with an installed capacity potential of 8 TW, the statement said. This growth is essential for enabling solar energy to meet global electricity demands affordably and reliably. The report also identified barriers to the widespread adoption of solar and LDES, including regulatory challenges, financing issues, and technical limitations, and pro-

posed solutions to overcome these hurdles. "Solar, already the most economical source of new electricity globally, will further strengthen its competitive advantage. Combined with Long Duration Energy Storage, solar becomes a continuous, reliable 24/7 energy source," stated Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General ISA. "Developing long-duration energy storage is the best pathway to full decarbonization for economies worldwide. LDES provides the scaffolding for reliable, resilient, around-the-clock renewable energy for industry and the electric grid," asserted Julia Souder, Chief Executive Office, LDES Council.

'Production of 5 MMT green hydrogen can help cut fossil fuel imports'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the 5 million metric tonnes (MMT) installed capacity under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, India can reduce imports of fossil fuel worth Rs 1 lakh crore by 2030, Union Minister R K Singh said on Tuesday. In January 2023, the Union Cabinet approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission with an outlay of Rs 19,744 crore with an aim to make India a global hub for manufacturing this clean source of energy. Green hydrogen has the potential to replace fossil fuels including natural gas, either as



a source of energy or as a feed-stock, thereby contributing to reduction in dependence on import of fossil fuels, the Minister for New and Renewable Energy informed the Rajya Sabha. The mission envisages substitution of grey hydrogen with green hydrogen in industries

such as fertilizer production, petroleum refining, steel, shipping etc. reducing carbon footprint and dependence on imported fossil fuels, he said. "The quantum of such reduction in imports is estimated at Rs 1 lakh crore by 2030," Singh said. The minister also said that for production of 1 kilogramme of green hydrogen via electrolysis, around 10 litres of demineralized water is needed. Accordingly, the demineralized water requirement for 5 MMT of green hydrogen production per annum will be about 50 Million Cubic Meter (MCM) per annum.

‘There isn’t a more boring task than accompanying women for shopping’



Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan shared how he finds doing shopping with women- the most boring task, and also shared his amusing diet plan.

Big B is currently hosting the 15th season of quiz based reality show *Kaun Banega Crorepati*

The actor welcomed Sonal Mahnot from Guwahati, Assam to the hot seat.

During the gameplay, the contestant said to the actor: "Sir, I want to ask you something, Sir, you're the epitome of fitness as we all know. You've maintained your body even at this age. And

as you can see, my husband, he roams about with a family pack! He craves junk food all the time. 'Kachori', samosa and at times, 'bhujia'. Please share your diet plan or some tips to help him."

Hearing to this, Amitabh turned to her husband and said: "Sir, the next time you get 'kachoris' and samosas, please share them with me. I am fond of them! Let her say whatever she wants. Eat what you like. Let me tell you that the 'kachoris' you get in Banaras are delectable. We'll go there together sometime and gorge on

'kachoris' and samosas." "Is there anything else? Do you want him to be fit and run with you?," asked Big B.

Sonal shared: "Sir, I mean after he eats 'kachoris' and snacks, then he wants to sleep whereas I want to go shopping. He doesn't want to buy anything for himself. So, he sends me shopping and asks me to have a good time."

The 'Sholay' actor said: "He is doing the right thing. One feels drowsy after eating. There isn't a more boring task than accompanying women for shopping! Believe me. Am I right?"

The 81-year-old actor continued, saying, "Men will go to a shop, check the options available. 'How much is this for? Okay, I'll take it.' He's done in minutes. While women, 'Show me that one.' The shopkeeper shows it to her. 'How about that one?' Then the shopkeeper shows her a long sari. 'What's that? Show me that, please.' He would spread all the sheets he has. 'It's not good enough.' Then they leave without buying anything."

"The women customers turn the whole shop upside down and then leave. The next time you (Sonal's husband) go shopping with her, please sit on the chair inside the shop and take a nap," concluded Big B.

Kaun Banega Crorepati 15 airs on Sony.

Ajay Devgn, Tabu-starrer *Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha!* gets a release date

Filmmaker Neeraj Pandey's romantic drama *Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha!*, starring Ajay Devgn and Tabu, will hit the theatres on April 26, 2024. The film is billed as a unique musical love story that spans across 20 years, set between 2002 and 2023. Golden Globe-winning composer MM Kreem (MM Keeravani) is creating an original soundtrack for the movie.

Shot extensively in Mumbai, the film also stars Jimmy Shergill, Saiee Manjrekar and Shantanu Maheshwari.

This is the third consecutive collaboration between Ajay and Tabu after *Drishyam 2* and *Bhola*. They have previously shared the screen in *Vijaypath* (1994), *Haqeeqat* (1995), *Thakshak* (1999), *Drishyam* (2015), *Fitoor* (2016), *Golmaal Again* (2017), and *De De Pyaar De* (2019).

The film will be Pandey's sixth directorial venture.

He is best known for helming titles such as *A Wednesday*, *Special 26* and *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story*. *Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha!* will be backed by Pandey's banner Friday Filmworks and presented by NH Studios. Shital Bhatia, Narendra Hirawat, Reliance Entertainment and Kumar Mangat Pathak of Panorama Studios are attached as producers.



CARMEN ELECTRA: I DIDN'T THINK OF MYSELF AS A SEX SYMBOL

Actress-model Carmen Electra never thought of herself as a sex symbol despite posing nude for Playboy magazine numerous times at the height of her career.

She also said that it always came as a surprise to her whenever she was given a compliment about her body. Asked if she ever wonders if she was objectified, she told 'Rolling Stone': "No, not really. I chose that route because that's what I felt and I really didn't think of myself as a sex symbol."

"When people would say it I would go, 'Really?' and I took that as a compliment. There are so many sex symbols that I looked up to then and look up to now. "The *Good Burger 2* actress did say that she would be put into "boxes" early on in her career but has noticed that the fashion and style of her heyday is making a comeback, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She added: "There were definitely boxes that I would get put in. I was told, 'You can't be overly sexy and you can't wear those sexy clothes if you want to be taken seriously in this business'. The publicists and your team would try to change everything and now what I think is really cool is that everyone can be their individual selves."

"You almost can't really tell someone, 'You can't, you're not this, or you shouldn't be this, or you can't wear that.'"

You know what I mean? But throughout that time, I learned a lot and I started to really get into fashion because I was at a point in the early to mid-Nineties where I had a little (debit) card."

"I'd go and pull out a couple hundred dollars, and I'd go to Melrose and just buy the sexiest outfit I could find, then I'd go out that way. It's funny when people send videos on a red carpet or walking into a place where (paparazzi) were shooting, a club or a birthday party or whatever, and I'm like, 'Oh my God, I was really wearing that.'"

"What I do notice now is all the girls are wearing that Nineties look again and I love it."

what's brewing?

Jonathan Majors accused of using physical violence to 'manipulate' ex-girlfriend

Actor Jonathan Majors has been accused of assaulting his ex-girlfriend Grace Jabbari to hide his infidelity and "establish control."

The *Creed* actor, began his trial over the alleged attack on December 4 at Manhattan Criminal Court, New York, and walked into the hearing carrying a Bible and a notebook – while holding hands with his girlfriend Meagan Good and another older woman.

He received a huge boost at the beginning of proceedings when the judge dismissed four of the seven counts after an agreement between the prosecution and the defence, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Majors has denied assault with intent to cause physical injury, assault recklessly causing physical injury, aggravated harassment and harassment.

Prosecutor Michael Perez said they wanted the multiple assault charges "merged" into one charge "based on the nature of the injuries and the acts alleged."

He is alleged to have slapped Grace Jabbari on a ride home before apparently grabbing her hand and throwing her back into the vehicle when she got out.

He is alleged to have got into the apartment row after Grace saw a text from another woman which said, "Wish I was kissing you right now."

Prosecutor Michael Perez of the Manhattan District Attorney's office used his opening statement in the trial to claim Jonathan beat up his then-lover to cover up his infidelity.

He added to the jury, "Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that betrays an intimate partner's trust and has historically taken place behind closed doors. It can take many forms... on March 25, the defendant, Jonathan Majors, committed domestic violence against his then romantic partner Grace Jabbari when he used physical violence to manipulate her, control her and physically hurt her."

"The defendant over the course of relationship with Grace Jabbari used a cruel and manipulative pattern of psychological and physical abuse that culminated in the tragic end of their relationship."

In her opening statement, Jonathan's lawyer Priya Chaudhry called the allegations "false" and painted Grace as the aggressor in the pair's relationship. She said Grace had concocted the claims against the actor as "revenge" after seeing the text from another woman.

Majors has denied six counts of assault in the third degree, one count of aggravated harassment in the second degree and one count harassment in the second degree.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



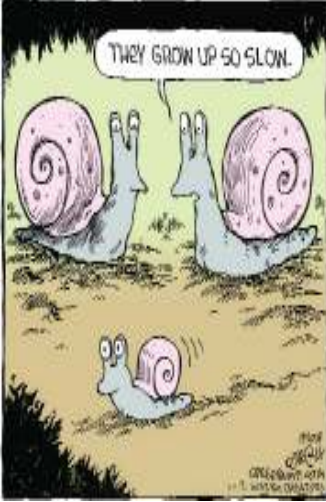
GINGER MEGGS



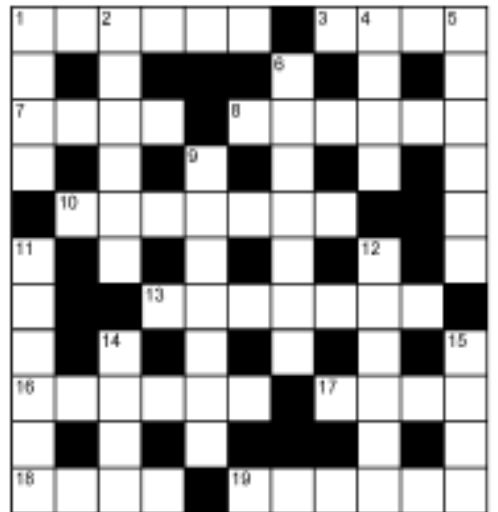
REALITY CHECK



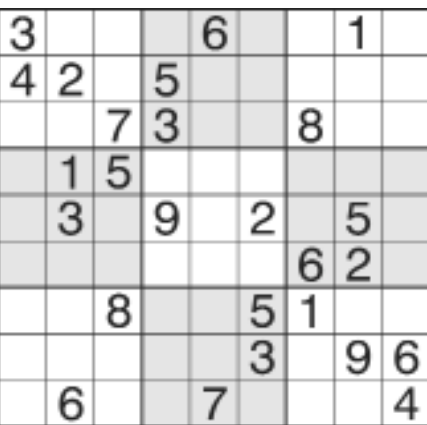
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Further up
- A stopper for a bottle
- Follow orders
- Say again
- Cooked over boiling water
- Not normal
- A hole through a hill
- Your body's covering
- Devours
- A baby's toy
- Baby cat
- Set free from captivity
- An artist
- A stinging plant
- A short coat
- A tied joint in string
- A leg joint

DOWN

- A horse's foot
- Invited visitors
- Opposite of under



‘My biggest flex is that I am a live performer; I enjoy the overall process of having to travel to the show’

TEJAL SINHA

Music is something that everybody can relate to in one way or another. not only for the listeners but also the musicians. Well, so has it been for the adroit singer Madhur Sharma too. As much as he could recall, he has always been inclined towards music from a very young age. While nobody in his family pursued music professionally, his father was an avid music lover and amateur performer.

So in a way, “I owe it all to him. Watching him admire music made me fall in love with it as well. When I decided to take up music professionally, it almost felt like I was trying to fulfill my father’s dream.” Just as how his name ‘Madhur’ refers to melodious and/or sweet, so has his journey been— ‘Madhrastic.’ “The more I think about my journey, the more overwhelmed I get. My journey so far has been nothing short of a miracle, if you ask me. The love I have received from my fans for all my work has been beyond anything I could have imagined. but the aim is to keep getting better and make sure that the journey ahead is better than what it has been so far.” With over 1500+ performances across the country at various events and festivals, he’s earned a reputation as one of India’s most sought-after singers. And so, “I am a strong believer that you are nothing without the support of the people who appreciate your art. And in that aspect, I have been very lucky. My fans have showered all my songs with immense love, and I am also very grateful to everyone who takes the time from their busy schedule to watch me perform. I hope and pray that I continue to receive such love in the future as well.”

Lately, the one-minute music format has been gaining immense traction. And in fact, a one-minute version of his now-full-version song, *Samandar Sharaab*, has gained over 30 million streams. Isn’t that massive? An elated *Kali Kali Zulfon Ke* singer shares, “The numbers sure took us by surprise as well. One-minute versions of songs were a fairly new concept, and we simply decided to dabble in it as an experiment. However, we did not expect *Samandar Sharaab* to reach as many people as it did. I and my team are incredibly grateful. A fuller version of the song was recently released. I used to often think about romance and true love, and how everyone isn’t as lucky when it comes to love. I was discussing this dilemma with a few friends one night. That’s when I thought, Why not make a song about it? And that is how *Samandar Sharaab* happened.”

Recently, he has also unveiled a new mesmerizing melody track, *Maahi*, which he says has been very close to his

heart. Firstly, because “it is the brainchild of a very dear friend. And it allowed us to work together again. And secondly, it was all the more special because it was backed by a big label like T-Series. I had a lot of fun working on this song, and I am happy that people have accepted it. I am looking forward to coming out with more songs like this one.”

Millions of people prefer to work or try to fall asleep while watching these videos on YouTube, which include endless streams of relaxing hip-hop music matched to animated character graphics. By definition, lo-fi music is less polished and professionally produced than other types of music. This is not to say that the music is poor; rather, it employs less expensive equipment, faulty audio, and lower sound quality to create its unique style.

Talking about the same, the *Mere Baad Kisko Sataoge* (Lo-Fi) singer shares, “I personally like Lo-Fi music because I find it very soothing. The gentle beats and calming melodies allow you to enjoy a moment of respite while listening to the song. Its raw and unpolished nature resonates with listeners. And since I like Lo-Fi music, I thought my listeners would too. And that is how we decided to release Lo-Fi versions of my songs. I am glad people have loved them too.”

Apart from this, another video, or probably video song of his, that had gone viral was that of *Kaho Na Pyaar Hai*’s version. And he gleefully shares, “When we talk about music from the late 90s and early 2000s, we simply have to mention the soundtrack of *Kaho Na Pyaar Hai*. And just like a lot of other people, my favorite song of the entire soundtrack was the title track. I always wanted to perform this song. However, I thought of doing something different to the song in my style for a different listening experience. And since we have spoken about my love for Lo-Fi, I thought, why not release a Lo-Fi version of *Kaho Na Pyaar Hai*? And to my surprise, it was well received by the listeners.”

Just as the emotional person that he is, so does that reflect heavily on his creative process. “I’d like to think that the experiences in my personal life have been a great source of inspiration to me. Also, I listen to a lot of different genres of music. And I am always open to feedback and constructive criticism of my work. All of these things help me become a better artist,” shares the *Sanu Ek Pal* singer, who finds his biggest inspiration in Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Sahab and then, of course, enjoys listening to Atif Aslam, Arijit Singh, and Ed Sheeran.

While there has been a constant debate on the recreation of songs, Madhur, who has received immense love for his recreated versions, shares, “Some songs become such an important part of

our lives that the thought of someone meddling with the memory alone can feel intrusive. And that makes the process difficult. However, in my opinion, while remaking any song, you need to understand that the simplest rule is to keep it minimalistic and clean. Try to meet the expectations and bring the demands of the song on par with its original composition. Ultimately, I think creating original tracks and recreated tracks both take an equal amount of hard work and effort. All I know is that you have to have honesty and original ideas while working on any song.”

Waiting for the right opportunity and ongoing talks in general, he signs off the chat on a brighter note, saying, “My biggest flex is that I am a live performer and I get to perform in front of so many people so frequently. I enjoy the overall process of having to travel to the show, the sound-check, the interaction with the fans, and the final performance. And if that weren’t all, I love being surrounded by such talented musicians. My band is my family since we all spend so much time together while touring. They keep my spirits up and make sure the performances are worth remembering.”

Singer Madhur Sharma, who has become a new traction of the social media era, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about his journey, his recent releases, recreation and Lo-Fi music, and more.



WEDDING DECOR TRENDS TO KEEP AN EYE ON THIS 2024

The wedding industry is prepping for a revolutionary change in the way we celebrate weddings as we approach the new year. In 2024, an upsurge of innovation and personalization is expected to sweep over the wedding décor industry, encompassing everything from sustainable practices to the use of technology.

cuisine, and attire. They have developed into an all-encompassing experience that covers all facets of guest interaction. Every element, from the sophisticated dance floors and welcome foyer to the specially created lounges and dinner tables, is carefully chosen to create an experience that will never be forgotten by the guests.

SUSTAINABLE WEDDINGS

Amidst an increased awareness of environmental issues, the notion of sustainable weddings is gaining prominence. What was once limited to basic decor is now being used for large weddings, with eco-friendly materials and locally produced flowers taking prominence. Sustainable alternatives are replacing plastic and synthetic fibers, resulting in an elegant combination of style and environmental responsibility.

VENUE SPACE MANAGEMENT

The art of wedding décor has evolved beyond its traditional limitations and is now comparable to interior design. It includes the traditional Vidhi Mandap as well as the meticulous arrangement of food counters, lounging areas, and tablescapes. The entire space has been thoughtfully designed to exude luxury and sophistication in every corner of the venue.

LEBANESE STYLE DECOR

The extravagance and elegance of Lebanese aesthetics serve as inspiration for the 2024 wedding decor, which embraces rich materials, elaborate designs, and vivid color palettes to provide a sense of grandeur and drama to the celebration.

BACKYARD OR FARMHOUSE WEDDINGS

Backyard or farmhouse weddings are expected to be another popular wedding décor theme in 2024. Nowadays, many choose to wed on family farms or in their own homes. As a result, they can provide a more intimate and personal wedding experience. Rustic and basic decorations are popular for backyard and farmhouse weddings. Consider mason jars, wildflowers, and string lights being beautifully added to the theme.

INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

In keeping with the digital era, modern wedding décor incorporates cutting-edge technologies like facial mapping, kinetics, and AR/VR features to create a captivating visual experience that captivates visitors and gives the celebration a futuristic feel.

PERSONALIZATION

Gone are the days of bland decor. Nowadays, couples are incorporating every aspect of the wedding décor with their own personal stories. Every crevice and edge of the wedding location is decorated with quotes that capture their habits, love stories, and most treasured memories. This personal and sentimental atmosphere undoubtedly creates a heartfelt ambience overall.

It’s obvious that things are changing to meet the needs of a more aware, tech-savvy, and engaged audience as we set off on this journey of cutting-edge wedding décor trends in 2024. The wedding décor business is poised to revolutionize celebration art by putting individuality and sustainability at its center and providing lasting and unforgettable experiences for guests and couples alike.

THE COMPLETE EXPERIENCE

Nowadays, weddings involve more than just décor,

(The author, Sachin Mehendale, is the Head Designer of House of Vivaah.)



‘I acknowledge that sometimes this industry is not a fair playing field for outsiders’

Debutante Alizeh Agnihotri, who recently made her way to the entertainment industry with the recently released *Farrey*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, about being passionate about cinema, crediting her co-stars for the praise, and more.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Farrey starred Alizeh Agnihotri, the niece of Salman Khan and daughter of Atul Agnihotri, as a board-topping genius, who gets lured into a cheating racket at an elite private school. The stakes were high for her! She was representing the country’s most privileged youth, but gratefully, she’s not stuck in that circle because Alizeh, for the better, had the fundamental right to star in the film, and she succeeded. You know what, readers? Nepotism is tiring now; its discourse is rinse, and repeat!

In an exclusive conversation with the upcoming leading actress of our industry, the debutante says, “I am just as passionate about cinema as any enthusiast would be. My whole life revolved around films. I

admit it openly: I didn’t have any obstacles coming my way, and there are more advantages to being an industry kid than disadvantages. In a business that already has so much to do with who you know and your networking, it makes a big difference in your career! Sometimes, industry is not a fair playing field for outsiders. But at the same time, I don’t want to be inconsiderate of the pressures industry kids have. Yeah, in the grand scheme of things, the obstacles are very manageable.”

Well done, Alizeh; she acknowledges that at the heart of our discomfort with nepotism is the unfairness of it all.

After creating quite a buzz, we moved ahead with our conversation, and she said, “My co-stars are the reason why the film has received so much praise; I owe everything to them. I am not a competitive person at all!

As far as the title of my movie goes, I have never cheated in any of my examinations. Yes, I have asked for help during submissions to increase my grade.” Interesting Alizeh!

Actually, once the stage was set, she came on her own without any help from her ‘Mamu Jaan’. It’s true! “The school and classroom portions were the most fun to shoot. We had a 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. schedule. We would wake up, get ready in our uniforms, and go to the classroom. We were shooting in an actual school; it all felt very real,” added the actress, who instantly bagged the spotlight. She was very nervous about shooting *Bigg Boss* by the way, and her ‘Manu Jaan’ Salman Khan, helped her through. She admitted that she was more nervous shooting for a reality television show than her own movie! She even thought his mom wouldn’t come on *Farrey*’s sets because everyone gets distracted when he’s around and they don’t focus on the task at hand. She clarified that it’s not him who creates the confusion and chaos; it’s the people who are around him, and he wanted the focus to always be on the actors and the film.

INDIA TO PLAY FEARLESS CRICKET

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India women team's new head coach Amol Muzumdar wants his players to play 'fearless cricket' while also making it clear that there would be no compromise on fitness and fielding, ahead of the three-match T20I series against England beginning here on Wednesday.

"We need to play a certain brand of cricket, which we have been known for so far. Fearless cricket is something which I have always advocated. We would be playing that brand of cricket," Muzumdar told reporters on Tuesday ahead of the team's training session at the Wankhede Stadium.

"Shafali (Verma) and Jemimah (Rodrigues) are both very important cog in the wheel. I would like them to continue what they have been doing."

Muzumdar said that every step taken from here-on will be important as the team has embarked on its preparations for next year's T20 World Cup (September-October 2024 in Bangladesh).

"We are moving towards the World Cup. Every series and match will have its own importance. The series against England and Australia will count a lot," said Muzumdar who is starting his coaching stint with the women's national team during the three-match T20I series against England.

"We had a chat about it with the team and they (players) are all raring to go. Every step that we take (hereon) is (about) moving towards the World Cup."

"England and Australia will be a superb series to start the preparations (for the World Cup). (Both) will be tough series (and) will give us an indication of where we are. Going forward, the tougher the opposition, the better it is," he said.

After the contest against England, India face

NO COMPROMISE ON FITNESS AND FIELDING: WOMEN'S TEAM COACH MUZUMDAR



Australia in another home series.

Muzumdar said there will not be any compromise on fielding and fitness standards, as parameters have been set and are being followed already.

"Fielding and fitness are of highest priority. There is no compromise on fielding or fitness. There will be a lot of camps post this series - a lot of cricket will be played - at NCA or some other place," he said.

"That means more exposure. All the fringe and new players will also get an opportunity."

India's record of only seven wins in 27 matches against England in T20Is (home and away) does not bother the new coach who has urged his team to leave the past behind.

"As a team, we have decided to leave the statistics and whatever has happened behind us. We are looking forward to a fresh start," said the domestic batting stalwart.

"The numbers are there to be seen, but these girls and the team are looking forward to the season ahead. We are not going to go back in history — of course it is important — but at the same time, it is also important to look forward to the season ahead. They are all raring to go."

Muzumdar informed that Troy Cooley has been named the bowling coach for the series against England (three T20Is, one Test) and Australia (one Test, three T20Is and three ODIs).

He said women's cricket in India is on 'cusp of something big' with the inaugural Women's Premier League garnering a lot of response from the fans.

"It was a fantastic advertisement for women's cricket last year. We all saw how many people turned up for the game. We all are on the cusp of getting it big in women's cricket. The crowd turning up for the game is absolutely a boost for everyone," he said.



Bangladesh looking to secure first test series win over NZ

AP ■ MIRPUR (BANGLADESH)

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha wants his players to guard against complacency as it tries to secure a first series win against New Zealand in the second and final test.

Bangladesh won the first test in Sylhet by 150 runs to close in on a landmark series victory. The only top-level teams that Bangladesh has ever beaten in a two-match test series are Zimbabwe and West Indies.

"I can't see complacency in the team. If I see any action of complacency, I will have one to one chat," Hathurusingha said ahead of Wednesday's opening day.

"We had a good chat inside the dressing room yesterday. Strong and experienced leaders like Mushy (Mushfiqur Rahim) and Mominul (Haque) spoke very emotionally. They spoke in Bengali. I can see there's no tall poppies in the dressing room."

The Sylhet test victory was only Bangladesh's second against New Zealand in 18 meetings, and it came courtesy of captain Najmul Hossain Shanto's second-innings century.

In doing so, Shanto became the first Bangladeshi cricketer to hit a century on his debut as captain.

"Captaincy and leadership are two things," Hathurusingha said. "(Shanto's) captaincy was excellent. He was tactically on the mark. He was step ahead of the game most of the time. Very impressive field placings as well. Sometimes unorthodox, but very effective."

"(His) leadership was excellent. He led from the front with his performance. He was commanding respect, and demanding the standard. I think he has

a long future ahead."

Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who took 10-184 in the first test, will be a Bangladesh's most crucial weapon in Mirpur, which traditionally has a slow wicket with uneven bounce.

"He goes under the radar because he plays second fiddle to Shakib (Al Hasan) in most of the games," Hathurusingha said of Islam. "His record is phenomenal. He has nearly 200 wickets. He is very consistent!"

New Zealand skipper Tim Southee said the team's spinners need to show more consistency if they are to avoid a first series defeat against Bangladesh.

"We're expecting obviously spin-friendly conditions, but we spoke about it after the last game about being more consistent for longer as a bowling group," Southee said. "And then, obviously, partnerships as a batting unit. We've had a great couple of days of training. So, we're looking forward to getting into another test match."

While Bangladesh's spinners claimed 18 wickets at an economic rate of 2.48, New Zealand's spinners took 14 wickets at a rate of 3.73 runs.

New Zealand's frontline spinners Ajaz Patel and Ish Sodhi also had a limited impact in the match, and the team could include Rachin Ravindra and Mitchell Santner in the squad for the second test.

"They're (Ravindra and Santner) obviously capable spinners. But we went with what we thought was the best side to win that first test match," Southee said. "It's just a tough one to try and get your 15 great players to fit into an 11. So, it's about picking a side that you think is going to do the job for the five days ahead of you."

This tour is going to be valuable: Heather

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The T20 series in India gain significance as it will show how the young visiting players excel in conditions which will be similar to what the team will experience in Bangladesh during next year's T20 World Cup, said England women's skipper Heather Knight.

India and England are set to face off in a three-match T20 series, starting here on Wednesday.

"I learned a lot about my game playing in Indian conditions, it really tests you as a cricketer, your skill level and how you do with the noise and the heat," Knight told reporters ahead of England's training session here on Tuesday.

"It is a really good place to accelerate development, to see how our young players cope with it. We have got a T20 World Cup in Bangladesh later on in the year (2024) so this tour is going to be valuable in terms of having similar conditions."

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be hosted by Bangladesh between September and October in 2024.

A lot of members of the England's T20I squad arrived in

India two days before the start of the series which will be played at the Wankhede Stadium on Dec 6, 9 and 10.

Knight said it will be challenging for her team to silence the Indian crowd as despite their dominant record against the hosts, presence of "world-class" players make India a "brilliant" team.

"We have had some really good T20 games against them. They have got some world-class players in and in home conditions they are going to be tough (to face)," Knight said.

After winning the ODI World Cup beating India in the final, Australia captain Pat Cummins had said that he took delight in silencing the Indian fans.

Knight said passionate crowds in India can be imposing on the visiting sides and her team will look to keep its focus amid all the noise.

"Sometimes you can feel like things are accelerating; rushed actually, when there is crowd and the game is happening quite quickly. We have talked a lot about trying to get our own pace, maintain our concentration in the moment," the England captain said.



"Trying to silence the crowd will be tougher - watching the men's World Cup it is all you see and the support and the passion that Indian fans have and having experienced that, it is a hard thing to do to silence the crowd and even if there is not many of them they are usually very loud."

"We have to have quick turnaround, adapting to conditions has to be accelerated a bit. How we do that, how we communicate, how we are going to take 10 wickets, how we are going to score runs?" Knight said the past experience

said.

Having played in the WPL for Royal Challengers Bangalore wherein Knight shared the dressing room with some Indian players like Smriti Mandhana, Shreyanka Patil and Kanika Ahuja, the England captain said knowledge-sharing works two-ways.

"It is brilliant that some of the RCB girls have got the chance to play for India on the back of what they did in the WPL. It works both ways, obviously I know those players better and they also know my game better," Knight said.

England have seven wins in nine T20Is against India in their backyard and overall 20 wins from 27 matches, but Knight said it does not feel like they have a comforting factor as far as knowledge of conditions is concerned.

"It feels like a long time actually since we have been to India, before that 2019 series we had a lot of tours here," she said.

"It is how the Future Tours Programme pans out, and obviously, playing another WPL here in the calendar, there is going to be a lot of cricket here which is brilliant."

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Defending champion Manu Gandas, PGTI Ranking leader Om Prakash Chouhan and Rashid Khan will be seen in action in the second edition of the SSP Chawrasia Invitational Golf tournament beginning here on Thursday.

The 124-member field of the Rs 1-crore prize purse event will also see tournament host and local favourite SSP Chawrasia, along with the likes of Rahil Gangjee, Khalin Joshi, Chikkarangappa, Veer Ahlawat, Karan Pratap Singh, Udayan Mane and Aman Raj.

The leading names from abroad include Sri Lankans N Thangaraja, Anura Rohana and K Prabakaran, Bangladesh's Badal Hossain, Md Akbar

Gandas, Chouhan headline SSP Chawrasia Invitational Golf

Hossain and Md Dulal Hossain, American Varun Chopra, Nepal's Sukra Bahadur Rai, Canada's Sukhraj Singh Gill and Andorra's Kevin Esteve Rigall.

The other prominent local players are Shankar Das, Divyanshu Bajaj, Mohammad Sanju, Arjun Puri and Raju Ali Mollah.

Two-time Indian Open champion Chawrasia is the second Indian professional golfer after Jeev Milkha Singh to have a PGTI event named in his honour.

A six-time winner on the Asian



Tour, Chawrasia also has represented India at the Rio Olympics and the World Cup of Golf in 2016.

He also represented Team Asia at the EurAsia Cup in 2016 and 2018. SSP, a winner of 17 professional titles, was honoured with the Arjuna Award in 2017.

"With a strong field, we can expect a week of exciting golf. I'm also very motivated to performing well at my home course. I wish the players all the best," tournament host Chawrasia said.



Ebenyo, Yehualaw star attraction in Kolkata 25K run on Dec 17

PTI ■ KOLKATA

World championships 10,000m silver medallist Daniel Simiyu Ebenyo of Kenya and Ethiopian 10K world record holder Yalemzerf Yehualaw will be the star attractions in the men's and women's sections respectively in the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K run on December 17.

Ebenyo won a silver medal in 10,000m in Budapest world championships in August and then finished second in half marathon in Riga at the inaugural World Road Running Championships, before easily winning the Delhi Half Marathon in October.

Two other Kenyans, Roncer Kipkorir Konga and Bernard Biwott, with sub 60-minute personal best in half marathon (21.0975 km), are expected to challenge Ebenyo for the top

podium position.

Yehualaw, who set the 10k world record of 29:14 in 2022, will participate in the event for the first time. She also sits second on the world all-time list in half marathon with a time of 1:03:51 (clocked in 2021).

Another Ethiopian, Anchinalu Dessie and Kenya's Betty Chepkemai Kibet will be the main challengers for Yehualaw.

ELITE FIELD: Men: Daniel Ebenyo, Eric Kiptanui, Roncer Konga, Bernard Biwott, Victor Kipruto Togom, Jackson Kiplete (all from Kenya); Hiskel Tewelde, Aferwerki Berhane (both from Eritrea), Abe Gashahun, Mulugeta Debasu (both from Ethiopia).

Women: Yalemzerf Yehualaw, Anchinalu Dessie, Sutume Asefa Kebede (Ethiopia); Betty Chepkemai Kibet, Nelly Jeptoo (both from Kenya); Mercyline Chelangat (Uganda).



'I AM FOCUSING COMPLETELY ON THE MAINSTREAM CINEMA, NOT INCLINED TO DO OTT'



PNJ HYDERABAD

Nithiin awaits the release of *Extra-Ordinary Man* on December 8. Director Vakkantham Vamsi's entertainer, co-starring Sree Leela as the heroine, has Nithiin in a hilarious role. He says that, for the first time ever, he is not stressed out ahead of the release of a movie. Nithiin reveals that a song in the second half will surprise the audience.

"The journey of this film began 2.5 years ago with Vamsi giving a narration. The shoot was begun in November 2022. As I am an extra on the sets of films in this movie, there are references to some movies and stars. Pawan Kalyan, my favourite actor, is one among them," shared the Telugu actor. The film doesn't delve into the struggles of junior artists. It is a fun-filled entertainer with an exciting screenplay. Vamsi is

known to write fresh protagonists, as evidenced by *Kick*, *Temper* and *Race Gurram*, among others. Goddess Maisamma drives the story in a certain direction, as the trailers suggested. By the time of the interval, you can expect a surprise element that might be called a twist. Amid violent films in recent times, he is confident that 'Extra' is mostly about being an out-and-out entertainer.

"The father-son scenes will surely bring the roof down. My scenes with Rao Ramesh are hilarious. I play a fear-stricken son who is scared of his controlling dad. Our characters are thoroughly entertaining! You will also fall in love with Sampath Raj's character. When the content is strong, every artist will get into the right zone. Every scene that the artists were part of became close to their hearts. That's why we all could give our best," added Jayam fame. Usually, films set in the backdrop of the film industry turn serious. 'Extra' maintains its hilarity factor throughout. It is jovial from start to end. The 'josh' factor will surely keep the audience engaged consistently, claims Nithiin.

He continued, "My primary focus is and will be Telugu cinema. Anything else that comes my way will be a bonus. I am not fancying my chances to do non-Telugu movies at this point in time. I have done non-entertainers like *Check* and *Maestro* in recent times after dabbling in safe genres like *Bheeshma*. *Maestro* would have become a box-office hit had it been released in theatres. Since it was an OTT release, I am unable to gauge if I should try out something of that sort again. I am focusing completely on the mainstream cinema and theatrical market. I am not inclined to do OTT. I am up for a grey character."

Rashmika Mandanna had been replaced by Sree Leela for his film with director Venky Kudumula of *Bheeshma* fame. Love, comedy and action are all his favourite ingredients. That's why he like films like *Bheeshma* a lot. He has never viewed himself as a Telangana hero consciously in the last 20 years of being in the industry. Unless someone tells him he is a "Telangana hero", that thought doesn't even cross his mind.

Superstar siblings Suriya and Karthi to donate ₹10 lakhs for relief efforts of Chennai floods



Superstars and siblings Suriya and Karthi have come up as the first from the business to contribute to relief efforts amid the destruction wrought by heavy floods in Chennai. Through their fan clubs, they have contributed a total of Rs 10 lakhs, which will be used to assist with any necessary relief efforts.

"Actors #Suriya and #Karthi have announced an initial sum of Rs 10 lacs to carry out relief work in the flood affected districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, and Tiruvallur. ||#ChennaiRains2023||#ChennaiFloods||#Cy cloneMichaung|| The actors are offering assistance to those affected through their fan clubs," a trade expert tweeted in reference to this news on X.

The state government advised people to take precautionary measures as the IMD issued a red alert for the state, predicting heavy to very heavy rainfall in Chennai and neighbouring areas.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin on Tuesday said that the rains received during Cyclone period have exceeded

what the state has received in 2015. The Chief Minister also called on organisations involved in Relief Work to join hands with the government to alleviate the suffering of fellow human beings.

"Relief assistance of Rs 5,000 crore will be requested from the central government for storm and rain damage. Relief assistance will also be provided to the people who have suffered," CM MK Stalin said. Eight people have lost their lives while multiple roads and subways are closed due to waterlogging in the wake of the Severe Cyclonic Storm 'Michaung', which is expected to make landfall on the southern coast of Andhra Pradesh between Nellore and Machilipatnam.



'No paid premiers for Hi Nanna,' says Nani

Hi Nanna is the latest film directed by the young filmmaker Shouryuv, featuring Natural Star Nani as the protagonist and Mrunal Thakur as the heroine.

In a recent Twitter chat session, "Ask Nani," the actor addressed questions from his fans, providing clarity on the paid premieres of the movie.

In response to a fan inquiring about paid premieres in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Nani mentioned that there would be no paid premieres for the film. He also shared that AMB Cinemas will host several shows on the evening of December 6th, including special screenings for the media and selected audiences.

Expressing confidence in the movie's impact, Nani stated that he believes *Hi Nanna* will leave a lasting impression on the audience and fans.

This family-centric action emotional entertainer has generated high expectations among Nani's fans and the general audience. The film's music, composed by Hesham Abdul Wahab, has already gained popularity. We have to see if the film becomes a hit.

The film is scheduled for release on December 8th.



Tripti Dimri vs. Rashmika Mandanna: Are Rashmika fans upset over Tripti's dominance?

There has been an online war between the supporters of Tripti Dimri and the fans of Rashmika Mandanna ever since the release of *Animal*. Tripti, for those who haven't watched the movie, plays a character named Zoya Riaz. It is she who is seen in the viral bedroom photo doing the rounds on the Internet.

As per many male audiences, Tripti is far better than the *Geetha Govindam* actress in the film.

"Tripti Dimri ate Rashmika alive despite limited screen time. Her chemistry with Ranbir is something nobody expected; they were so good," a netizen wrote.

"Get Tripti Dimri more films; she deserves it so much. She is made for bigger roles, as she had such a small part in *Animal* but the way she shined was just wow! Also, her chemistry with Ranbir was better than the chemistry he had with Rashmika," wrote another movie buff.

Rashmika's fans, however, are trolling Tripti's supporters by arguing that looks are not the only aspect of a performance.

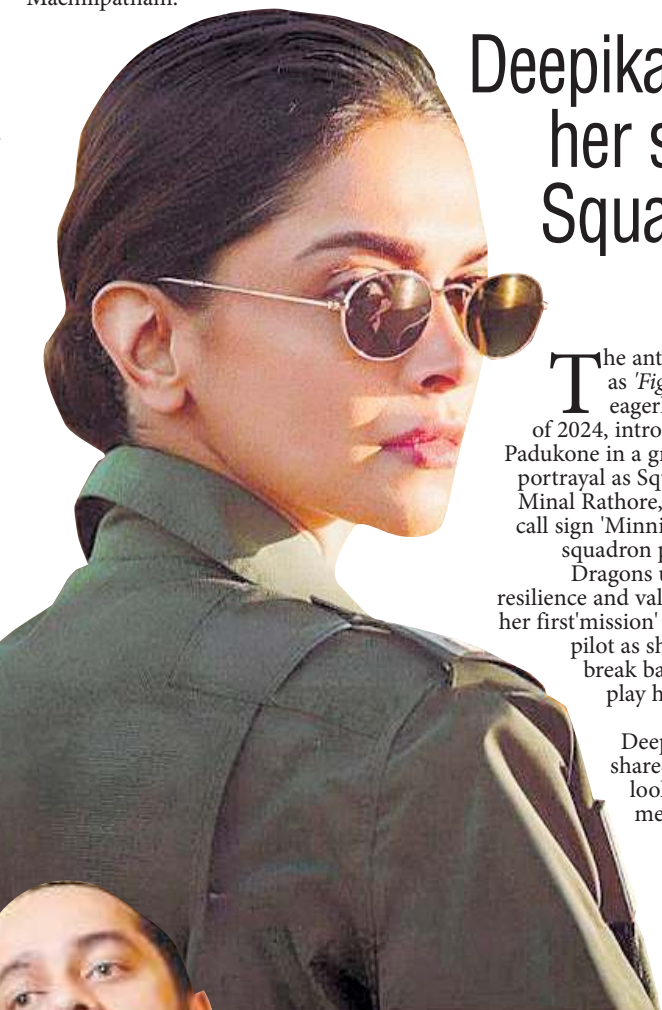


Vishal Chandrasekhar to lend music for the Prabhas-Raghavapudi film

Fans of Prabhas are gearing up to watch their star hero in action as *Salaar* will be released on a massive scale on the 22nd of this month. Prashanth Neel has directed this film, and Shruthi Haas is the heroine. Apart from *Salaar*, Prabhas is also doing a film with Maruthi and has started shooting for it. We had already reported that Prabhas will be doing a film with *Sita Ramam* fame Hanu Raghavapudi soon.

Mythri Movie Makers will be producing this film, and we have now come to know that Vishal Chandrasekhar, the man who composed hit music for *Sita Ramam*, has been roped in to compose music for the Prabhas starrer as well.

Hanu has worked with Vishal earlier, so he has roped him again. Prabhas will be seen in a romantic role in this film, as per the news.



Deepika Padukone unveils her spectacular look as Squadron Leader Minal Rathore in *Fighter*

The anticipation soars as *'Fighter'*, the most eagerly awaited film of 2024, introduces Deepika Padukone in a groundbreaking portrayal as Squadron Leader Minal Rathore, known by her call sign 'Minni'. Her role as a squadron pilot in the Air Dragons unit showcases resilience and valor. This marks her first mission as a helicopter pilot as she continues to break barriers and display her acting mastery.

Deepika Padukone shared the exclusive look on her social media and wrote, "Squadron Leader Minal Rathore, Call Sign: Minni, Designation: Squadron

Pilot, Unit: Air Dragons." Squadron Leader Minal Rathore's character embodies fortitude, determination, and the unwavering spirit of a fighter. Her journey within the film encapsulates the essence of a pioneering woman navigating new horizons, poised to redefine norms and inspire generations.

Fighter emerges as more than just a film; it is a movie transcending conventional storytelling. Helmed by Siddharth Anand and presented by Viacom18 Studios in collaboration with Marflix Pictures, it brings together thrilling action and a strong patriotic fervor.

Mark your calendars for January 25th, 2024, India's 75th Republic Day, as *'Fighter'* takes flight and witnesses the spectacle of cinematic brilliance.



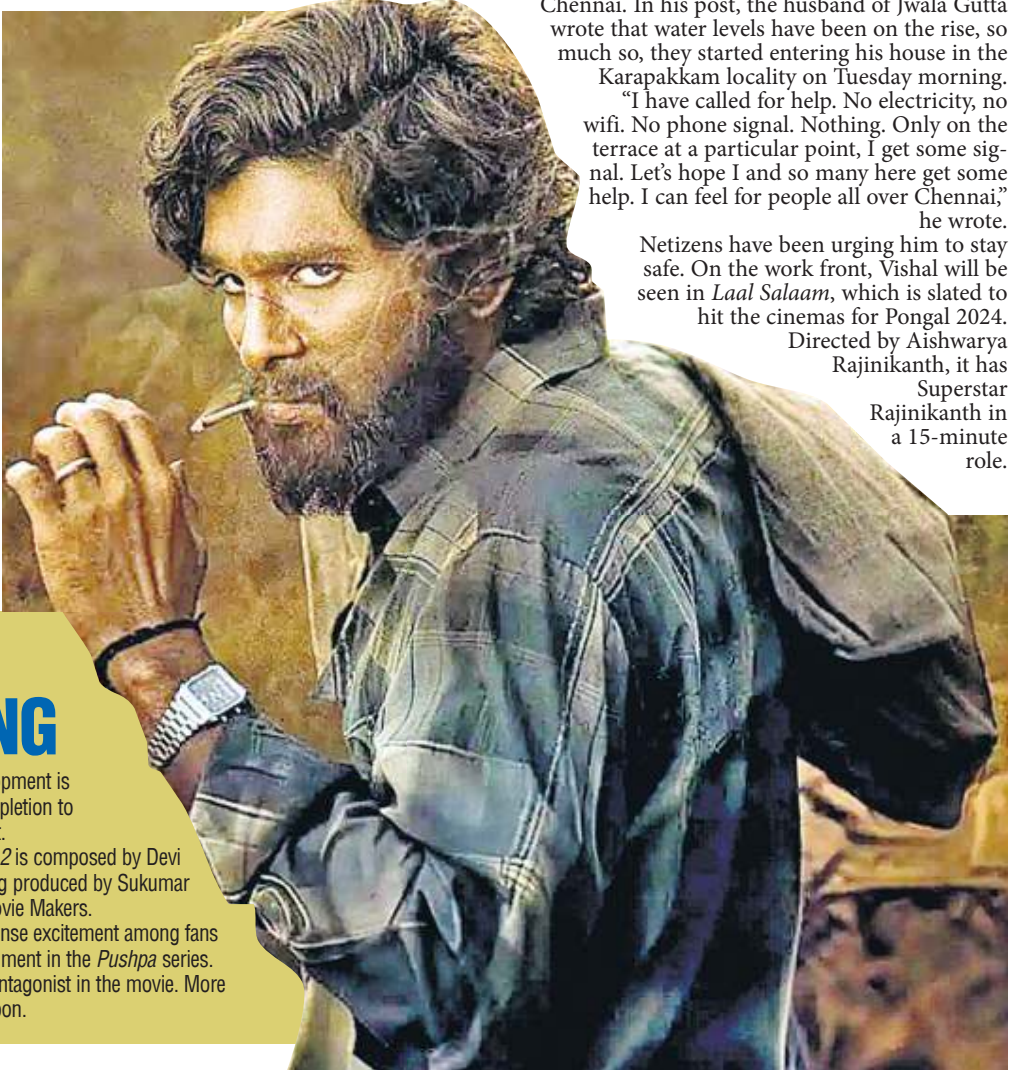
Vishnu Vishal 'calls for help', gets to the terrace

Vishnu Vishal, who is known for Tamil films like *FIR* and *Gatta Kusthi*, on Tuesday took to his social media at a time when floods are furiously ravaging Chennai. In his post, the husband of Jwala Gutta wrote that water levels have been on the rise, so much so, they started entering his house in the Karapakkam locality on Tuesday morning.

"I have called for help. No electricity, no wifi. No phone signal. Nothing. Only on the terrace at a particular point, I get some signal. Let's hope I and so many here get some help. I can feel for people all over Chennai," he wrote.

Netizens have been urging him to stay safe. On the work front, Vishal will be seen in *Laal Salaam*, which is slated to hit the cinemas for Pongal 2024.

Directed by Aishwarya Rajinikanth, it has Superstar Rajinikanth in a 15-minute role.



PUSHPA 2 MAKERS TO SOON KICKSTART SHOOTING ITS SONG

The much-anticipated sequel film *Pushpa 2*, directed by Sukumar, features Icon star Allu Arjun as the hero and Rashmika Mandanna as the heroine. Despite high expectations, the director and the production team are progressing rapidly with the shooting of the film, having recently embarked on a significant schedule.

In the upcoming week, the makers plan to kickstart the shooting of a song for *Pushpa 2*. There are speculations that the song shoot will commence after completing a portion of the

dialogue sequence. This development is expected to take the film's completion to approximately 65 to 70 percent.

Notably, the music for *Pushpa 2* is composed by Devi Sri Prasad, and the film is being produced by Sukumar in collaboration with Mythri Movie Makers.

The project is generating immense excitement among fans eagerly awaiting the next installment in the *Pushpa* series. Fahadh Faasil plays the film's antagonist in the movie. More details of the film will be out soon.