



It has also approved the decision to release nine life convicts from the prison on the occasion of Azadi ki Amrut Mahotsav and also make all university recruitments through APPSC.



# New tourist points will emerge in Visakhapatnam in near future

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In pursuit of its ambitious vision to elevate the 'City of Destiny' into a prominent tourist destination, the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) is taking proactive steps to solicit Request for Proposals (RFPs). These proposals aim to facilitate the development of a luxurious hotel, an international convention center, and several recreational amenities along the picturesque coastline of the former MGM Theme Park site, involving an investment of Rs 220 crore.

According to a senior VMRDA official, the project will be executed using the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. As a component of this initiative, VMRDA has already made public its intention to construct an impressive

oceanfront deck in the same vicinity, with an estimated expenditure of Rs 7.8 crore. This deck will extend 50 meters along the beach and an additional 50 m towards the waterfront area, providing an excellent opportunity for visitors to capture selfies and video clips showcasing the breathtaking ocean views.

Additionally, a mini-conference hall will be available for meetings, with a cafeteria on the ground floor and a viewing point on the top floor. The project has received approval from both the board and the State government.

The intention is to establish various attractions through a public-private partnership, including a dinosaur-themed amusement park, a theme park spanning five seasons, a water park, a glass skywalk, a rotating restaurant, and hot air balloon rides.

Following a recent board meeting, District Collector Dr A Mallikarjuna, who is also serving as the VMRDA Metropolitan Commissioner in an additional capacity, announced that the ocean deck, inspired by a successful concept in Mumbai, will be expedited for development and completed within a swift nine-month timeframe. This marks the inaugural venture of VMRDA into the construction of a premium sea-view hotel. The project location is situated next to the VMRDA Park, recognized as the largest park in Andhra Pradesh, which underwent an extensive beautification process in a sprawling 37-acre expanse some time ago.

The VMRDA Master Plan encompasses heritage site preservation to boost heritage tourism and identifies beach tourism as a lucrative revenue

source for the State Government.

The plan proposes expanding the beach road from Bheemilipatnam's 17th-century Dutch township to Bhogapuram, where the GMR Group is building an Rs 5,000 crore greenfield international airport in its initial phase.

VMRDA also plans to create tourist hubs at strategic locations, such as the Mulakodu confluence near Bheemunipatnam (owned by the Visakhapatnam Port Authority) and Konada Beach in Vizianagaram district. The Master Plan emphasises resilient urban development and green satellite townships to ease city congestion. Additionally, VMRDA aims to promote economic activity through theme-based projects in satellite townships like Nakkapalli, Bheemunipatnam, Parawada, and Atchutapuram.

## Kavitha to fight for BC women reservation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, while welcoming the Women's Reservation Bill, said on Wednesday that the Bharat Rashtira Samiti would continue the struggle to secure reservation to BC women. She said it was regrettable that women's reservation will not be implemented from the next election.

Kavitha congratulated all the women of the country for the approval of the Women's Bill in the Lok Sabha, providing 33 percent reservation for women in the legislatures.

"It is sad that women have to wait another five years. It is sad that BC women are not given opportunities in women's reservation and this bill has lost its soul. It is like a body without a soul", she said. The MLC asked the BJP government to think how the country could move forward if any section of women was left behind.

# Important Bills approved by Cabinet: Minister Srinivas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State cabinet took several important decisions during the meeting chaired by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday. After the Cabinet meeting, Information and Public Relation (I&PR) Minister Ch Srinivas Rao spoke to the media and disclosed the decisions.

Minister Srinivas said that the Cabinet approved the International Baccalaureate (IB) syllabus with international standards in the Education Department.

The minister briefed about the important Bills that were passed in the Cabinet that are the AP Contract Employees Bill – 2023, AP Vaidya Vidhana Parishad Employees Bill and the AP Guaranteed Pension Scheme (GPS) Bill. The Cabinet also took decisions

Minister Srinivas said that the Cabinet approved the International Baccalaureate (IB) syllabus with international standards in the Education Department.

regarding housing, Aarogyasri and fee reimbursement to retired employees. Paralympics medalist Sheikh Zafrin was given a Group-I job.

He said that the Cabinet decided to fill 353 posts of AP Director of Medical Education including King George Hospital, and implement zero vacancy policy in the Medical and Health Department. The Cabinet approved the AP Private Universities Act Amendment Bill and 50 percent reservation for tribals in Kurupam Engineering College.

He further said that the Cabinet approved amendment to Aadhaar Act and awards in the name of Jagananna Civil Services Encouragement. An incentive award of Rs1 lakh will be given if the prelims exam is cleared and Rs 50,000 if the mains is cleared. There will be a ban of one more year on RDF and Communist Party Maoist. The Cabinet further approved the AP Special Security Group (SSG) Bill. It also approved setting up of Kakinada Bulk Drug Park at Nakkapalli and appointment of outsourcing employees in the AP High Court.

The minister explained that the Cabinet approved the AP GST Act amendment, Endowments Department Lands Act amendment and the AP Assigned Lands Act Amendment Bill.

# Naval ships, submarine reach Singapore for SIMBEX-23

## SIMBEX is an annual naval exercise involving Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Indian Naval Ships Ranvijay and Kavaratti and submarine INS Sindhuvesari have arrived in Singapore to participate in the 30th edition of the Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX), an annual bilateral naval exercise between the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), which is being conducted since 1994. SIMBEX holds the distinction of being the longest continuous naval exercise that the Indian

Navy has with any other country.

SIMBEX-2023 is being conducted in two phases -- Harbour Phase at Singapore from September 21 to 24, followed by a Sea Phase. Besides Ranvijay, Kavaratti and Sindhuvesari, Long-Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft P8I is also participating in the exercise.

The Harbour Phase will witness a wide range of professional interactions, cross-deck visits, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE) and sports

fixtures, aimed at enhancing interoperability and mutual understanding between the two navies.

The Sea Phase of SIMBEX 23 will involve complex and advanced air defence exercises, gunnery firings, tactical manoeuvres, anti-submarine exercises and other maritime operations. Units of both the navies will endeavor to hone their war-fighting skills while consolidating their capability to undertake multi-discipline operations jointly in the maritime domain.

## Bill will give representation only to savarna women: Owaisi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday opposed the women's reservation bill saying it would provide reservation only to "savarna women", and questioned why OBC and Muslim women who have even lesser representation in Parliament are not being given any quota.

"I oppose this legislation.... The justification that is being given for the bill is that more women will get elected to Parliament. If that is the justification, why that justification is not being extended to the OBC and Muslim women whose representation in this august House is minimal", Owaisi said.

"We know Muslim women are seven per cent of the pop-

ulation, but in this Lok Sabha their representation stands at only 0.7 per cent," he said.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal introduced the Constitution amendment bill which seeks to reserve 33 per cent seats in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies for women in the Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday.

According to the bill, it will come into effect after the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies which will be carried out after the completion of the next population census.

Speaking on the bill, Owaisi said, "This Modi government wants to increase representation for savarna women. They don't want representation for OBC women and Muslim women."

# Cong is nowhere in poll race in Madhya Pradesh: CM Chouhan

PNS ■ INDORE

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday hit out at the opposition Congress, saying that it was facing public anger in the state and that it was nowhere in the assembly election race.

He also accused the previous Congress government led by Kamal Nath of stopping the welfare schemes launched by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) earlier. The ruling BJP has rolled out the 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' from September 3 to reach out to voters ahead of the elections, while the Congress launched the 'Jan Akrosh Yatra' on Tuesday, claiming that there was public anger against the present saffron

regime. "Congress is nowhere in the race (for the upcoming assembly elections). It is only facing public anger," Chouhan told PTI while participating in the BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' in Indore.

On the Congress's 'Jan Akrosh Yatra', CM Chouhan said, "They (Congress) do many things which we have already done, but their only intention is to garner votes, whereas we serve the public." People know the real face of the Congress, he said. The BJP will win with a record number of votes in the upcoming assembly elections on 230 seats, he claimed.

Earlier, while talking to reporters at the Indore airport, Chouhan alleged that the pre-

vious Kamal Nath-led Congress government had stopped the implementation of various public welfare schemes started during the BJP rule.

On DMK leaders' remarks against Sanatan Dharma, Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh will not tolerate such statements.

When asked about the BJP leaders joining the Congress ahead of the assembly polls, the CM refused to comment on it. Kamal Nath-led Congress government collapsed in March 2020, after being in power for 15 months, when a section of Congress MLAs, mostly loyal to Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, quit the grand old party and joined the BJP.

## TAKING BRIBE TO MAKE SPEECH, VOTE IN PARL

# SC to re-examine verdict on MPs' immunity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to re-examine its 1998 judgment granting MPs and MLAs immunity from prosecution for taking bribe to make a speech or vote in Parliament or state legislatures.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said it will set up a 7-judge bench to examine the matter afresh.

In 2019, a bench headed by then chief justice Ranjan Gogoi had referred to a 5-judge bench the crucial question, noting it had "wide ramification" and was of "substantial public importance".

The three-judge bench had then said it will revisit its verdict in the sensational Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) bribery



case on an appeal filed by Sita Soren, JMM MLA from Jama constituency in Jharkhand.

The top court's five-judge bench had in its 1998 verdict in the PV Narasimha Rao versus CBI case held that parliamentarians had immunity under the Constitution against criminal prosecution for any speech made and vote cast inside the House.

## Exercise...

Continued from Page 1

It said the Indian nationals and students from India in Canada must also register with the High Commission of India in Ottawa or Consulates General of India in Toronto and Vancouver through their respective websites or on <http://m/adad.gov.in>.

"Registration would enable the High Commission and the Consulates General to better connect with Indian citizens in Canada in the event of any emergency or untoward incident," the MEA said.

In an explosive statement in the House of Commons on Monday, Trudeau said that Canada was looking at "credible allegations potentially linking" Indian agents to the killing of Nijjar, a Canadian Khalistani terrorist. He was shot dead by two gunmen in Surrey on June 18. In a strongly-worded statement, the MEA on Tuesday trashed Trudeau's comments asserting that "such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

# Modi invites Biden to be chief guest at R' Day celebrations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited US President Joe Biden to be the Chief Guest for the Republic Day celebrations on January 26 during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit, US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said on Wednesday.

Asked whether the Quad summit is being planned in India around the same time, Garcetti indicated that he was not aware of it. The Quad comprises India, the US, Japan and Australia. It is India's turn to host the annual Quad summit next year. The US ambassador was asked at an event about the reports that India is considering inviting leaders of the Quad nations to grace the Republic Day celebrations.

US President Biden was invited to the Republic Day celebrations by Prime Minister Modi during the bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit, Garcetti said.



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was the chief guest at this year's Republic Day celebrations.

Every year, India invites world leaders to attend its Republic Day celebrations.

There was no Republic Day Chief guest in 2021 and 2022 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the then Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest.

In 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was the chief guest at the parade, while in 2018, leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries attended the celebrations.

In 2017, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the

chief guest at celebrations, while the then French President Francois Hollande graced the occasion in 2016.

In 2015, the then US President Barack Obama watched the parade.

In 2014, the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the chief guest at the celebrations, while Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck attended the parade in 2013.

Other heads of state and government who have attended the Republic Day celebrations include Nicolas Sarkozy, Vladimir Putin, Nelson Mandela, John Major, Mohammed Khatami and Jacques Chirac.

The then British Prime Minister John Major had attended the celebrations in 1993, Nelson Mandela participated as then South African President in 1995 while South Korean President President Lee Myung Bak witnessed the parade in 2010.

# A move towards...

Continued from Page 1

The debate also saw rival political parties claim credit for women's reservation, with Gandhi saying that the bill was a dream of her late husband and former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who made attempts to grant reservation to women in local bodies in 1989 but failed, and BJP members asserting that former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee brought the bill twice only to be met with unruly scenes in the House.

The bill was brought in 2008 during the coalition government led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and passed by the Rajya Sabha, where it was introduced, in 2010. However, the bill could not be passed in the Lok Sabha due to political differences. It subsequently lapsed with dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi was the lone voice of opposition to the bill contending that the measure would provide reservation only to "savarna women", and exclude OBC and Muslim women who have little representation in Parliament.

The AIMIM has two members in Lok Sabha. On the issue of immediate implementation of the proposed law, Shah said such a move would lead to allegations of partiality and insisted that the matter be best left to the delimitation commission which would carry out the exercise in a transparent manner.

"If we do it and Wayanad becomes reserved you will say it is a political step. If Hyderabad becomes a reserved seat, Owaisi ji will say it is politically motivated," the home minister said.

# Should be effective...

Continued from Page 1

I want to ask a question.

For the last 13 years, Indian women have been waiting for their political responsibilities, and now they are being asked to wait for a few more years -- two years, four years, six years, eight years," the former Congress chief said.

Is such behaviour with Indian women appropriate, she asked.

"It is the demand of the Indian National Congress that the bill be immediately implemented... but, along with that, provision should be made for the reservation of SC, ST, OBC women after conducting a caste census," she said.

The government, Gandhi told the House, should take the required steps for this. The bill has proposed that the reservation continue for a period of 15 years and there will be one-third quota for women also within the seats reserved for SC/STs.

"This is the most appropriate moment to acknowledge and thank women for their contribution," Gandhi said. "On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I demand from the government that the Narishakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023 be implemented as soon as possible while clearing all roadblocks in its way. Doing this is not only necessary but also possible," Gandhi said.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

No 259 to 312 /ATO/2023-24

Date: 14.09.2023

This office Tender Notice No 259 to 312 /ATO/2023-24, Dt:14.09.2023, 54 works an amount of Rs. 1040.20 Lakhs. (1st Call). Jai Jeevan Mission Grant. Last date / Time for receipt of tenders 10.10.2023 upto 3.00 pm. Further details can be seen [www.approcurement.gov.in](http://www.approcurement.gov.in). Contact Nos. ATO - 8674658111, EE - 9100121217.

R.O.No: 1061/CLADVT/10201-22, Dt: 20.09.2023

Sd/- Executive Engineer,

RWS&S Division, Bhimavaram





# Ibrahimpattanam, Penuganchiprolu mandals will gain top position: DC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has told the officials of the NITI Aayog that under the Aspirational Blocks Programme, which is being implemented in selected blocks including Ibrahimpattanam and Penuganchiprolu, they made a plan to help these mandals reach the top position.

The district administration is planning to make arrangements in these two mandals to watch the live-streaming of the inauguration of 'Sankalpa Sattah' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 3, he said.

Dilli Rao attended the NITI Aayog officials' virtual meet-



**Dilli Rao attended the NITI Aayog officials' virtual meeting on the Aspirational Blocks Programme from the video conference hall on Wednesday.**

ing on the Aspirational Blocks Programme from the video conference hall on Wednesday. The NITI Aayog officials said that the Prime Minister would give a speech on the

Aspirational Blocks Programme from the Pragathi Mydan after launching the 'Sankalpa Sattah' programme on October 3.

Later, Collector Dilli Rao told the NITI Aayog officials that the district administration was all set to arrange the live-streaming in Ibrahimpattanam and Penuganchiprolu mandals. He added that they were implementing all guidelines given by the Central government. As part of this, they were organising various programmes from October 3 to 9.

NTR District Chief Planning Officer Y Sri Latha, MPDOs BV Ramakrishna Naik and SV Prasad were present.

## Ambedkar Smrithi Vanam to be developed into a tourist spot

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar inspected Dr BR Ambedkar's 125-foot statue, the work of which is in the final stage, at the Swarajya Maidan in Vijayawada on Wednesday. He directed the contracting agency to start the painting works for the museum and the theater. The statue works are going on at a brisk pace at the Swarajya Maidan adjacent to the Mahatma Gandhi Road, which is the heart of Vijayawada. Swapnil inspected all ongoing works and gave various suggestions to the contracting agency.

Speaking on the occasion, Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar said that the works on the museum and the theater were almost



complete.

Further, he said that the State government aimed to develop Dr BR Ambedkar Smrithi Vanam as a tourist spot. The fountain works should be completed within the stipulated time, he directed the officials.

Also, he gave instructions to

the contracting agency to maintain the quality of work. As it is the government's prestigious work, all officials should pay special attention, he added.

VMC Deputy City Planner Jubin Siran Roy, Executive Engineer ASSN Prasad and others were present.

## Comments against CM: Ayyanna Patrudu gives explanation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP senior leader and former minister Chintakayala Ayyanna Patrudu attended the enquiry in connection with his objectionable comments against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, at the Hanuman Junction Police Station in the Krishna district on Wednesday.

Ayyanna Patrudu made serious comments against Jagan during the TDP National General Secretary Nara Lokesh organised Yuvagalam Padayatra, which was held in the Gannavaram Constituency last month. For that, former minister and Machilipatnam MLA Perni Venkata Ramaiah (Nani)

complained to the police and the Atkuru police registered a case against Ayyanna Patrudu.

After that, the Atkuru police took Ayyanna Patrudu into custody at the Visakhapatnam Airport three weeks ago. Later, the police released him after giving the 41 CRPC notice to the former minister.

In this connection, former minister Ayyanna Patrudu came to the Hanuman Junction Police Station to attend the enquiry. He gave his explanation to the police. Learning that Ayyanna Patrudu arrived at the police station, a large number of TDP leaders and activists rushed to the police station in support of him.

## YSRC women MPs seek to include OBCs in reservation criteria

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress women MPs, endorsing the Women's Reservation Bill, raised the demand to include OBC candidates under reservation criteria.

While participating in the ongoing discussion on the Women Reservation Bill in the Parliament, YSRC Anakapalli MP Dr BV Satyavathi started her speech by referring to it as a 'commitment to strengthen democracy'. "The Women's Reservation Bill carries the promise of empowering women, fostering inclusivity, and advancing the cause of gender equality in our political sphere. It is a testament to our commitment to strengthening democracy by ensuring that every voice, regardless of gender, but also represented in the



highest echelons of governance," she said.

Highlighting the need and the strengths of the Bill, YSRC MP Satyavathi spoke about four major points supporting it. "The foremost positive aspect of this Bill is its potential to empower women in India, despite the Constitutional promise of gender equality. Women have been underrepresented in our legislative bodies, so this reservation policy

acknowledges the need for affirmative action to uplift the status of women and provide them with equal opportunities in politics.

Studies have shown that the political reservation for women leads to increase in the allocation of resources to issues closely linked to women's concerns. The third critical point in the support of the Bill is the increased participation. This Bill will encourage more women to actively participate in politics. And last but not the least, another major critical point is equitable representation. This Bill will help diversify the backgrounds, the experiences and perspectives of our elected officials, resulting in more inclusive and balanced decision making," she said.

Providing suggestions on the improvement of the Bill, Dr

Satyavathi continued to add, "I would further request the house to include reservation for the OBCs. So the original recommendation of the Joint Committee on the 1996 bill suggested extending reservations to women from other backward classes, OBCs. So this recommendation could be reconsidered for greater inclusivity."

YSRC Kakinada MP Vanga Geetha informed Parliament about 50 per cent reservation provided women in AP government nominated posts "Our party president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy decided that we should support the Women's Reservation Bill and YSR Congress Party has already been implementing it in the state of Andhra Pradesh and we will extend full support to the Bill.

## School bus driver dies of heart attack at wheel: narrow escape for students

PNS ■ BAPATLA

As many as 40 school children had a narrow escape after the driver of the bus they were travelling in suffered cardiac arrest and died on the spot.

The bus was transporting the students in Bapatla district of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday. The incident took place when the driver, 53-year-old Gurralla Edukondalu, was driving the bus through Mylavaram, Uppalapadu and Vempala villages to a private school in Addanki town.

While the vehicle was on Uppalapadu -

Vempala road, Yedukondalu suffered a heart attack.

However, he managed to slowly park the bus below the road margin. He told students that he was suffering a heart attack, and collapsed on the steering wheel. Locals who noticed brought him down and performed CPR. Police reached the spot and rushed him to a nearby private hospital, where he was declared brought dead.

The students were taken to Addanki on the same bus with the help of another driver. The police have registered a case and are investigating the incident.

## Mission Clean Krishna River in full swing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) has launched Mission Clean Krishna River under the leadership of Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi and Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar of Vijayawada. In response to the citizens commitment to maintaining clean canals, VMC has launched this significant initiative.

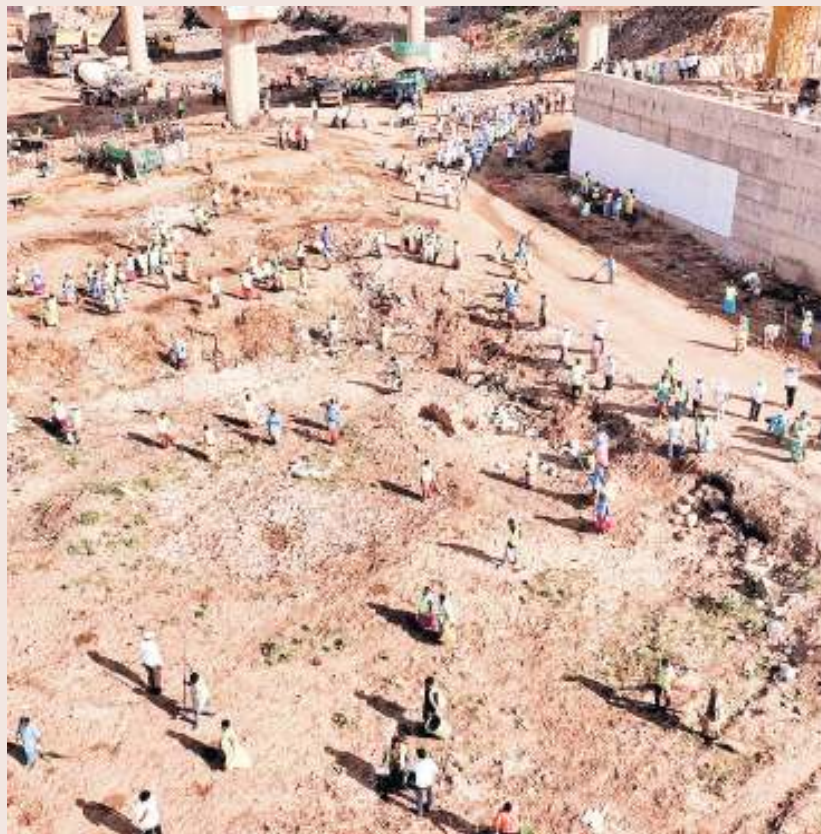
Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar recognises the critical importance of extending these efforts beyond the city's three canals. The vision for Mission Clean Krishna River seeks to transform the belts of Krishna River along the city into a clean water body, untarnished

by pollution and waste.

The vision has been meticulously planned to ensure the strategic cleaning of the river and the comprehensive awareness programs for the citizens about the importance of preserving the river's cleanliness.

On September 17, a mass clean up drive was conducted by VMC and over 3,000 young students and citizens participated in cleaning the river bank at Varadhi and collected 100 tonnes of garbage waste.

Commissioner urges citizens of Vijayawada to support by not throwing wastes into the Krishna river, which is the major source of drinking water to the people of Vijayawada.



## TTE returns handbag with cash, gold to passenger

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a most comforting gesture and display of sincerity and integrity, a Ticket Checking Employee of Vijayawada Division returned a hand bag with cash and lots of gold ornaments to the passengers yesterday on Train no. 18520 LTT-Visakhapatnam Express.

G Lakshmiiah, TTI, Vijayawada Division, was manning B6, B5, B4 and S1 coaches while working from Vijayawada to Visakhapatnam, on September 18. At about 05.10 am, after the train passed Bhimavaram Town, Lakshmiiah, TTI was checking the joining berths in coach B6. During the check he found a ladies hand bag on the dining table at Berth no. 26 of B 6 coach. The mobile inside the bag was ringing continuously.

He enquired the passengers in the next coupe and others regarding the hand bag. The co-passengers conveyed that it



belonged to a family who got down at Bhimavaram Town. TTI Lakshmiiah immediately informed Commercial Control, Vijayawada regarding the incident and requested the co-passengers to attend to the mobile in the hand bag. The party pleaded for the missing handbag and said that it contains Rs. 40,000 cash and around 120 grams Gold worth Rs 6.5 Lakh. The party requested the TTE to hand over the bag to their brother living at Rajahmundry. Lakshmiiah immediately informed Station Officer Rajahmundry and

Commercial Control regarding their request. After the train reached Rajahmundry the hand bag was handed over to her brother in the presence of GRP along with an official memo to GRP Police. Also a clear acknowledgement was obtained from her brother regarding the receipt. The party immensely thanked the TTE for his sincerity and kind gesture.

Acknowledging this gesture, Vavilapalli Rambabu, IRTS, Sr Divisional Commercial Manager, Vijayawada presented G Lakshmiiah, TTI, Vijayawada for display of utmost sincerity, diligence and dedication in duty and also reaching out to passengers in distress.

Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division congratulated G Lakshmiiah, TTI for his sincerity and integrity from Official Social Media Handles of Vijayawada Division.

## Actor Raja joins Congress

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Spiritual teacher and actor Raja joined the Congress in the presence of Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gidugu Rudra Raju at a programme held at the Andhra Ratna Bhavan in Vijayawada on Wednesday. APCC president and former MLC Gidugu Rudra Raju welcomed Raja into the Congress party by making him wear a tri-colour scarf. Also, Rudra Raju welcomed another leader Murari, who worked in the various movements along with former CBI JD Lakshmi Narayana, into the party.

Speaking on the occasion, Rudra Raju said that the Congress had been gaining its old glory in the State with the joining of senior leaders and familiar persons into the party. His party would use Raja's services following the guidance of the party leadership, he said.

Also, he gave his consent that his party would welcome



Actor Raja joining the Congress in presence of APCC president Gidugu Rudra Raju in Vijayawada on Wednesday (Photo:Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar)

former Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy's daughter and the YSRTP President Sharmila. Congress party leadership is striving to get the old glory to the party in the State, he added.

Cine actor Raja expressed happiness after joining the Congress. He said that he was

ready to work for the development of the party in the State. He said he was very much one of the fans of Rahul Gandhi.

APCC working president Sunkara PadmaSri, Vijayawada president Naraharasetti Narasimha Rao, party leaders B Kiran, V Gurunadham, and others were present.

## NTR CP Kanthi Rana Tata opens a renovated parking place

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR Police Commissioner Kanthi Rana Tata opened a renovated parking place on the premises of the Commissioner of Police Office (CPO) in Vijayawada on Wednesday. Also, he inaugurated the newly constructed dining hall on the CPO premises. The dining hall has been constructed for office administrative staff. Also, the CPO renovated the vehicle parking place. Later, CP Kanthi Rana Tata said that staff could use the dining hall and parking place for their convenience.

Deputy Police Commissioner Vishal Gunni, City Security Wing DCP ABTS Udaya Rani, Admin DCP M Satti Babu, Crime ADCP P Venkata Ratnam, CSB in charge ADCP GV Ramana Murthy, AO T Ranga Rao, AAO P Sunita, Police Officers Association President Somaiah, Administrative Wing Association President Gangadhar and others were present.



## Two-wheelers restricted on ghat roads

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

As a measure for devotee safety, TTD has banned the plying of two-wheelers on Tirumala Ghat Roads from 6pm of September 21 to 6am of September 23 in view of the heavy turnout of pilgrims for Garuda Seva on September 22.

TTD has made an extensive parking facility at old Alipiri Check Point for two-wheelers and extended RTC bus service to Tirumala from Tirupati.

TTD has appealed to devotees to note the changes and cooperate with TTD for the smooth conduct of the Garuda Vahana Seva.



# TDP is ready to face the anarchy of YSRCP: Ex-MLA

PNS ■ NARASAROPET

Narasaraopet district TDP president former MLA GV Anjaneyulu said that the TDP is ready to face any kind of atrocities and harassment against the TDP and the people of the state are ready to defeat the YSRCP in the next elections.

The relay hunger strike being observed in protest against the arrest of Naidu of the TDP entered on the 8th day on Wednesday. Participating in the deeksha, Anjaneyulu said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy falsely implicated Chandrababu Naidu in the skill development scam.

"Chandrababu Naidu has never committed any mistake and never indulged in corruption. As the debacle of YSRC looms large, the YSRCP is indulging in all kinds of anarchic acts. Jagan Mohan Reddy has become a psycho and resorting to anti-constitutional acts," he slammed.

The ex-MLA questioned the YSRCP headed government on what basis and evidence Naidu was arrested. He recalled that several officers



**"Chandrababu Naidu has never committed any mistake and never indulged in corruption. As the debacle of YSRC looms large, the YSRCP is indulging in all kinds of anarchic acts. Jagan Mohan Reddy has become a psycho and resorting to anti-constitutional acts," he slammed.**

including IAS officer Sriikshmi was sent to prison as she cooperated with irregularities when Rajasekhar

Reddy was the Chief Minister in the combined state.

The CID police, who are dancing to the tune of YSRCP

leaders, would pay a heavy price soon, he warned

"Conspiracy is being hatched to arrest Nara Lokesh for questioning corruption of YSRCP government. Telugu Yuvatha president Bodepudi Shankar, Telugu Vidyarthi resident Narra Kishore and I TDP leader LIC Nageswara Rao were among those who were present.

## Teacher cuts hair of girl students, suspended

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In a shocking incident a teacher cut the hair of girl students and the teacher was suspended by the officials.

Official sources here Wednesday said that a teacher of Sarvepalli Radhakrishna Municipal high school in Suryanarayanapuram area here on Wednesday was suspended for cutting the hair of ninth class girl students who failed to observe discipline in the classroom.

The teacher Manga Devi's action of cutting the hair of girl students drew flak. The Teacher Manga Devi, seeing the girls attending classes with loose hair as a fashion without grooming, took a scissor and cut the loose hair.

It sparked loud protests from parents who launched agitation against the teacher. The Mandal Education Officer Ganesh Babu conducted an enquiry on the incident and submitted a report basing on which the Deputy Educational Officer issued orders placing Manga Devi under suspension.



## BJP to write letter to Centre on liquor irregularities in AP

PNS ■ ELURU

BJP State President Daggubati Purandeswari said that she would write a letter to the CBI on the irregularities taking place in the implementation of the liquor policy in Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, she said that there is a need to unearth the corruption in the matter of liquor in the state, adding that she would also take up the matter with the central leadership.

Purandeswari decried the manner in which former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was arrested. The BJP condemns

the arrest of Naidu. She made it clear that the BJP has nothing to do with Naidu's arrest.

It is not fair to link this arrest to BJP, she said, adding that the BJP central high command would take care of the issue of alliances between the parties for the next elections.

Commenting on alliance with other parties in AP, she clarified that the BJP high command would make a decision and the state unit would follow it.

She alleged that many corporate hospitals are rejecting treatment to the poor under Arogyasri scheme as the government has not released funds. At the same time, the

Central government is releasing Rs 5 lakh under Ayushman Bharat scheme which is benefiting lakhs of poor. She welcomed passing of Mahila Reservation bill in the new Parliament Bhavan in the first session itself.

Purandeswari claimed that the Centre government is releasing funds at the regular intervals to AP based on the state government reports. BJP state general secretary Garapati Sitaramanyanayulu, state Mahila Morcha president Nirmala, EX-MLA Ambika Krishna and district in-charge APR Chowdary and minority Morcha state president Sk.Bhaji were among those who were present.

## YSRCP leader slaps tahasildar, Collector orders inquiry



PNS ■ ONGOLE

YSRCP leader attacked Santanuthalapadu Tahasildar Lakshminarayan Reddy and slapped him in the office and Collector AS Dinesh Kumar ordered the police to conduct an inquiry on the incident.

According to official sources here on Wednesday

Santhanuthalapadu YSRCP leader Dumpa Chenchi Reddy attacked the Tahasildar on the issue of uploading his land online.

The YSRCP leader exerted pressure on the Tahasildar to upload his land online. However, the Tahasildar refused to do so as they were against the rules.

Irate over this, YSRCP leader Chenchi Reddy slapped him. The YSRCP leader also held the Tahasildar's neck and pushed him out of the Tahsildar office.

A case was registered in the Santhanuthalapadu police station on the incident. Later Tahasildar Lakshminarayana Reddy met district Collector Dinesh Kumar and complained

about the attack by the YSRCP leader.

The Collector summoned Santhanuthalapadu SI Anjaneyulu and ordered him to conduct a comprehensive inquiry and submit a report. Tahasildar Lakshminarayana told the media that he would discuss the matter with the Revenue officials association.

## Collector asks people to utilize JAS facility

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector P Prashanthi appealed to the people to utilise the services of Jagananna Arogya Suraksha (JAS) scheme under which many medical facilities are being provided.

The District Collector participated in a house-to-house survey of Jagananna Arogya Suraksha in Balusumudi BC Colony under Dhawaram Local Municipality and interacted with locals. The Collector explained to the public that based on the diagnosis, they should get medical advice and medical services at the Jagananna Arogya Suraksha Camp.

Speaking on the she said that under the JAS scheme, medical facilities are provided at the door steps. She said that the health personnel go door to door to find out their health condition and conduct necessary tests there. After that, special health camps would be set up and glasses, hearing aids, other

tools and medicines would be provided to the needy.

Earlier, in the name of health survey, volunteers used to inquire about the health problems of people over the phone or directly. Now the ANM, Asha worker and volunteer go directly to every house and conduct at home.

"If there are problems that have not been identified so far, they will be identified at the earliest," told the officials and referred to hospitals, and some medicines will be given immediately.

The District Collector said that this is the main purpose of 'Jagananna Arogya Suraksha' in which specialist doctors examine the patients in the health camps to be organized and provide necessary medical services and medicines.

RDO Dasi Raju, DMHO Dr.D Maheswara Rao and municipal commissioner M Shyamala were among those who accompanied the Collector.

## Fool-proof steps for Ganesh Immersion

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of police Malika Garg directed the police officials to make fool-proof arrangements for the Ganesh immersion and she appealed to the public to operate with officials.

She asked the officials to perform duties with constant vigilance to avoid any disturbances during the immersion. Everyone should cooperate to the safe Vinayak immersion in a peaceful environment, the SP said.

The District SP on Wednesday visited the Kothapatnam coast where a large number of Ganesh idols are immersed in the district on Wednesday and personally inspected the security and security arrangements made there.

The SP directed the police officers about the special arrangements and precautions to be taken in various parts of the beach so that no untoward incident takes place during the immersion.

The SP told the officials to take strict measures to ensure that there are no disturbances or accidents in the immersion that took place during the Ganesh idols immersion.

She said that the roads and junctions where the immersion processions take place should be secured to ensure that the immersion is completed at the specified



times without any traffic disruption. She said the devotee, children and elderly people should not go into the deep sea areas in the immersion area.

The SP also ordered the police officers to keep ready flood lights, life jackets, and boats. The SP said that strict measures are being taken to ensure that Ganesh immersion takes place in a peaceful environment in the coastal

areas of the district to avoid accidents during immersion at rivers, ponds. Traffic control measures were being taken to prevent any inconvenience to the general public on the immersion day.

SP Malika Garg said that arrangements are being made for diversion of vehicles and parking spaces, for the safety of the devotee's. The marine police would also be on duty, a control room has

been set up and a public address system and precautionary rules have been set up to give appropriate instructions and information to the devotees.

The SP warned of taking stringent action against the thieves and anti-social elements. DSP Narayana Swamy Reddy, SB DSP B Mariyadas and other officials were among those who accompanied the SP.



## 400 kg ganja seized, 6 arrested

PNS ■ PADERU

The police seized 400 KGs of ganja worth over Rs 20 lakh at Gondikudem in Mothugudem manda.

Police here on Wednesday said that on a tip off the

police conducted checking of vehicles at Gandigundam village.

The police found 400 KGs of ganja worth Rs 20 lakh in a car. The police arrested six people and two managed to escape.

## IR upgrading Vande Bharat trains for enhanced passenger comfort

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vande Bharat Express is continuously being improved and upgraded taking into account the suggestions given by passengers to make the travel experience more memorable and comfortable.

A host of technological changes are being undertaken to ensure that the high satisfaction levels expressed by the passengers are maintained to make Vande Bharat the preferred mode of transport for the traveling public.

Currently, 25 pairs of Vande Bharat trains are being operated across Indian Railways. In South Central Railway, two pairs i.e., between Secunderabad - Tirupati - Secunderabad and Secunderabad - Visakhapatnam - Secunderabad have been running successfully with nearly



120 per cent patronage. The Ministry of Railways is planning to introduce additional Vande Bharat Trains across Indian Railways, including the South Central Railway.

In this regard, Railways have been taking feedback from the passengers. Based on the experience as well as the passenger feedback, several improvements have been incorporated into the New Vande Bharat trains to make them more comfortable, safer, aesthetic and energy efficient.

These include the reclination angle of the seats being increased from 17.31 to 19.37

to make it more comfortable for the passengers, optimisation of the hardness of cushion, the seat color in Executive Chair Car (ECC) being changed from red to pleasant blue, improved accessibility of mobile charging point under the seats.

It also improved the lighting in toilets from 1.5 watts to 2.5 watts, the toilet handle given an additional bend for improved grip, provision of water tap aerator for better water flow control, standardisation of colours for toilet panels to provide uniformity, borderless emergency talk back unit (to interact with driver in case of emergency) to match with panel background, hinged transparent door assembly for the fire extinguishers in coaches to have better visibility in case of emergency and many more.

## Two held for kidnapping infant from Niloufer Hospital

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Zone Task Force, in coordination with Nampally police, on Wednesday arrested two persons involved in kidnapping an infant from Niloufer Hospital.

The accused were identified as Katroth Mamtha (26) and Katroth Srinu (26), both natives of Kamareddy district. The incident occurred on September 14 when Mamtha, her husband Katroth Srinu, along with their infant boy came to Niloufer Hospital. They planned to kidnap another infant in a bid to swap their child. The accused got acquainted to the victims and had a conversation with an intention to divert her and abduct the infant.

## Heavy rain likely in north coastal AP in next 24 hours

PNS ■ GUNTUR

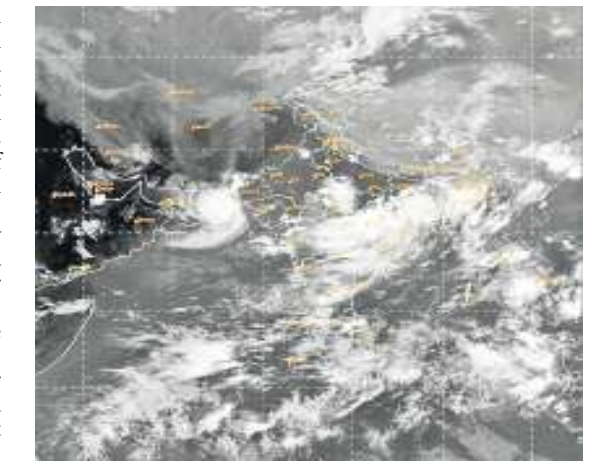
Heavy rainfall is likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours, the Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next three days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely to occur at many places or at a

few places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. Heavy rainfall occurred at one or two places in the Srikakulam district of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the last 24 hours.

Rainfall occurred at a few places over Coastal Andhra Pradesh, at one or two over Rayalaseema, and dry weather prevailed during the same period. The southwest monsoon has been weak over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema, the report added.



## Man kidnapped, murdered over financial dispute

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from Santoshnagar, a man was kidnapped and murdered over a financial dispute. The incident occurred on September 11.

The victim was identified as Mohammed Rizwan (31), a resident of Yakhtupura and was employed as a home guard.

Following his death, Rizwan's father received a ransom call. The accused asked Rizwan's father to meet them at Bazarghat with Rs 10 lakh, after which his son would be released. Following the call, the victim's father approached the IS Sadan police station.

However, there was not much help on offer. He then paid Rs

2 lakh to the kidnappers as ransom and got his son released on September 13.

However, after his release, Rizwan vomited blood as he suffered fractures due to a physical assault by the kidnappers during his two days of confinement.

As Rizwan's health deteriorated further, he was shifted to

Osmania General Hospital and later to Owaisi Hospital where he succumbed to injuries on September 18.


Raising concerns over repeated murders in the city, the spokesman of the Majlis Bachao Tehreek (MBT), Amjed Ullah Khan highlighted the incompetence of city police in curbing murders.



INDIA CORNER


### Elderly man attacked with acid over black magic succumbs in Maha

An 85-year-old man succumbed to severe burn injuries suffered in an acid attack carried out after he was accused by two persons of practicing black magic against them in a village in Jalna district of Maharashtra, police said on Wednesday. The deceased, identified as Shirrang Shejul, was a resident of Mhasrul village under Jafrabad tehsil. He was attacked with acid on the night of September 1 and succumbed to burn injuries on September 18 after battling for his life for more than a fortnight, they said. The police have registered a murder case against two suspects, Nandu Shejul and Bhaskar Sable, both local residents. While Nandu Shejul has been apprehended, Sable still remains at large. During investigation, police recovered stock of acid from Nandu's residence, they said. According to a complaint filed by the deceased's son, the gruesome attack took place when the elderly man was sleeping in the veranda of his house.




### 'Number of sites where mosquito larvae-breeding found has plateaued'

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Wednesday said the number of sites where mosquito larvae-breeding is being found in the national capital has "plateaued", and a city-wide awareness campaign will be launched to combat vector-borne diseases. Asked about the dengue cases situation in Delhi, Bharadwaj told reporters, "Last week, we held a meeting with officials of the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi), health department. During that meeting, MCD (officials) shared data with us and it shows that the number of sites where mosquito breeding is being found has reached a plateau". "I have directed the health department and the chief secretary to run a city-wide campaign for raising awareness as we approach the peak season of dengue. The campaign has not been run this time," he added. Bharadwaj said fogging is being done in all 250 wards of Delhi.



### Corruption cases pending against 276 govt employees: Himachal CM Sukhu

Corruption cases are pending against 276 employees and officers who figure in the "doubtful integrity" list and action is being taken against them in several courts, as well as by vigilance, police, and CBI, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said on Wednesday. The departments have been requested time and again to prepare a list of employees with "doubtful integrity" and directed not to appoint these employees to sensitive posts, and if they are already appointed, then remove them, Sukhu said in a written reply in the assembly house. Sukhu was responding to a question raised by Congress legislator Yadvinder Goma. Officers with "doubtful integrity" are those against whom criminal or departmental proceedings are pending in courts or at the departmental level, or who have been acquitted on technical grounds with "reasonable" suspicion about their integrity during trial.



BILKIS BANO CASE

# SC asks if convicts have right to seek remission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday asked whether convicts have a fundamental right to seek remission, as it heard petitions challenging the premature release of 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano gangrape case and murder of seven of her family members during the 2002 Gujarat riots.

"Is the right to seek remission a fundamental right (of the convicts). Will a petition lie under Article 32 (that deals with citizens' right to move SC directly if their fundamental rights are infringed) of the Constitution," a bench of justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan asked a lawyer appearing for one of the 11 convicts.

"No, it is not a fundamental right of the convicts," the lawyer responded.

The victim and others also do not have the right to move the apex court directly by filing a petition under Article 32 as no fundamental right of theirs has been infringed either, he said. The lawyer said the victims have other statutory rights to challenge the grant of remission.

Another senior lawyer representing a convict said the grant of remission by the com-



petent authority is open to judicial review before high courts under Article 226 of the Constitution.

Article 226 of the Constitution says the high court "shall have powers to issue orders or writs including habeas corpus....to any person or any government for the enforcement of fundamental rights and for other purposes."

"Who is to say that remission has been granted after following the rules?" the bench wondered.

The lawyer responded, saying if at all this is a question, then remission has to be challenged in the high court and not directly in the top court under Article 32.

During the hearing, the

bench objected to a lawyer's submission that after an accused has been convicted, "right or wrong", by a court including the Supreme Court, and served the sentence before being granted remission, it was not open to challenge.

"What is this right or wrong? You have been rightly convicted," the bench told the lawyer sternly.

The lawyer said he only wanted to drive home the point that the convicts have already served the sentence for over 15 years.

"Balance of convenience tilts more towards the convicts since they have already served the sentence. Our criminal jurisprudence is based on the idea of reformation. The nature

and severity of crime should not be seen at this stage but the conduct of the convicts in jail," the lawyer said.

The arguments on behalf of the convicts concluded on Wednesday and now the court will hear rejoinder submissions of Bilkis Bano's counsel and others on October 4 at 2 pm.

The court had earlier observed some convicts are "more privileged" and secure the benefit of remission.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for convict Ramesh Rupabhai Chandana, had said the grant of remission for reformation and rehabilitation of the convicts is a "settled position internationally" and the argument of Bilkis Bano and others that he cannot be granted the relief due to heinous nature of the offence cannot be invoked now after the Executive had taken a decision.

"Other side says retribution or deterrence and nothing less. That, in my opinion, is not an argument that can be made at this stage... the grant of remission cannot be approached through a punitive attitude. This is not in line with the policy of Indian law," he had said.

## 'Swachhata' boosts productivity: Jitendra Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

'Swachhata' does not add to costs but boosts productivity and conserves resources, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

During his visit to the Finance Ministry offices in North Block to oversee preparations for the 'Swachhata Special Campaign 3.0', he asked the senior officers to aim for reducing pendency in government offices with a saturation approach.

"Swachhata, viz cleanliness, does not add to costs but, in fact, boosts productivity and conserves resources," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

He said, close to 90 lakh square feet of prime office space has been cleared during the last two swachhata campaigns and put into productive usage. Besides, the government generated a revenue of Rs 370.83 crore from the disposal of scrap, 4.56 lakh public grievances were redressed and 8,998 MPs' references replied, a statement issued by the personnel ministry said.

Swachhata campaign also spurred e-office work culture in the government and now more than 90 per cent of file work has been made online, it said.

## Citing drought, K'taka CM to move SC on water release to TN

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing the "drought-like situation" in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the state government will appeal in the Supreme Court for an injunction against the CWMA order that stipulates the release of about 5,000 cusecs of water per day to Tamil Nadu till September 28.

Siddaramaiah also sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in this regard.

The order by the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) came on September 18.

Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar are likely to meet the Union Jal Shakti Minister to discuss this matter.

Meanwhile, senior BJP leader and Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi urged the Congress government in Karnataka not to "politicise" the matter as the state has agreed to release 2,500 cusecs out of 5,000 cusecs of water to TN. The issue was discussed in a meeting with all Members of Parliament and Union Ministers from Karnataka in the national capital here. Barring Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, all MPs from the state attended the meeting.



"The state is in distress as we have not received enough rainfall. There is a drought-like situation in the state. Out of 230 taluks, 195 taluks have been declared as drought-hit. In a meeting to be held soon, another 20-odd taluks will be declared drought-hit," Siddaramaiah told reporters after the meeting.

August month saw a rainfall shortage for the first time in 123 years. In times of distress, there is no formula to decide how much water to be released for Tamil Nadu, he said.

"Unfortunately, there is no distress formula to address this suffering. ....We cannot release water. We will appeal to the Supreme Court for an injunction against the CWMA order....," he said.

The chief minister also shared that the Supreme Court, in the modified order, had asked Karnataka to release 177.25 TMC of Cauvery water

in a normal year. However, it did not specify the quantum of water to be released during any distress year.

"Till now, we were to release 108 TMC of water had it been a normal year. So far, only 39.6 TMC water has been given because there is no water and no rain," he added. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said there is very little inflow of water in the state. CWMA has not come out with a formula on the quantum of water to be released in times of distress situation, he said.

"We are facing a distress situation as we have only 1/3rd of the water. For the first time in the last 120 years, such a situation has risen. CWMA has asked us to release 5,000 cusecs of water, but we have no water even for drinking. We discussed this with all MPs. They have assured us they will support in our fight," Shivakumar said.

## Stalin dubs women's bill 'poll gimmick', AIADMK welcomes it

PNS ■ CHENNAI

DMK President and Chief Minister M K Stalin on Wednesday dubbed the Women's Reservation Bill in its current form a "poll gimmick" as it would come into force only after a delimitation exercise on the basis of a yet-to-be held census.

The main opposition AIADMK welcomed the bill, and stated that in Tamil Nadu the party had pioneered initiatives aimed at women empowerment.

Stalin stressed on the importance of having a quota for women of the Backward Classes and also demanded that the Centre assure the people of Tamil Nadu and the whole of south India that the delimitation exercise would do no harm to the states that have managed to control their population.

"Delimitation is like a Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of Tamil Nadu and south India. The political conspira-

cy to lower the political representation of south India must be outmanoeuvred," he said.

In a statement here, Stalin referred to delimitation and said that the effort to betray a "politically vigilant Tamil Nadu" should be nipped in the bud.

Dubbing the Women's Bill a poll gimmick triggered by the prospect of electoral defeat, the DMK chief said it is a "strange trick" to adopt a bill now for something that is said to come into force in 2029 following a delimitation exercise on the basis of a yet-to-be-held census, for which there is also no guarantee on when it would be held.

AIADMK General Secretary and former Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami said his party has been the pioneer for the whole of India in providing reservation to women. In local bodies, his party-led regime provided 33 per cent reservation for women and enhanced it to 50 per cent in 2016.

## National hypertension programmes key to BP control in adults: WHO Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 4 out of every 5 people having hypertension are not adequately treated, according to a new report by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Nearly 76 million hypertension-related deaths could be averted between now and 2050, if countries scaled up treatment coverage, the report detailing devastating impacts of hypertension said.

The improved coverage could further prevent 120 million strokes, 79 million heart attacks, and 17 million cases of heart failure in the same time period, the report said.

Affecting 1 in 3 adults worldwide, hypertension, or high blood pressure, is often referred to as a "silent killer".

"(This is because) its symptoms are often unnoticeable until it has already caused significant damage to the heart, blood vessels, and other organs," said Ajay Kaul, chairman of Cardiac Sciences, Fortis



Hospital Noida.

The report said that people living with hypertension - blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher or taking medication for hypertension - doubled between 1990 and 2019, from 650 million to 1.3 billion.

It went on to say that nearly half of people with hypertension globally are currently unaware of their condition, with more than three-quarters of adults with hypertension liv-

ing in low- and middle-income countries.

"People may have high blood pressure for years without knowing it, which can lead to serious health complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney damage, and more," said Kaul.

"It catches people unawares and has proven to be one of the most common causes of mortality and morbidity in India and worldwide," said Viveka Kumar, principal director & chief of Cath Labs, Pan Max - Cardiac Sciences.

Salt intake is an important factor that heightens hypertension risk, even as lack of physical activity, family history of hypertension, external stress and obesity, along with high alcohol consumption, are major contributors towards developing the condition, said the cardiologists.

"A diet high in sodium (salt), saturated fats, and low in potassium can contribute to hypertension," said Kaul.

## 1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS Delhi court acquits former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court Wednesday acquitted former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a case related to the killing of a person during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, giving him the "benefit of doubt".

Special Judge Geetanji Goel also acquitted two other accused -- Ved Prakash Pial and Brahmanand Gupta -- holding that the prosecution failed to prove the case of murder and rioting against them. A Sikh man Surjit Singh was killed during the incident in Sultanpuri.

"The accused Sajjan Kumar is given benefit of doubt and acquitted for the offence" the judge said.

Kumar was accused of various offences punishable under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) including promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of reli-



gion, race etc. (Section 153A), abetment of any offence (Section 109), murder (Section 302) and rioting (147).

The riots had broken out after the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984.

Kumar is currently lodged in Tihar jail after conviction in another case related to the riots.

## Opposition members criticise govt for low spending on scientific research

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition members in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday criticised the government over low spending on scientific research while calling for increasing the salaries of scientists.

In a discussion on 'India's glorious space journey marked by successful soft landing of Chandrayaan-3', members also called for the need to use science to solve the problems of the common people and improve their lives.

Taking part in the discussion, V Sivadasan CPI(M) said over the years the number of space mission launches has come down. "It is not due to lack of work from scientists. I believe it is due to lack of government funding," he said, adding India's spending on science and technology as a percentage of GDP was a meagre 0.7 per cent while countries like South Korea, the US and China spend far more.

## Electric buses can give us a liveable future : US envoy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti on Wednesday said electric buses can change the world and give a future where the planet will be liveable.

The ambassador travelled in an Indian electric bus to attend a session on "accelerating deployment of electric buses in India".

"It was very exciting for me to be on an Indian electric bus. We know that electric buses can change the world. They are quieter, cleaner, they help us reduce our carbon (footprint) and give us a future where our planet will be livable.

"It is one of the reasons the United States government is working with our friends in the Government of India to get more electric buses on the

streets of Indian cities. So, we have launched an initiative to have 10,000 electric buses be on Indian streets," he said.

The United States and India launched a mechanism that will facilitate deployment of 10,000 made-in-India electric buses in cities across the country, bringing into reality a joint vision first announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official state visit to the White House.

"Every day we see the impact of the climate crisis at a global level. We must respond now or jeopardize the future of our planet and our people. The partnership announced today will mobilize financing for a fleet of 10,000 electric buses throughout India, expanding options for electric public transportation in India, creat-



ing cleaner cities and healthier communities," the ambassador said.

According to a joint statement issued earlier this month, India and the United States will provide joint support for a payment security mechanism for expanding electric mobility in India, giving a boost to the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme that aims to procure 10,000 electric

buses for cities that lack adequate public transport.

The statement on the meeting between Prime Minister Modi and US President Joe Biden said the two leaders spoke of the importance of "decarbonising the transport sector". Modi and Biden met at the Prime Minister's residence before the start of the G20 Leaders' Summit.

India had launched the National Electric Bus Programme (NEBP) in June last year with an aim to deploy 50,000 new e-buses across the country by 2027 in a phased manner.

"This new initiative between the governments of India and the United States shows how public and private partners can work together to lower emissions and promote electric mobility. Through this new partnership, the US government, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the office of the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, will partner with public and private-sector entities to accelerate electric bus financing," a statement by the US Embassy in New Delhi said.

## Countries with highest proportion of women MPs have reservation within parties: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Parliament debates a bill providing reservation to women in Houses of People, a think tank study shows several countries having a high proportion of women representatives do not have laws mandating a quota but there is reservation within the political parties.

According to an analysis by PRS Legislative Research, countries like Sweden, where 46 per cent of the public representatives are women, Norway (46 per cent), South Africa (45 per cent), Australia (38 per cent), France (35 per cent) and Germany (35 per cent) do not have any law reserving seats for women



but some political parties provide reservation.

Bangladesh, which has 21 per cent women MPs, has a law providing reservations to women. Out of the 300 seats in the Bangladesh Parliament, 50 are reserved for women.

The study also claimed that reserving seats for women in Parliament would restrict the choice of voters. According to the think tank, experts sug-

gest reservation within political parties as an alternative or a system of having dual-member constituencies.

Around 15 per cent of the total members of the 17th Lok Sabha are women, while in the state legislative assemblies of the country, women on average constitute just nine per cent of the total members.

Around 13 per cent of Rajya Sabha MPs are women.



## Drifting apart

India and Canada have enjoyed warm ties but now they seem to be at loggerheads

In international diplomacy, misgivings, misunderstandings, upmanship and disputes are the most common pitfalls. Therefore, it is essential to sift through the perceived facts and allegations to arrive at a balanced understanding and perspective. The recent standoff between India and Canada following the killing of Khalistan sympathiser Hardeep Singh Nijjar has raised concerns. While Canada has voiced its opinion about India's alleged and implicit role in the incident, India has brushed aside the allegation. It is, therefore, crucial to examine the situation from all angles before reaching any conclusion. Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a vociferous pro-Khalistan supporter, was gunned down on June 18 outside a Sikh cultural centre in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada. As he was indeed on India's most wanted list, Canada alleges that Nijjar was targeted and eliminated by Indian security forces. As it goes about demanding an explanation from the Indian Government, India has officially denied any involvement in the killing. For its part, and



as history can vouch, India has been the target of numerous terrorist attacks over the years, resulting in the loss of countless innocent lives. Given this context, India has consistently demonstrated its commitment to combating terrorism both within its borders and beyond by legal means. Besides, India has never had a policy of eliminating such wayward elements by sending assassination squads for the person in its crosshairs. It has always firmly and openly believed in following the legitimate judicial process and, in numerous cases, sought extradition of such characters. India has consistently called for united efforts to combat global terrorism and has been a significant contributor to international counterterrorism initiatives. In the case of the alleged murder of Nijjar, India has emphasised the importance of credible intelligence sharing.

Accusations alone are not sufficient ground to indict a country for any perceived wrongdoing. In any legal or diplomatic context, the burden of proof lies with the accuser. Canada's allegations regarding India's involvement in Nijjar's killing must be substantiated with concrete evidence before any punitive measures can be sought or taken. Otherwise, it is a clear case of jumping the gun. It is also worth noting that India has expressed its willingness to cooperate fully with Canada in any investigation into the incident. This willingness to engage in a transparent and open process speaks volumes about India's commitment to resolving this issue through diplomatic means. Both India and Canada have shown their intent to engage in diplomatic dialogue to address the concerns surrounding the Canadian national's killing. Unfortunately, the expulsion of a senior Indian diplomat by Canada, a kneejerk move reciprocated swiftly by India, has only made things worse between the countries. As the diplomatic process unfolds, it is essential for all parties involved to maintain open lines of communication, adhere to international norms and agreements, and prioritise the fight against terrorism.

### PICTALK



Women devotees chant 'Athanvashirsha' in front of Utsav Mandap on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Pune PTI

## A paradigm shift in the automobile sector

The New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) policy will give a boost to the secondary car market, especially in the luxury car segment

The recent introduction of Bharat NCAP has been welcomed by the automobile industry. The industry players are awaiting its implementation with much anticipation starting from October 1. The overall sector is quite optimistic that the program has the potential to place the Indian automobile industry on a higher pedestal with the ability to compete in the global market.

The policy aimed at elevating and strengthening road safety standards. After taking into account the existing Indian driving conditions and regulations, the Bharat NCAP provides a rating to the vehicle in a range of one to five stars. Evaluating the vehicles on the parameters of adult occupant protection, child occupant protection, and safety technologies in a car, not only promotes safer cars in the country but also empowers customers to make an informed decision while purchasing a car.

The pre-owned luxury car industry is quite hope-



ful of leveraging the assessment program to the fullest. Considering that the NCAP focuses on the safety of the car, pre-owned luxury cars are well-equipped with advanced safety technologies. Coming with innovative features like intelligent alerts, parking assistance, driver assistance features, and many more, luxury cars are adept at providing that extra protection to the occupants of the car.

Moreover, luxury cars come with some standard features such as more than six airbags, electronic stability control, improved emergency braking systems, etc. that further add to the resilience of the vehicle. Where the pre-owned luxury cars are themselves fur-

nished with innovative safety features, the introduction of NCAP is only expected to augur the proposition of the cars in the market. Even though the pre-owned luxury car industry has come a long way, a lot of scepticism still lingers among the masses. They are highly doubtful about the condition and safety of the cars. However, with the pre-owned luxury cars conforming to the ratings of the new assessment program, it can instil faith among the customers.

While the organized players in the segment have been playing an instrumental role in giving a comprehensive structure to the sector, Bharat NCAP can help amplify the penetra-

tion of pre-owned luxury cars deeper into the market. If the LocalCircles survey is to be believed then 72% of buyers have shown keen interest in considering Bharat NCAP as the deciding factor for making purchasing choices.

In addition to this, the online players in the pre-owned luxury car industry relentlessly work towards fostering a transparent buying and selling ecosystem for the customers. They ensure the pre-owned cars undergo thorough safety checks to render authentic and quality vehicles in the inventory. Therefore, looking at the benefits the new assessment program has to offer, the initiative is being highly appreciated by the industry players. They are optimistic about harnessing its benefits to inculcate loyalty among the customers. Focusing on boosting the safety of the passengers and the cars, it is very likely that the NCAP can complement the pre-owned luxury car industry.

(The author is the Co-Founder and CEO of Luxury Ride)



HIMANSHU ARYA

# The art of leading from the front

The sacred culture of 'leading from the front' by army officers has survived despite challenges and other institutional concerns

Three recent losses of precious lives i.e., Colonel Manpreet Singh, Major Aashish Donchak, and DSP Humayun Bhatt, seem to be a timely reminder of the civilisational and constitutional values in some of us, that guarantee our freedom. Distracted, as the nation was in peddling phoney controversies, fake outrage, meaningless rhetoric, or sheer bombast – these men simply gave their all for the nation. They did not unleash hate or anger amongst us internally, instead, they chose to 'lead from the front' by letting their work (and lives) do the talking, not words. To reiterate, they didn't incite or order from the comfort and safety of distance, but put themselves in harm's way, fully knowing the possible consequences, as only true leaders do.

The saga of the Indian Armed Forces is not necessarily etched by the better-known Generals, Admirals or Air Marshals, in as much, if not more, by the unmatched steel, fire, and ramrod-straight posture of its junior-middle leadership (from Junior Commissioned Officers to Unit Commanding Officers and their equivalents), who hold the fort, literally. Beyond the hagiographies of victory, the Kargil War is a grim reminder of doing the impossible with the hearts, legs, arms, and sharp minds of the junior-middle leadership, and not so much on account of any strategic brilliance by senior leadership, be it Military or Political. Many international Military historians marvel at the surreal conditions of impossibilities (in terms of topography, weather conditions, battlelines et al) that were neither matched, before or after, in modern battle accounts. Yet, the Indian Armed Forces had triumphed, against all odds and disproven all militaristic ratios and assumptions.

However, there was one vital and unique element that differentiated the Indian Armed Forces from all other global Militaries, which made Kargil possible, despite its counterintuitive draw of unfavourable militaristic ratios and assumptions i.e., clichéd as it sounds, 'leading from the front'. Put simply, the Officer-to-Soldier



fatality/wounded ratio of the Indian Army is by far the highest as compared to any other professional Military in the world. In the thick of battle, the reality of leadership matters more than anything else, ever does. Kargil, India is believed to have lost 26 Officers out of a total casualty of 527. Considering that there are approximately 18-20 officers per Infantry battalion of about 800 odd soldiers, the value of 'leading from the front', can never be overstated.

Even in the unforgiving conditions of Galwan Valley, the heroics of Col BS Babu (Commanding Officer, 16 Bihar Regiment) who was killed in action is a testimony. There is never a similar reportage of a leadership-level officer getting killed in action, amongst Militaries of neighbouring China or Pakistan (occasionally in ambush or IED blast, but never in combat). This culture of 'leading from the front' is borne out of an inexplicable admixture of regimentation, normalised expectation and esprit-de-corps that has withstood the test of time, civilian morass, regression, and polarisations.

Some lazily attribute 'leading from the front' to overambition, misplaced bravado or momentary lapse of better sense – it may be some shades

“PUT SIMPLY, THE OFFICER-TO-SOLDIER FATALITY/WOUNDED RATIO OF THE INDIAN ARMY IS BY FAR THE HIGHEST AS COMPARED TO ANY OTHER PROFESSIONAL MILITARY IN THE WORLD”

of all of the above, and the likes of Kargil were only possible thanks to that unique josh that is still fires and cranks up performance. Never forget, those who dare, do so knowing that they are in the line of fire (when they needn't be) but still choose to do so.

The irrepressible and probably the boldest Military General of the Indian Army 'led from the front' and never lost a battle in his life i.e., Lt Gen Sagat Singh. Legend of him liberating Goa, inflicting a bloody nose on the Chinese at Nathu La and Cho La (by 1967 itself), or dashing to Dhaka to liberate Bangladesh by repeatedly overflying enemy territory in a helicopter (which took bullets) to control battle, is a fact not fiction. You may never hear of such leadership conduct in Ukraine, the Middle East, or any other conflict zone, anywhere in the world.

Before Colonel Manpreet, Major Dhonchak and DSP Humayun had answered their calling in life, it was a well-beaten path that had been carved by the likes of Colonel Ashutosh Sharma, Colonel MR Rai, Colonel Santosh Mahadik etc., all Commanding Officers of the various Rashtriya Rifles battalions, like the 19th Rashtriya Rifles, Commanded by the gal-

lant Colonel Manpreet Singh. As 'Commanding Officers' they could have avoided literal 'leading from the front', but still did so – while they and their families paid an irreplaceable price for the same, the Indian Army and the nation at large, remain eternally grateful for their ultimate sacrifices.

This sacred culture of 'leading from the front' by officers, especially by the junior-middle leadership has survived so many other institutional concerns that undeniably stare. The Officer-to-Soldier ratio was 1:18 in the 1965 War, 1:20 in the 1971 War and still, 1:17 in Kargil 1999. While die-hard Infantry folks like to flex 'When it was a victory, the cavalier claimed it outright, the Gunner boasted of his guns, Signalman publicised his worth, but the Infantryman remained silent with victory at his feet'. Beyond the lighthearted intra-services banter, the Indian Armed Forces have thankfully retained traditions, regimentation and culture at the junior-middle level of the forces, and perhaps owing only to the same, it still bashes on regardless.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)



BHOPINDER SINGH

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TRUST DEFICIT

Sir — Regrettably, it has come to our attention that after approximately four months, an Indian Army Jawan was tragically abducted and killed while on leave in Manipur. Furthermore, in another distressing incident, a mob attempted to storm the Porompat police station in Imphal East on a fateful Saturday night, with the aim of releasing suspects. These incidents serve as glaring examples of the escalating divide between various communities in Manipur, a divide that seems to widen with each passing day. The ramifications of this growing mistrust and division are not confined to Manipur alone; they cast a shadow over the entire nation, particularly in the North-East.

It is imperative to recognize that the armed forces' effectiveness is significantly impacted by the presence of an efficient and cooperative civil and political administration. The disconcerting silence from both the state and Union government has not only unsettled the people but also demoralized the Manipur civil society. Urgent intervention by the Union government is paramount to quell this violence and facilitate a peaceful resolution to the situation in Manipur. Together, we can work towards a more harmonious future for all.

SK Khosla | Chandigarh

### STANDOFF WITH CANADA

Sir — Amidst the deteriorating diplomatic relations between India and Canada, New Delhi has taken the decision to expel a senior Canadian diplomat currently stationed in India. The diplomat has been given a five-day notice to depart from India, as conveyed through a summons received by the High Commissioner of Canada to India, Cameron Mackay, on Tuesday, 19 September. The decision to expel the diplomat reflects the growing concerns of the Government of India regarding Canadian diplomats' interference in

## Women reservation bill



Congratulations on the forthcoming implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill, set to take effect after the next delimitation exercise in 2026. We hope that the execution of this bill will be well-organized and system-

atic, ensuring that it provides opportunities for women from all walks of life, including the most economically disadvantaged.

The essence of women's rights lies in the idea that no one, regardless of gender, age, or profession, should dominate or harm others. It is crucial that this bill does not inadvertently create divisions or conflicts among women, as unity is vital for its success. The bill, known as the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' (NSVA), proposes a commendable 33% reservation for women in both the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. Let us celebrate this milestone and work together for its effective implementation.

PV Rao Sreelekha | Secunderabad

internal matters and their involvement in anti-India activities.

These developments unfolded in the wake of Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's emergency statement in Parliament on Monday, 18 October. Trudeau accused the Indian government of involvement in the fatal shooting of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar and stated that Canadian security agencies were actively investigating credible allegations of a potential link between Indian government agents and the murder.

India vehemently rejects these allegations, terming them "absurd and motivated." The external affairs ministry issued a statement denying any involvement in acts of violence in Canada. The possibility of India severing ties with Canada looms large, which could have serious implications, particularly for Indian citizens residing in Canada, who may fear being targeted by the Khalistan group supported by the Canadian government.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### FUNCTIONING OF PARLIAMENT

Sir — Following the successful G-20 Summit, India International Convention

and Expo Center 'Yashobhoomi' has been officially dedicated to the nation. In addition to this milestone, several noteworthy announcements are anticipated during the special session of the House scheduled from 18 to 22 September. It is now crucial to enhance the productivity of our parliamentary sessions.

Both the ruling party and the opposition bear a significant responsibility towards our nation. It is imperative that they recognize the need to move beyond futile debates on 'dharma-adharma' or other extraneous matters and focus on addressing pressing issues. Such issues encompass inflation, unemployment, healthcare, law and order, poverty alleviation, and the economic landscape.

The future of our nation hinges on constructive and substantive debates. As we traverse the Amrit Kaal, the Parliament's working style must adapt to meet the demands of the times. A more informed and engaged Parliament will instill confidence in our government and pave the way for a brighter future.

N Ashraf | Mumbai


Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



FIRST COLUMN

WHAT IS ‘SUKHA’ AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT?


Seek ‘sukha,’ the real one, while enjoying ‘sukha’ of the mundane type



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

The word sukha has been used extensively in the Bhagavad-Geeta but in different contexts. This word essentially means: what pleases. The English words for sukha are happiness and pleasure. Lord Krishna has spoken about sukha to describe what pleases in three different ways. The first one is what is according to dharma and its only source is God. Let us call this sukha for this article. The second one is: what is according to dharma but brings good and bad results depending upon how it was obtained. This has been called ‘vihara’ in the Geeta. There is just one verse where this word has been used. The third kind is against dharma and brings only misery as a result. The word for this sukha is ‘kama’. I will use this word for this article. There are many verses in the Geeta in this connection.

Beginning with the real sukha, I will refer to some of the verses in their order as described in the Geeta. The first one is: “In a state of having real spiritual intelligence, one transcends the feeling of material suffering.” (2.65) A classical example is that of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, who carried on his spiritual activities even with throat cancer. Personally speaking, I have accepted some pains, which are inevitable due to my advanced age. They don’t bother me much and I go on with my life. The next verse clarifies where only real sukha can be obtained: “One must be linked with God, and one must have faith in God.” Then, one will be peaceful, which is essential to be sushi.” (2.66) It is quite logical, isn’t it? Peace can only come from God because we, grown-ups, can feel secure only if we have taken shelter from God. How does a small child go to sleep peacefully in the lap of his mother?



The third verse is about control over kama and anger. “Unless that is accomplished, where is any scope for sukha?” This is only possible to accomplish if we are enjoying the shelter of God. (5.23) We can either be in control of kama or of God. For example, if I am indulging in sexual thoughts, I have effectively taken their shelter. The fourth verse chosen is very encouraging. It states, “God accompanies the conqueror of self, who is blissfully peaceful.” (6.7) This means that such a person has fully surrendered to God, and God obliges by being with him or her. The fifth verse chosen tells us about unlimited bliss experienced through intelligence. (6.21) An advanced devotee realizes that God is responding to him; He is even using him as His ‘nimitta’ (instrument) to get important acts done. His sukha knows no bounds.

Now the second level of sukha is called vihar in the Geeta. Lord Krishna states, “One whose eating and recreation (vihara) are appropriate; one who strives appropriately in activities; one who sleeps and stays awake, as required suffers less.” Because: “Contact between senses and their objects are givers of cold, heat, pleasure (sukha) and misery (duhkha). They, being temporary, come and go; tolerate them.” (2.14) If one acts in goodness, it will be like poison in the beginning but in result will be like nectar, which is the result of spiritual knowledge. (18.37)

Now to the last type of sukha, which has been described as kama. Lord Krishna has given sufficient warnings about indulging in this kind of sukha. In verse # 16.21, the Lord warns sternly, “Kama is a door to hell; causes ruination of soul; should be given up.” How? “Kill this difficult to conquer enemy in the form of kama.” (3.43). So what is sensible to do? Seek sukha, the real one by linking with God earnestly. Meanwhile, sukha of the vihar type can also be enjoyed. But one must remember that it must be yukta (proper) at all times, otherwise, misery will be invited. A classic example is that of cricket fans. Not only do they spend a lot of money and time watching matches in person but suffer great disappointment when their team loses.

*(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views expressed are personal)*

# Challenges to attain net zero emissions

A multipronged mitigation strategy is necessary but many techniques such as carbon dioxide removal must be approached with caution



ISHOO RATAN SRIVASTAVA

The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived,” the UN chief recently remarked. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted in its recent report that projections based upon stated policy commitments fall short of containing the global warming levels at 1.5°C or even 2°C. So, when emissions mitigation is not happening at the pace desired and extreme climate events indicate an earlier-than-expected tipping point, carbon capture may offer a pathway to the solution.

**Challenges to Net Zero**

The developmental imperatives demanding equity and justice, sub-optimal


*(The writer is Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer, North Western Railway and UK Commonwealth Scholar; views are personal)*

technology readiness levels and challenges related to lifestyle adaptations make the net zero road, a difficult terrain to tread on. Food, energy, transport and materials like cement & steel contribute significantly to emissions but are such fundamental necessities that they cannot be wished away overnight from our lives. Take the case of food, the global population has increased nearly eightfold since the early 19th century. Quite obviously, it is the fertiliser-intensive farming without which it is estimated that half of the world’s population cannot be fed. These fertilisers are synthesised using fossil fuels which contribute to emissions.

Regarding electricity, renewable sources come with intrinsic uncertainties and only reliable storage solutions can fully replace fossil fuels. This necessitates mining significant amounts of lithium which has its commercialised mining predominantly concentrated in the South American lithium triangle and notably it has a high water footprint. Additionally, mining cobalt, a key element in Li-ion batteries, is associated with ethical issues concerning child labour. Pumped hydro, an alternative to battery storage, also has environmental concerns.

**The Concept of Carbon Dioxide Removal**

Carbon dioxide removal involves capturing CO2 at various sources of generation



or directly from the atmosphere and securely storing it to prevent escape. Natural systems such as forests, rocks, and oceans act as carbon sinks, absorbing and sequestering carbon. However, a warmer climate diminishes the capacity of these systems to absorb CO2. To augment the capacities of these natural systems, conservation efforts and engineered techniques for enhanced absorp-

tion are necessary.

These include afforestation, increased rock weathering which enables rocks to absorb more CO2, and enhanced ocean fertilisation which is a geoengineering technique that may result in higher organic growth in ocean systems thus implying higher carbon absorption and bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), which introduces circularity in the emissions balance sheet. Technology-based solutions involve capturing CO2 emissions during production processes or electricity generation using fossil fuels predominantly using chemicals called amines which can absorb and release CO2 upon temperature regulation. The captured CO2 is

stored in deep geological formations, preventing its release. The pumping of CO2 in the oil reservoirs for enhanced oil recovery is an established practice in the oil and gas industry. Another technology namely Direct Air Capture, involving CO2 capture from air surrounding us instead of a concentrated point source is also gaining traction however it has cost concerns.

**The Pros and Cons**

The fact that certain techniques are already practised in the industry, builds a certain amount of confidence towards the feasibility of the proposition. However, there is scepticism over its large-scale adoption, particularly in terms of potential interfer-

ence with oceans and other natural systems. Additionally, increased afforestation and adoption of BECCS may have adverse impacts on our food supplies as well. The possibilities of CO2 leakage from geological formations too cannot be ignored. Also, it is argued that excessive reliance on carbon removal pathways may lead to complacency in emissions mitigation and adaptation efforts.

The world needs to act swiftly on climate change and undoubtedly, a multipronged mitigation strategy is necessary. However, considering the uncertainties associated with carbon removal, its deployment should be approached with caution and a gradual scaling up as we learn more about it.

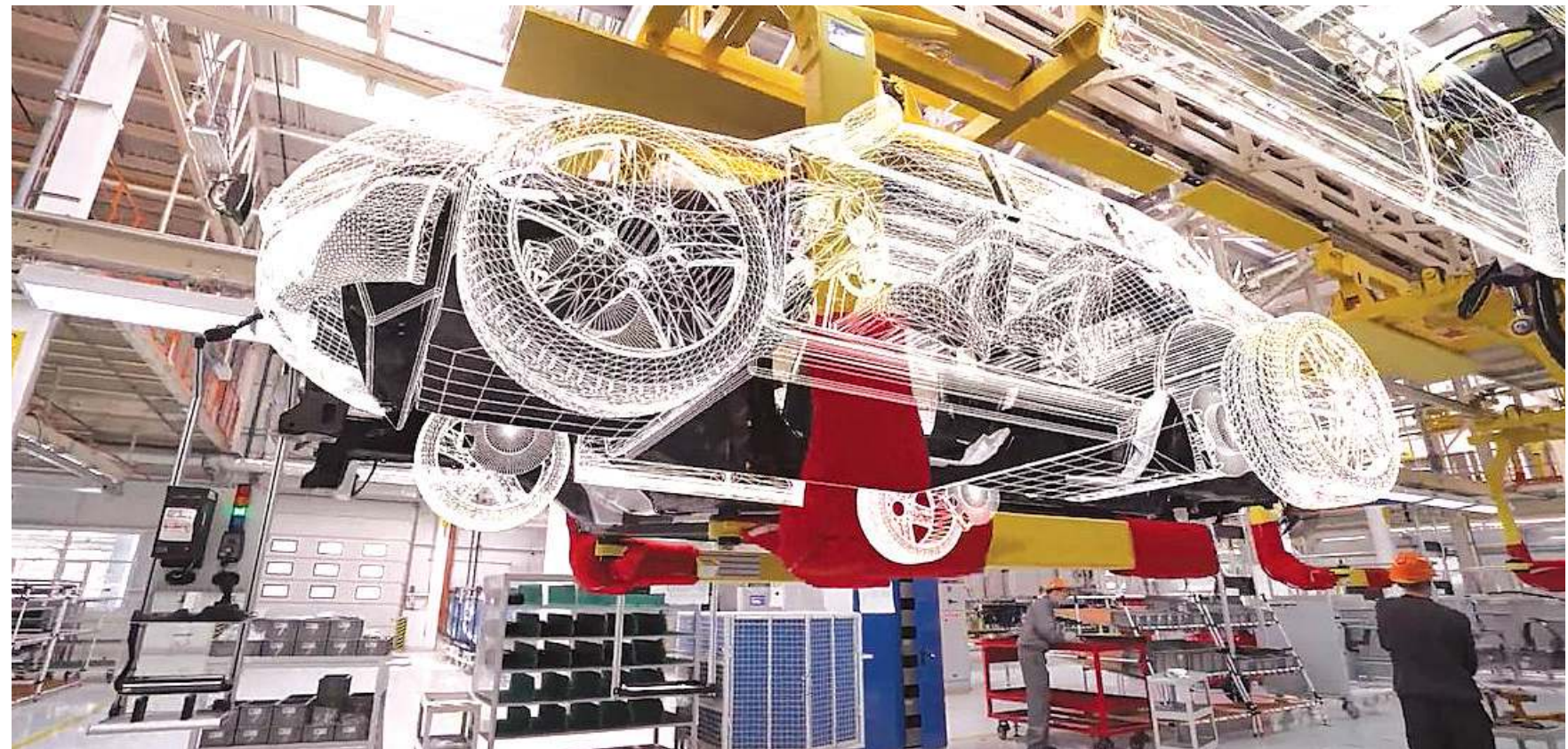


# Skills gap hinders future employability

It is crucial to bridge the skills gap by providing training in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning



DINESH SOOD




The rapidly changing nature of jobs and skills requirements across the world is creating a skills gap that hinders employment opportunities. Business leaders need to quickly identify this gap and prepare their workforce for the future by providing clear direction to employees on how to build the skills they need to succeed. In the Asia-Pacific region, approximately 86 million workers need to acquire advanced digital skills through upskilling or reskilling to keep up with the fast pace of technological changes.

The UNDP’s Human Development Index ranks India at 132 out of 191 countries. This is a critical concern, as companies face a shortage of skilled workers while millions of educated individuals remain unemployed. To address this problem, India has been working to transform into a skill-based economy over the past decade. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Corporation have been established to bring skill development to the forefront. The Skill India Mission, which began in July 2015, aims to address the shortage of skilled workers in the country. However, there is still a huge mismatch between the number of candidates trained, certified, and finally placed, with the International Labour Organization predicting a shortage of around 29 million skilled personnel in India by 2030.

Employees across various industries are facing pressure to upskill and reskill, but many find it challenging to take time out for learning due to long work hours. A lack of support systems that prioritize worker well-being can hinder motivation for upskilling and reskilling. Organizations can create new financial incentives through skills-based compensation to encourage employees to self-learn new skills.

A skilled workforce is critical for higher growth, but only 45% of trained



INDIA CURRENTLY LACKS AN EFFECTIVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM THAT IS BOTH ASPIRATIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

*The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres, (an initiative of Gol)*

individuals in India are employable, with only 4.69% of the workforce having vocational training. This indicates a significant skill gap in the country, which can be attributed to a lack of training infrastructure and limited private-sector participation. The lack of a monitoring body for these training institutes is also a contributing factor.

India’s demographic advantage will become a challenge if the young population is not skillfully upskilled, reskilled, and skilled. By 2025, an estimated 70% of India’s population will be of working age, and without proper employment opportunities, unemployment will remain a significant challenge. The National Education Policy (2020) needs to make sincere efforts in skill development from the school level. There is a need to create a sound National Vocational Education and Training System that provides every child with an option to go for vocational education and training after 10 years of schooling. Most developed countries have a well-defined national vocational education and training system that facilitates job readiness among youth and encourages skill-empowered entrepreneurship.

Inadequacies in skills are directly linked to the kind of education that is being imparted right from the school level and the ecosystem we put in place to equip every job seeker with market-driven skills. If someone wishes to be a carpenter, plumber or electrician, he or she needs to have undergone at least a globally certified course for which we need to have a skill training centre in every high school where job seek-

ers should be trained in the fields of their interest during non-school hours. Similarly, education providers must support students with knowledge and skills relevant to the world of work to make them productive and able to be employed. All skill courses at school levels must be synchronised with employment for a wholesome integration between skill providers and industries will be of paramount importance.

Today, education is not confined to what is taught in schools and colleges, but the scope of learning has become wider, owing to the evolving market and technological advancement. To secure a career in the competitive and evolving job market, upskilling and remaining industry-relevant are crucial for youths. Acquiring market-driven skills will offer great placement opportunities to the youths and help them build promising careers.

India currently lacks an effective vocational education and training system that is both aspirational and accessible to all young people. To address this issue and achieve the national goal of making India the skills capital of the world, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship should establish a National Skills University (NSU), as proposed in the National Skills Universities Bill 2015. This university would offer industry-relevant curricula and skill-based certificates, diplomas, and degree programs to enhance employability.

In addition to the NSU, state governments can establish Multi-skills Development Centres (MSDC) in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. These centres can identify skill gaps in major industrial clusters and provide cluster-specific Skill Development Centres to upgrade the skills of existing workers. Advanced Skill Development Centres can also be set up to provide the latest know-how and courses to meet the high-end skill requirements of the industry. The World Bank has approved the \$250 million Skill India Mission Operation (SIMO) to improve the marketability of short-term skill development courses of 3-12 months.

To keep pace with the rapidly evolving technological landscape, it is essential to conduct global skill gap mapping and shift recruitment from “degree-based” to “skill-based”. According to a report by The World Economic Forum, 150 million new technology jobs will be created globally over the next five years, with 77% of all jobs requiring digital skills by 2030. Currently, only 33% of technology jobs worldwide are being filled by skilled workers, which could hinder technological advancements on a global scale.

Therefore, it is crucial to bridge the skills gap by providing training in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), blockchain, robotics, IoT, 3D printing, drones, and data analytics. A skilled workforce capable of understanding, implementing, and driving innovation is essential to the success of these technologies and the industries that rely on them. By focusing on vocational education and the latest skills training, India can create a workforce equipped to meet future demands.



MONEY MATTERS

## M&M market valuation crosses Rs 2 lakh cr

The market capitalisation of Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd crossed Rs 2 lakh crore mark, helped by a strong order book in the SUV segment and leadership position in tractor segment. M&M shares closed at Rs 1,636.85 on the BSE, giving the firm a market value of Rs 2.03 lakh crore, according to stock exchange data. The automaker's market cap has doubled in less than one-and-a-half years - from Rs 1 lakh crore in April 2022 to over Rs 2 lakh crore this week. M&M market cap hit Rs 2 lakh crore mark on Monday. The incremental m-cap in the last two years is more than the incremental market value the firm had over the last decade. Capital allocation actions have led to an overall better financial performance with several non-accretive divestments completed, analysts said adding net cash is at all-time high levels. Mahindra's auto and farm businesses are industry leaders and it is looking to capitalize on market leadership position.



## Sai Silks IPO subscribed 7% on first day of offer

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of ethnic apparel retailer Sai Silks (Kalamandir) was subscribed 7 per cent on the first day of offer on Wednesday. The IPO received bids for 26,16,752 shares against 3,84,86,309 shares on offer, as per data available with the NSE. The category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) was subscribed 12 per cent and that of non-institutional investors received 3 per cent subscription. The public issue has a fresh issue of up to Rs 600 crore and an offer for sale of up to 2.70 crore equity shares. The price range for the offer is Rs 210-222 a share. At the upper end of the price band, the IPO will fetch about Rs 1,201 crore. On Monday, Sai Silks said it has raised over Rs 360 crore from anchor investors. The Hyderabad-based company was founded by Prasad Chalavadi, a techie turned entrepreneur in 2005. It has four store formats -- Kalamandir, VaraMahalakshmi Silks, Mandir, and KLM Fashion Mall.



## EPFO records highest net member addition of 18.75 lakh in July

Retirement fund body EPFO has recorded the highest net member addition of 18.75 lakh in July 2023, according to the payroll data released on Wednesday. The labour ministry in a statement said that the addition of 18.75 lakh during the month is the highest since the first publishing of EPFO payroll data from April 2018 covering the period of September 2017 onwards. A growing trend has continued for the last three months with an increase of around 85,932 net members over the previous month of June 2023. The data indicates that around 10.27 lakh new members have enrolled during July 2023 which is the highest since July 2022. The majority of new members joining EPFO are in the age group of 18-25 years constituting roughly 58.45 per cent of total new members additions during the month. This shows an increasing trend in youth enrollment, who are mostly first-time job seekers joining the organized sector workforce of the country, it explained.



## Ensure long-term policy, formula for ethanol price: ISMA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sugar industry body ISMA on Wednesday demanded that the government should come out with a long term policy and formula for ethanol pricing in order to encourage mills to expand capacity by around 400 crore litre which will require an estimated investment of Rs 17,500 crore.

Briefing media about the demand-supply scenario of sugar for the 2023-24 marketing year starting next month, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) President Aditya Jhunjhunwala also demanded that the minimum selling price of sugar should be enhanced to Rs 38 per kg from the current Rs 31 per kg

in view of an increase in production cost.

He said the ISMA will come out with a fresh sugar production estimate for the 2023-24 marketing year (October-September) during November after analysing the satellite image of sugarcane area across major producing states and then only would be able to assess whether there is any surplus for exports after meeting the domestic demand of sugar and ethanol.

"At present, the sugar industry has an installed capacity of 700 crore litre for ethanol production and we operate at 80 per cent capacity utilisation. We need to increase our installed capacity to 1,000-1,100 crore litre.

## 'We are very close' on FTA with India: UK Trade Minister

PNS ■ LONDON

India and the UK are "very close" to achieving a mutually beneficial free trade agreement (FTA) but the aspects left to agree on are the toughest ones, Britain's Business and Trade Secretary in charge of the negotiations has told a parliamentary panel.

Kemi Badenoch was answering questions posed by the cross-party House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, which scrutinises the work of the Department of Business and Trade (DBT), on Tuesday when she was asked about the timeline for signing off on the FTA which has completed 12 rounds of negotiations.

The Cabinet minister was specifically asked about some UK media reports suggesting that cricket fan British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak may be planning a return visit to India next month to sign the deal on the sidelines of the World Cup being hosted across the country.

"We have never set a deadline. I think this is a very optimistic briefing for newspaper



"We are very close. It is possible, but I wouldn't be setting that sort of deadline. We will finish when we finish," she said.

responded Badenoch.

"We are very close. It is possible, but I wouldn't be setting that sort of deadline. We will finish when we finish," she said.

Referencing former British prime minister Boris Johnson setting a Diwali 2022 deadline for an agreement, Badenoch reiterated the Sunak-led government's approach of not setting any end dates.

"We had the same thing last year, where they said we're going to have a deal by Diwali. Once you set a date, you create problems on your own side. We have always been very, very

specific that it's about the deal, not the day. And, we will get there when we have a deal that is mutually beneficial for India and for the UK. We've done quite a lot, so it is close," she said.

"It's the Pareto principle, that the few bits left are always the toughest bits," she added.

The Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 principle, is named after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto and is a phenomenon that states that roughly 80 per cent of outcomes come from 20 per cent of causes.

Badenoch reviewed

progress with her Indian counterpart, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, during a visit to India last month coinciding with Round 12 of the FTA negotiations.

Sunak's visit to New Delhi for the G20 Leaders' Summit earlier this month also concluded with a commitment to an FTA, with the British Indian leader telling reporters that he "won't rush things".

Meanwhile, amid a diplomatic standoff between two of its allies -- India and Canada -- over the contentious issue of pro-Khalistan extremism, Sunak's spokesperson at Downing Street reiterated this week that trade talks with New Delhi remain on track.

"Work on the trade negotiations will continue as before when we have concerns with countries we're negotiating trade deals with, we'll raise them directly," the spokesperson told reporters on Tuesday.

According to official DBT figures, UK-India bilateral trade was worth an estimated GBP 36 billion in 2022 -- a figure expected to be significantly boosted with an FTA.

## Centre keen on Recruit-Train-Deploy model

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Inviting training partners and India Inc to collaborate with the government on the Prime Minister's Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0, a top official on Wednesday said the Centre is keen on having a Recruit-Train-Deploy model for its flagship skilling scheme.

Secretary in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Atul Kumar Tiwari also called upon the industry to assist in designing some courses.

"We would also like the training partners and industries to come together and work with us on the Prime Minister's Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 in which we would like to have the RTD

model. We would like industries also to come forward and help us in terms of designing some courses for them and funding some part of that so that they can skill people for their workforce," Tiwari said.

He was addressing the Global Skills Summit organised by Fici.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech this year announced that the fourth phase of the PMKVY 4.0 will be launched in order to skill lakhs of youth within next three years.

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0 officially ended in March 2022 but due to Covid-led delays, training under the scheme carried on for a few months into 2023.



## Updater Services' IPO to kick off on Sep 25

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The initial share sale of integrated facilities management company Updater Services Ltd will open for public subscription on September 25.

The three-day Initial Public Offering (IPO) will conclude on September 27 and the bidding for anchor investors will open on September 22, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP).

The IPO will comprise a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 400 crore and an Offer for Sale (OFS) of up to 80 lakh equity shares by a promoter and existing shareholders.

Under the OFS, Tangi Facility Solutions Private Ltd, India Business Excellence Fund-II and India Business Excellence Fund-IIA will be selling shares of the company.

Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for payment of debt, funding working capital requirements, pursuing inorganic initiatives and general corporate purposes.

The company offers integrated facilities management services and business support services to its clients. It caters to customer segments across sectors such as FMCG, manufacturing and engineering, BFSI, healthcare, IT/ITES, automobiles, logistics and warehousing, airports, ports, infrastructure and retail.

## Sensex tanks 796 pts, Nifty closes below 20K

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Wednesday due to selling in index heavyweights in tandem with weak global trends ahead of the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision.

Falling for the second day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 796 points or 1.18 per cent to settle at 66,800.84. During the day, it tanked 868.7 points or 1.28 per cent to 66,728.14.

The NSE Nifty declined 231.90 points or 1.15 per cent



to end below the 20,000 mark at 19,901.40.

US bond yields surging to 16-year high levels and fears of

high crude oil prices fueling commodity inflation also hit the investor sentiment, according to analysts.

Fresh foreign fund outflows and caution ahead of a host of interest rate decisions from global central banks also added to the overall bearish trend. Besides the US Fed meeting, the BoE (Bank of England) and the BoJ (Bank of Japan) are also scheduled to meet this week.

Among the Sensex firms, HDFC Bank emerged as the biggest loser, falling 4 per cent. JSW Steel, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement, Maruti, Tata Steel, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Larsen & Toubro were the other major laggards.

## Goldman pays Rs 26.44 lakh to settle FPI norms violation case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Goldman Sachs (Singapore) Pte has settled with capital markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to certain discrepancies in the monthly ODI (offshore derivative instruments) reporting after paying Rs 26.44 lakh towards the settlement amount.

The order came after Goldman Sachs, a registered Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) which deals in off-shore derivative instruments, proposed to settle the alleged violations by "neither admitting nor deny-



ing" under the settlement rules.

"It is hereby ordered that any proceedings that may be initiated for the violations... are settled in respect of the applicant (Goldman Sachs (Singapore) Pte)," the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a settlement order

passed on Monday.

In its order, the regulator observed that certain discrepancies in the monthly ODI reporting for the month of March 2022 were identified by the applicant.

These were related to a mismatch of investment managers for multi-managed clients with respect to four ODI subscribers and updated details of investment managers or beneficial owners information of three ODI subscribers were not provided in the monthly ODI reporting.

## Equity investors lose Rs 2.89 lakh cr in two days of market fall

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth fell by Rs 2.89 lakh crore in two days of market fall, with the BSE Sensex tumbling 796 points on Wednesday, amid weak global market trends ahead of the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision.

Fresh foreign fund outflows and caution ahead of a host of interest rate decisions from global central banks also added to the overall bearish trend. Besides, the US Fed meeting, the BoE (Bank of England) and the BoJ (Bank of Japan) are also scheduled to meet this week.

Falling for the second day

running, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 796 points, or 1.18 per cent, to settle at 66,800.84 points. During the day, it fell by 868.7 points, or 1.28 per cent, to 67,294.16 points.

The BSE benchmark fell 241.79 points, or 0.36 per cent, to settle at 67,596.84 points on Monday.

Equity markets were closed on Tuesday on account of Ganesh Chaturthi.

Following the bearish trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell by Rs 2,89,121.56 crore to Rs 3,20,51,859.15 crore in two days.

## Total to invest US\$ 300 mn in Adani's green energy projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

TotalEnergies SE will invest USD 300 million in a new clean energy joint venture with the Adani Group, marking the French energy giant's first public deal since a US short-seller levelled fraud allegations against Gautam Adani's business empire.

Total will hold a 50 per cent stake in the new joint venture firm, with Adani Green Energy Ltd holding the rest, the two firms said in a statement.

The joint venture will hold a portfolio of 1,050 MW, including 300 MW of already opera-



tional capacity, 500 MW under construction and 250 MW under-development assets with a blend of solar and wind power.

The investment is part of Total's drive to expand its portfolio of clean energy projects.

Total already has a 19.7 per cent stake in Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL). It also has

an equal joint venture with AGEL, called AGE23L that holds a portfolio of 2,353 MW.

In a stock exchange filing, AGEL said its board has approved "the execution of a binding term-sheet to be entered into between Adani Green Energy Twenty Three Limited (AGE23L) and TotalEnergies SE (Total) pursuant to which, inter alia, Total will make further investment (either directly or through its affiliates) of USD 300 million to form a new 50:50 joint venture company with the company and modify certain terms of its investment in AGE23L".

## Infosys to train 50,000 employees on NVIDIA AI technology

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT company Infosys plans to train and certify 50,000 employees on NVIDIA AI technology to provide expertise to its customers across industries, the company said on Wednesday.

The development follows expansion of collaboration between Infosys and chipset company NVIDIA to provide generative AI-based solutions to enterprises worldwide.

"Infosys plans to set up an

NVIDIA Centre of Excellence, where it will train and certify 50,000 of its employees on NVIDIA AI technology to provide generative AI expertise to its vast network of customers across industries," Infosys and NVIDIA said in a joint statement.

Infosys uses the full-stack NVIDIA generative AI platform, including hardware and enterprise-grade software to help customers create generative AI applications for business operations, sales and marketing.



The broadened alliance will bring the NVIDIA AI

Enterprise ecosystem of models, tools, runtimes and GPU

systems to Infosys Topaz an AI-first set of services, solutions and platforms that accelerate business value using generative AI technologies.

"Infosys Topaz offerings and solutions are complementary to NVIDIA's core stack. By combining our strengths and training 50,000 of our workforce on NVIDIA AI technology, we are creating end-to-end industry-leading AI solutions that will help enterprises on their journey to become AI-first," Infosys, Co-founder and Chairman,

Nandan Nilekani said.

Through the integration, Infosys will create offerings customers can adopt, to integrate generative AI into their businesses.

"The NVIDIA AI Enterprise ecosystem is ramping quickly to provide the platform for generative AI. Together, NVIDIA and Infosys will create an expert workforce to help businesses use this platform to build custom applications and solutions," NVIDIA, Founder and CEO, Jensen Huang said.

## Apparel retailers likely to register 7-8% revenue growth

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Organised sector brick and mortar apparel retailers are expected to register a 7-8 per cent revenue growth this fiscal, buoyed by festival and marriage season demand, and despite inflation impacting discretionary spending in the first quarter, according to a report.

Continued store expansion, including into tier-II and III cities, will also help revenue growth this fiscal and over the medium term, Crisil Ratings said in a report on Wednesday.

Despite moderation in topline growth, revenue growth will be comparable to the 8 per cent range seen before the pandemic, the

report said.

Last fiscal, retailers had seen a strong 38 per cent growth on a low base, driven by swift recovery from the pandemic-induced slump and higher realisations following a steep jump in raw material prices.

Operating margins are seen at 8 per cent this fiscal as improving product mix in favour of the premium segment and lower input costs will offset the impact of higher marketing spends, the report said.

The pace of store area addition will be at the pre-pandemic level of 2.2 million sq ft in FY24, the report said, adding that it was 3.7 million sq ft in the last fiscal.





Ayushmann Khurrana:

I HAVE STOPPED USING THE WORDS 'LADIES AND GENTLEMEN'

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana has been careful about addressing everyone and in his recent outings and has avoided addressing genders. He said that it is necessary to make every space inclusive for all.

The actor has stopped using the words 'ladies and gentlemen' at recent gatherings, including the TIME 100 Impact Awards in Singapore, where he was honoured as one of the most influential people in the world.

The actor said: "Yes, I think it is necessary to make every space inclusive for all genders. Gender has to be seen as a spectrum today and not just as male and female. It is true that I have stopped using the words 'ladies and gentlemen' whenever I address people now. Instead, I'm happy using 'everyone'."

Ayushmann



Anne Hathaway feels insulted when people say she looks good for her age

Hollywood actress Anne Hathaway does not see it as a compliment when people tell her she looks good for her age.

The 40-year-old actress considers the concept of ageing irrelevant and sees the process as "another word for living," reports aceshowbiz.com.

"I don't think about age. To me, ageing is another word for living. So, if people want to pay a compliment, it's nice. But whatever the hype is, I'm interested in what's beyond the concept of hype," Anne said in an interview with "Today".

The *Devil Wears Prada* star also explained that she has learned to be kinder to herself now she has grown older and is also better at "sharing."

She explained: "I'm right at that point where I have a much better sense of how I like to do things. I'm so much better at sharing. I feel like I'm kinder to myself and kinder to others."

Hathaway was recently announced as the face of Shiseido's Vital Perfection product range, an opportunity that

she considers to be a dream come true.

She told People: "I feel like I'm punching above my weight class with this one."

"I've known about Shiseido as a company since I was first starting out as an actress. I worked with a makeup artist who used Shiseido products on me, so I've always known their quality."

"It was amazing to realise that a company so timeless, so synonymous with excellence and care and thoughtfulness could want me. It was an incredible compliment and I decided to say yes before they changed their minds."



Hina Khan on her debut single Barsaat Aa Gayi: The entire experience was surreal

Actress Hina Khan is set to make her singing debut with *Barsaat Aa Gayi*, and called it a "surreal" experience.

Hina recently took to her social media platforms to share this news.

An excited Hina said: "I have officially sung my first ever song on record, and the entire experience was truly surreal! Hearing my own voice being recorded for the beautiful *Barsaat Aa Gayi* track was such an exciting experience."

"One of the most intriguing experiences of mine as a performer. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and I am very excited for everybody to hear the song. I am also sure of this not only being my first of many songs, as I definitely want to explore a lot more singing as well."

The song will be released on Vynl Originals. Just a few days ago, Hina let a sneak peek into her upcoming project, *Barsaat Aa Gayi* by sharing captivating behind-the-scenes glimpses.

Hina is known for playing Akshara in the television show *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* and Komolika in *Kasautii Zindagii Kay 2*. In 2017, she participated in the reality shows *Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 8* and *Bigg Boss 11* and emerged as runner up in both.

She made her Bollywood debut in 2020 with Vikram Bhatt directorial *Hacked*. The film also stars Rohan Shah, Mohit Malhotra and Sid Makkar.

*Hacked* is the story of a boy's love for an older girl and how it turns into an obsession.

Star vs Food Survival will see celebrity guests out in wilderness

Celebrity Chef Ranveer Brar, who is known for his unique way of presenting the cooking process and interacting with the audience, is set to host a new season of the show titled 'Star vs Food Survival'. The show will see the celebrity guests tackling the wilderness as they navigate the culinary journey.

Celebrity guests like Sunil Shetty, Sanjay Dutt, Aparshakti Khurana, Mouni Roy, and Nakuul Mehta will explore the essence of India's culinary legacy.

Ranveer will lead the star-studded cast on an

adventurous journey through the vibrant flavours and culinary treasures of two unique Indian locales: Coorg and Spiti. The show promises to unravel the flavours and stories behind each dish.

Talking about the show, Ranveer Brar, stated: "As the host of the show, it is truly an honour to meet some of the brightest stars of Indian cinema and collectively discover some of India's hidden culinary delights. This season, we venture beyond cooking to explore the breathtaking regions of Coorg and Spiti while having our guests take on challenges around the locality."

The new season will entail physical tasks as well as the celebrities will step out of their comfort zones and into the wild terrains,

embarking on thrilling survival adventures amidst extreme conditions.

Each episode features Chef Ranveer alongside a different celebrity as they explore India's uncharted culinary treasures, transforming wild finds into delectable dishes. From taking on adventurous tasks to crafting local delicacies in unspoiled wilderness, each episode promises excitement.

Ranveer further mentioned: "It's a privilege to witness these incredible stars in the wilderness, and I can't wait to share their heartwarming narratives and mouthwatering dishes with all our viewers."

*Star vs Food Survival* is set to air from October 9 on discovery+ and Discovery Channel on every Monday.



ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



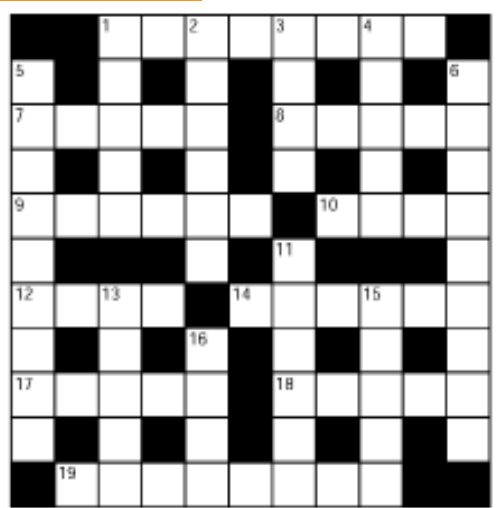
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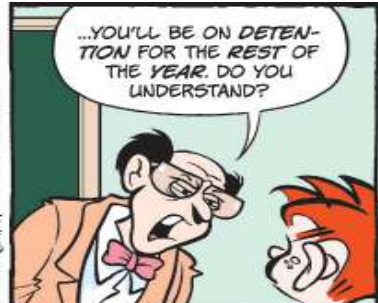
CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

- Beard
- Movements of the sea caused by the moon's pull on the Earth
- A sour oily fruit from a tree
- One of the continents
- An alcoholic drink
- Look at something for a long time
- Me
- A type of small bird
- A clothing size
- A chart of months and days

DOWN

- Broader
- A six-legged creature
- Round handle

- Lift up
- People not known to you
- Extremely frightened
- An eye's cover
- A striped animal
- Mistake
- A joint in the leg







## Dancing, nurturing & growing Tango dance community in Hyderabad

SHIKHA DUGGAL

While Tango has been around since the 19th century, it's not the most known dance form in our city of Hyderabad—but what's Hyderabad Tango Community is doing to create that buzz is already so phenomenal. The art of tango is something else only!

This community has passed out many beginners as experts in the recent years. So when we speak to the founders of the community by the names of Santak and Ketaki, they say, "Argentine Tango is more than a dance; it's a passionate conversation between two souls. Its intricate footwork and close embrace create an intimate connection, allowing dancers to express their emotions with every step. This art form continues to captivate with its blend of tradition and improvisation, making each tango a unique story told on the dance floor."

It was important for our city to have a distinctive community like this who really helps in the growth of a dance form like this and the scene around it. They continued, "Beyond being a captivating dance form, offers valuable insights and lessons that can be applied to both business world and wellness. In tango, partners must communicate non-verbally, relying on subtle cues to lead and follow. This emphasizes the importance of clear communication in business relationships. Effective communication fosters teamwork, minimizes misunderstandings, and enhances productivity. In terms of mental health, building strong connections and open channels of communication with colleagues and friends can provide vital support during challenging times."

In fact, they underlined, "Learning tango requires mindfulness, as dancers focus on the present moment and the connection with their partner. This can be applied to manage stress and improve mental health. Mindfulness practices can help individuals stay present and reduce anxiety in both work

Bringing the art of Tango, a passionate conversation between two souls, today *The Pioneer* brings to you about the Hyderabad Tango Community, that's building a community of their own.



and personal life. Then incorporating the principles of Tango into business and mental health strategies can lead to improved communication, teamwork, resilience, and well-being, ultimately contributing to more fulfilling personal and professional lives."

So you see in the quintessential Hyderabad way this duo is actually promoting and teaching the dance form in the city. They describe this professional training in the Hyderabad as, "Tango is a passion project for us, and this deep passion for tango drives our growth strategy in Hyderabad. Our strategy for growth in Hyderabad centers on making tango accessible to everyone. Our passion for this dance drives us to offer affordable classes and practice sessions every Sunday, creating a nurturing

environment for enthusiasts.

To introduce more people to the magic of tango, we host monthly Intro to Tango workshops and even invite international instructors to share their expertise." Once a month they also organize a social tango event called Milonga, where those who have learnt tango can come and dance, form social connections and celebrate their love for Tango! So you see the journey and destiny of tango here in Hyderabad? Besides — "The inception of Tango in Hyderabad was inspired by a chance encounter with a visiting German researcher, Thomas Falk, in 2015. He initiated Tango lessons in Hyderabad for the very first time. His love for tango ignited our own passion, and we have been dedicated to cultivating the tango community in Hyderabad ever since. While tango might not be the most widely

embraced dance form, it boasts an incredibly devoted following. Those who fall under its spell become addicted to its unique music and dance etiquette, forming a close-knit and passionate community."

Furthermore the duo confirms that in recent times, they have witnessed a surge of interest in tango, with a growing number of inquiries about their classes and workshops. Their existing students continue to show enthusiasm to learn more, become better dancers and deepen their understanding of this dance form. In fact, "Our future aspirations for Tango in Hyderabad are clear: we want to spread awareness and foster a deep appreciation for this art form. Our vision is to cultivate a strong, inclusive community that can share the love and joy of Tango with even more people in our city."

## 'I love how Nawaz as an actor absorbs everything that a filmmaker desires of him'

TEJAL SINHA

The Nawazuddin Siddiqui-starrer *Haddi* has hooked the audience, not only with the concept, and the way he donned himself into a transgender, but also the way the entire film was executed and presented. In the end, the film received the much-deserved appraisal that it was meant to get. The hard-hitting noir revenge drama is directed by debutant Akshat Ajay Sharma, who has been assisting Anurag Kashyap for many years now.

While Akshat has always adored Anurag and his work, but he feels that he is a different filmmaker and they have a huge contrast in their art. However, what he adapted from Anurag was, "While working with him for 3-4 years is the trait of how to be a budget filmmaker, and working in pandemonium so you can say that I learnt everything that a producer usually loves. Sadly, the only Anurag you will see in this is him as an actor, my villain, Pramod Ahlawat. Anurag calls me "A Dark Person" for my ideas. Imagine that! Him calling someone Dark is something. As much as I love his creative advices - he didn't give me any for the film. But he stood by the film - like a rock making sure it sees the light. Anurag wasn't a part of the writing/making of this. *Haddi* is my baby and my team's - I'm proud to say that."

Nawaz plays a transgender and from what we can tell, he has done a phenomenal job. The film is against the backdrop of modern ruins in NCR, Gurgaon, and Noida, and gives

a peek into the life of *Haddi*, a rookie transgender, portrayed by Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who comes from Allahabad to Delhi to join a gang of transgenders and climbs up to the top of the criminal chain to avenge his family who was wronged by a mighty powerful gangster turned politician played by Anurag Kashyap.

So, did you wonder too if it was a task convincing him, or if he was the first choice for the role? Well, the director says, "Without Nawaz, there was no *Haddi*. He is *HADDI*. It wasn't a task to convince him. He inspires greatness and he has an eye for the best scripts. But it was a task to get him to sit down with me for 3 hours. He reads all his scripts, and I prefer doing script reading. Considering his busy schedule, it was a task getting his availability for that meeting. But once he read/listened to the script, he said yes immediately. It was a long journey from that day to this hour. He was my ONLY choice for this role. Why do you think I waited an entire year for him and did not pitch anyone even before he knew about the existence of this script? Regarding his involvement in prep, it was a huge collaboration. The preparation for this role wasn't much about external appearance. We had the best people for that. With Priyanka and Subhash, the 'Appearance' was never a worry. What was a task for us was to dissect the psychology of this character. The sensitivity, the strength, the love of the sisterhood, and the vengeance of someone who had lost everything. It

included hours of discussion till the last day of the shoot. I love how he as an actor absorbs everything that a filmmaker desires of him and then he gives that and more."

Debutant director Akshat Ajay Sharma, who has been winning hearts with his recent project *Haddi*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, about working with Anurag Kashyap, and Nawazuddin donning the character in the film.



## CHANGING THE FACE OF THE INDIAN REALTY SECTOR

India post Independence has experienced a rapid surge in urbanisation. This has been fuelled by the adoption of a mixed economy and the growth of the private sector. The transformation has led to a significant increase in the urban population, as per data from the country's census reports and international organisations.

According to the 1901 census, a mere 11.4% of India's population resided in urban areas. However, this number jumped to 28.53% by the 2001 census, indicating a substantial shift towards urban living. As of 2017, the World Bank reported that the urban population in India had further climbed to 34%, reflecting the ongoing trend of urbanisation. Projections by the United Nations paint a clear picture of the future, with an estimated 40.76% of the country's population expected to live in urban areas by 2030. This forecast highlights the continued momentum of urbanisation in India and the increasing appeal of urban centres for its citizens.

However, in a dynamic shift, the Indian real estate landscape is experiencing a major transformation, with Tier 2 and 3 cities emerging as lucrative hubs for development. These cities have witnessed a surge in the popularity of townships in recent years, offering a fresh perspective on urban living and revolutionising the entire real estate industry. Experts believe that Tier 2 and 3 cities,

typically found in industrial corridors, hold substantial potential for future economic growth and real estate development. As these cities see improvements in infrastructure and the expansion of industries, they become attractive destinations for investment. With the availability of affordable spaces and increasing job opportunities, their growth potential as promising real estate markets in India is further strengthened.

### MEETING THE DEMAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A pivotal factor driving the rising prominence of townships in Tier 2 and 3 cities is the pressing need for affordable housing. Large metropolitan centres have been tackling escalating housing costs and limited land availability, pushing potential homeowners to explore alternative options. The relatively untapped development areas in these smaller cities have become a beacon for real estate investments. Townships in these regions present a wide array of housing choices, catering to diverse needs and budgets, from economical flats to lavish villas.

### TRANSFORMATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The allure of townships in Tier 2 and 3 cities is further enhanced by the well-



planned infrastructure and comprehensive services they offer. Unlike chaotic urban centres, these smaller cities have the advantage of meticulously designed developments. Townships boast well-connected road networks, dependable utilities, and modern amenities such as schools, hospitals, shopping malls, and recreational facilities. This thoughtfully crafted infra-

structure ensures residents have seamless access to all essential services, elevating their living experience.

### PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING

A notable feature of townships in Tier 2 and 3 cities is their emphasis on sustainable living. Many of these developments have been purposefully designed with

environmental considerations in mind. Green spaces, rainwater harvesting systems, and energy-efficient structures are incorporated to promote a greener and healthier lifestyle for residents. The burgeoning awareness and importance of sustainable living among modern homeowners have further cemented the appeal of these townships.

### GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FUELING GROWTH

The government's commitment to urban development in Tier 2 and 3 cities has played a significant role in propelling the growth of townships. Initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana have laid the foundation for integrated townships that house residential, commercial, and recreational spaces within self-sustaining communities. With proactive government support and developer incentives, a conducive environment has been created, hastening the development of townships in these cities.

### THE FUTURE OF INDIAN REAL ESTATE

As the real estate market in India undergoes a metamorphosis, townships in Tier 2 and 3 cities are poised to be the game-changers. The year 2023 is expected to witness a notable shift in investment focus towards Tier II and Tier III cities in India. With specific cities like

Visakhapatnam, Trivandrum, and Coimbatore showing great promise in different sectors, these regions are set to become major drivers of economic growth and real estate development.

In other regions, cities like Ludhiana, Ambala, Lucknow, Patna, Siliguri, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Jaipur, and more have experienced remarkable growth as manufacturing hubs. As a result, these cities have emerged as promising locations for the establishment of warehousing clusters.

The thriving manufacturing sectors in these areas have made them attractive choices for businesses seeking efficient warehousing and distribution centres.

Offering an attractive blend of affordability, robust infrastructure, contemporary amenities, and sustainable living options, these townships have become the preferred choice for discerning homeowners. The government's continued emphasis on urban growth and investment encouragement in these cities ensures that townships will remain the driving force shaping the future of real estate in India. With more people seeking a balanced and rewarding lifestyle, the rise of townships in Tier 2 and 3 cities is set to define the trajectory of the real estate market in the country.

(The author, Aditya Kushwaha, CEO and Director Axis Ecorp.)



# ASHWIN VS SUNDAR: STORY BEHIND UNEXPECTED WC TRIAL

PTI ■ MOHALI

A month and half back, Ravichandran Ashwin was eloquently explaining on his Tamil YouTube channel, why a talent like Tilak Varma should be seriously considered for the ODI World Cup.

One of India's greatest match-winners in Test cricket wouldn't possibly have envisaged that in six weeks time he would be summoned for a two-match trial against Washington Sundar — nearly a decade and half junior to him.

Close selection calls are par for course when it comes to World Cup squads.

But just two weeks before the mega event, the Indian team management has called the two off-spinners for the three-match series against Australia to keep a ready back-up option in case Axar Patel's quadriceps tear doesn't heal on time.

It will be a virtual shoot-out and their performances on flat decks of Mohali and Rajkot will be monitored by Ajit Agarkar's selection committee.

"I think Ashwin will be slightly ahead now that a bowler of his stature has been called into the mix. I have always felt that Ashwin should have been in the mix from the time the team got into the ODI World Cup mode," said former chairman of selectors MSK Prasad, who was at helm when the 2019 squad was selected.

So, who will be his pick if Axar can't make it to the World Cup?

"Look, let us hope that Axar is fit for the final ODI in Rajkot. Because if he is fit, however well Ashwin or Washy bowl, it will be Axar who will retain his place. If he has been your pick ahead of these two, then you have to have him if he is good to go," Prasad set the record straight.

"But this is one of the most fascinating World Cup trials



that you will get (to see). Question is: if they are looking at a 50-50 batting-bowling option then it is Washy. But if they are looking at a purely spin bowling option, then Ash holds an edge as far as I am concerned," Prasad said.

Harbhajan Singh, however, has a contrarian viewpoint.

The 'Turbantor' believes that if the team management and selectors took an informed decision to summon Washington in Colombo for the Asia Cup final and even fielded him in the playing XI, then he should be the first-choice replacement.

"Washington bowls well in Powerplays. He is a brilliant fielder and last but not the least is a left-hander in that lower middle order. So, he does come as a package," said Harbhajan.

Another national selector, who refused to be named, had an interesting take on the Washington vs Ashwin debate.

"No offence meant but Axar's supposed hamstring

injury could just be a blessing in disguise. The decision to have a right-arm finger spinner should have been taken long back and now, perhaps, at eleventh hour, they have got that opportunity," the selector, who has seen some pitched battles between previous captains and selection commit-

tees, said. He then decoded the whole issue that the Indian team is facing.

"Not denying that Axar played two crucial knocks in the Asia Cup and one was in a winning cause against Sri Lanka. But just look at his bowling on a track that offered considerable

turn. If Charith Asalanka is picking up four wickets and you (Axar) are not even getting most of your deliveries to turn, it is a problem," added the former selector.

"Mind it, Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) is lethal when there is help off the surface and doubly

so, if Ashwin is operating at the other end. Also, why did they call two off-spinners and not a like-for-like replacement. The next in line are Shahbaz Ahmed and Abhishek Sharma (left-arm spin and left-handed bat). These two are okay for Asian Games level but certainly not for the World Cup," he added.

"Also at the moment, they asked Ashwin to report for his fitness update at NCA (after the Super 4 against Pakistan, if one goes by his Instagram handle), you would know that he is in line and there is a clear dilemma in Rohit (Sharma), Rahul (Dravid) and Ajit (Agarkar)'s mind as to who is the best option. "Is it a bits and pieces cricketer like Washy or someone like Ashwin, who can turn a game or two on Indian tracks? Hence they called both," the selector said.

Prasad agreed to the point.

"I believe some of the tracks will offer help for spinners. In Chennai, think about Ashwin's possible match-up against Steve Smith or a left-hander like David Warner. Yes, his successes came in the red ball (cricket) but just think about the possibilities," the former India stumper added.



## Siraj back to No. 1 in ODI rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj has regained his number one spot in the men's ICC ODI bowling rankings after his six-wicket haul in the final of the recently-concluded Asia Cup. Siraj, who first grabbed the top position in January before being displaced by Josh Hazlewood in March, has surged eight spots after his memorable performance that helped dismiss Sri Lanka for just 50 runs and enabled India to complete a 10-wicket victo-

ry in the summit clash.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav has moved down three places to ninth.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah climbed up two places to 27th while Hardik Pandya rose eight spots to 50th.

Among batters, openers Shubman Gill and Rohit Sharma have retained their second and 10th spots respectively while star batter Virat Kohli moved up a rung to eighth.

Pandya is the only all-rounder in the top 20, climbing up a spot to the sixth place.

## ICC confirms New York, Dallas, Florida as US venues for T20 WC 2024

PTI ■ DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday confirmed New York, Dallas and Florida as the three venues for the USA-leg of the ICC Men's World Cup 2024.

Broward County (Florida), Grand Prairie (Dallas) and Eisenhower Park (New York) will be the three stadiums hosting the matches in the US.

This is the first time the tournament will be played in the USA, and they will co-host it with the West Indies.

The ICC had awarded the event to the USA in 2021. Geoff Allardice, the Chief Executive of the governing body, said, these venues have been zeroed in after an extensive evaluation process.

"We're delighted to announce the three USA venues that will host part of the biggest ICC Men's T20 World Cup ever staged, with 20 teams competing for the trophy.

"We explored a number of potential venue options in the country, and we were hugely encouraged by the enthusiasm



the event generated amongst prospective hosts," said Allardice in an ICC release.

Allardice said the existing

ular stadium solutions.

He said the same technology will be used to build a 34,000-seat modular stadium at Nassau County, New York, and he hoped to acquire the required permit from local officials by next month. "We are very excited about the opportunity to use modular stadium technology. This technology has been used at previous ICC events to increase venue capacity and it's routinely used in other major sports around the world.

"In the USA, it will give us the opportunity to increase the

size of the venues in both Dallas and Florida and create what is going to be a stunning venue in New York," said Allardice.

A number of other venues around the USA, including George Mason University in Washington, the new home of MLC team Washington Freedom, have also been identified as potential venues for pre-event matches and training. The ICC's announcement has also allayed all concerns over USA hosting the T20 WC 2024 because of the doubts surrounding the readiness of the stadiums.

## B'desh hungry to gain pre-WC boost in ODI series vs NZ

AP ■ MIRPUR

After failing to reach this month's Asia Cup final, Bangladesh is hungry to gain a much-needed boost ahead of the 50-over World Cup by beating New Zealand in the three-match ODI series that starts on Thursday.

Bangladesh rested a host of key players for the Asia Cup, captain Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Najmul Hossain and Towhid Hridoy among them, in order to keep them fresh and injury-free, although it has still not named its squad for next month's World Cup.

New Zealand has sent only five World Cup-bound players to Bangladesh, stand-in skipper Lockie Ferguson, Trent Boult, Rachin Ravindra, Ish Sodhi and Will Young.

Tamim Iqbal, who stepped down as ODI captain last month, is back for Bangladesh after recovering from a back problem. Mahmudullah, axed after the England series



in March following poor form, also returns. Liton Das, who leads the side in Shakib's absence, said: "There are many things to achieve from the series. The first thing is to win, that will be a big achievement ahead of the World Cup.

"We won't play to show just individual brilliance. A five-wicket haul or a century doesn't matter if the team doesn't win."

Ferguson, yet to play on Bangladesh soil, believes conditions will test his New Zealand team to the limit.

"Bangladesh is very good in home conditions and is a huge challenge here," he said. "It's important for us just to focus on what's coming up tomorrow and try to adapt as quickly as possible to the conditions. Some of us haven't played here so we'll have to adapt quicker."

New Zealand hasn't won an ODI match in the country since 2008 and Ferguson said the input of former Bangladesh bowling coach Shane Jurgensen would be invaluable.



## Southee to undergo surgery on thumb

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand veteran fast bowler Tim Southee is set to undergo a surgery on his injured right thumb on Thursday and a call on his availability for the World Cup in India will be taken next week. Southee broke and dislocated his right thumb while attempting to take a catch in the fourth ODI against England last week.

New Zealand head coach Gary Stead is hopeful the 34-year-old seamer will recover in time for the side's opening game in the mega event on October 5.

"We've got our fingers crossed the surgery goes well for Tim," Stead said.

"He'll have some pins or screws inserted in his right thumb and, providing the procedure is a success, it will be a matter of ensuring Tim can tolerate the pain and manage the actual wound when returning to train and play."

Ahead of their opener against defending champions England, New Zealand are

scheduled to take on Pakistan and South Africa in the World Cup warm up matches on September 29 and October 2.

"Our opening game of the World Cup against England is not until Thursday October 5 in Ahmedabad, so that would be our logical target in terms of his availability.

"Tim's obviously a hugely experienced and important figure in our team and we want to give him every chance to be part of this World Cup campaign."

Black Caps skipper Kane Williamson is also recovering from a ruptured ACL he suffered during the IPL earlier this year and may not be available for New Zealand's opening game.

Teams can make changes to the 15-player World Cup squad until September 28, post which any changes would need approval from the ICC. Five members of the Black Caps' World Cup-bound squad are in Bangladesh for a three-match ODI series, starting Thursday. The others are scheduled to fly out to India on Tuesday.

## Ronaldinho to visit Kolkata during Durga Puja

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Retired Brazilian legend Ronaldinho is set to visit Kolkata during the auspicious occasion of Durga Puja next month.

An official privy to the development said that Ronaldinho is likely to visit the city between October 15-19 but the final date will be ascertained following the confirmation date of Barca Legends match at Congo.

According to the official, Ronaldinho, who will be visiting Kolkata for the first time, is expected to feature in a short charity match, besides visiting a football clinic and a Durga Puja pandal. He will also inaugurate a statue of Argentine FIFA World Cup winner Lionel Messi.

A two-time Ballon d'Or winner, Ronaldinho is also expected to attend some sponsor meet and greet events and visit the nearby town of Risra. The official involved has played a key role in bringing football legends to the city in the past, including Maradona, Pele and Cafu.

He also played a role in bringing current Argentinian World Cup-winning goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez this July to the city.

Notably, Ronaldinho also has his football academy in the city, the R10 Academy, in Rajarhat.

## Sreejesh eyes direct berth to Olympics through Asiad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At 35, PR Sreejesh is standing at the twilight of his career and the Hangzhou Asian Games is most likely his last appearance at the continental showpiece.

But the veteran Indian hockey goalkeeper is determined to win the gold at Hangzhou to give himself a chance to earn a direct entry to the Paris Olympics next year, and do better there winning a yellow-coated medal.

Eight-time champions India had won a historic bronze at the Tokyo Olympics after 41 years beating Germany 5-4 in the

play-off match.

"Obviously, next year's Olympics is my main target and I want to change the colour of my medal there. But having said that, we need to qualify through the Asian Games (to Olympics) so that we get ample time to prepare ourselves," Sreejesh told PTI.

Sreejesh reiterated that age is just a number for a sportsman and gave the example of tennis great Novak Djokovic in this regard.

"I am right now taking one game, one tournament at a time. As (Novak) Djokovic said, 35 is the new 25. So, I'm definite-



ly there," he said.

Having handled the duties under the goal post of the Indian hockey team for more than 17 years, Sreejesh wants to groom the next generation of goalkeepers in India.

"Krishan (Bahadur Pathak) and me have been donning the goalkeeping responsibilities for a long time. We share a good rapport. There are upcoming goalkeepers like Suraj Karkera and Pawan Malik who are good and will only get better with time.

"I just want to ensure that there is enough back-up," he said.

The Indian men's hockey team goalkeepers, including Sreejesh, underwent some sessions under Dutchman Dennis van de Pol in the lead up to the Asian Games, which has been very helpful according to the veteran custodian.

"Dennis van de Pol is a good coach. It has really been beneficial to work with him. His experience and vast knowledge about goalkeeping has been very useful for us.

"He has deep knowledge about his skills and expertise and it has definitely helped us in all aspects of goalkeeping qualities," he signed off.

## Antim Panghal shocks reigning world champion Parrish, reaches semis

PTI ■ BELGRADE

Antim Panghal shocked reigning champion Olivia Dominique Parrish en route to the World Championship semifinals, raising hopes of locking a quota for the Paris Olympics even as other Indian contenders bit the dust in their respective categories, here Wednesday.

The two-time U20 champion Panghal slipped to a 0-2 deficit at the start of the bout against the American but edged her rival 3-2 in the women's 53kg opening round.

She later outplayed Poland's Roksana Marta Zasina

by technical superiority and followed that up with a 9-6 win over Russian Natalia Malyshova, who is competing as a neutral athlete.

However, Manisha (62kg), Priyanka (68kg) and Jyoti Berwal (72kg) have lost their bouts and exited the tournament.

All 10 men's free-style wrestlers have already exited the tournament without winning either an Olympic quota or a medal in non-Olympic categories.

All Indian athletes are competing under the UWW flag because the wrestling federation is suspended.

## India face Bangladesh in must-win Asian Games football match

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Battered by hosts China in their opening match after playing without any training session, India will be up against a tricky Bangladesh side in their must-win group match in the Asian Games football competition here on Thursday. A rag-tag Indian team reached here late Monday evening and played its first match without proper rest and sleep and was hammered 1-5 by China on Tuesday.

Igor Stimac's team needs to beat Bangladesh in its second Group A game to remain in the fray for the knock-outs.

A loss on Thursday may not straightway knock India out of

reckoning as the best third-placed teams from the six groups can also advance to the Round of 16, but that will leave the team with a lot of uncertainties in the final game.

Qualifying as one of the best four third-place teams could also set India up against tougher sides in the pre-quarterfinals.

Bangladesh have never been an easy side for India in any level and they will also be desperate for a win after losing their opening match 0-1 to Myanmar.

India will, however, be strengthened after the arrival of defender Konsam Chinglensana Singh, who could not travel with the team before due to a visa delay. The Indian Olympic



Association (IOA) arranged 'express visa' — which could be procured in two-three days — for him and he has arrived here separately.

It will not be easy for the Sunil Chhetri-led side to beat Bangladesh and log its first win of the competition as the team was assembled at the last minute with very few known faces after the Indian Super League clubs refused to release their players.

The Indians played on an even keel in the first 45 minutes but they caved in the second half, exposing the gulf in quality between the two teams.

Stimac himself admitted after the China match that he has brought a third-rung team

with him.

"This is our third or fourth-choice team here. I would love to play against China with my best team. Then it would be totally opposite, but the players that are here are heroes," the Croatian coach said.

"What they went through, with travelling problems, arriving here very late, not having time to recover and handling the first 45 minutes in a brilliant way.

"I was realistic and knew that it wouldn't happen (to get a drawn match). With no-one on the bench, apart from three players which we had, we couldn't make any tactical changes. We couldn't influence the game in the second half."



# venu thottempudi

## I DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT MISSING SOME PROJECTS IN MY CAREER

Actor Venu Thottempudi, who recently made his comeback with the webseries *Athidhi*, speaks about its response, playing his character, working with producer Praveen Sattaru, and more.

PNS| HYDERABAD

Actor Venu Thottempudi, has recently made his comeback, which also marks his OTT debut with *Athidhi*, currently streaming on Disney plus Hotstar. This web series is directed by Bharat Vyji and produced under the banner of Random Frames Entertainment, and renowned director Praveen Sattaru acted as the show runner. The web series has received a mixed response. While some call it classy, other say that it lacks mass elements. However, Venu shares for him, it is a complete family entertainer. "It has comedy, suspense, drama and sentiment and less horror elements. That's why the family can watch it comfortably together. I watched a lot of web series during the lockdown time. At that time I also thought it would be good if I did a web series. As I thought, the executive producer of this web series said about *Athidhi*. After that the script was sent to me. I liked the story of *Athidhi*. When Bharat came to me he said it would be good if you do this subject. When a new director came who believed in me, I thought to support his vision. The story is also very impressive. So I agreed to do this web series."

*Athidhi* not only marks his OTT debut, but also it is for the first time that he had worked in the horror genre. Venu reveals that it was rigorous challenge for him to perform the character of Ravi Varma because, "He knows

everything in this story. But he should behave like, he knows nothing. There should be a balance, not too much or too little. There are no such restrictions for other characters. For me, they tightened it like it was put in a box. When director Bharat brought this story to me, he said you should give settled performance. If my performance is good, credit should be given to Bharat." *Athidhi* has been a web series where you can find limited character. Going ahead, the actor was all praises for Praveen Sattaru, and says, "He takes care of everything. They used to discuss with us. He did not come to the set but knew everything. He has put in a good effort for the *Athidhi*. I thoroughly enjoyed working in the project.

On a concluding note, the Ramachari





# 'Rudram Kota deserves audiences' support,' says actor Srikanth

Rudram Kota, starring senior artist Jayalalitha in a pivotal role, is produced by Anil Arka Kandavalli. Written and Directed by Ramu Kona. The film is coming from the banner ARK Visuals. Starring Rudhra, Vibhisha and Riya in leading roles. The thriller is going to be released in theatres on September 22nd through Screen Max Pictures.

The film's pre-release event was held in Hyderabad in the presence of chief guest and actor Srikanth. Speaking on the occasion, Hero Srikanth said, "Me, Rashi and Suchitra have done many songs together. We always feel great to meet Ram-Lakshman duo. I acted

in *Panchadara Chilaka* with Jayalalitha. She is a very nice person. She has built *Rudram Kota* with so much care. Any good movie is valuable. The songs of this movie are so good. The trailer is very good. I appreciate the core team, including the actors and the Director. Ramu Kona has a lot of experience with TV serials. All the best to everyone who worked on the film. I want the audience to support this movie when it comes out in theatres on September 22nd."

Senior actress Jayalalitha thanked the audience who were present at the event, and shared, "The film is going to be released on September 22nd. I wish the audi-

ence to watch our film in the theatres and make the movie successful. I would like to thank Master Shiv Shankar garu for doing excellent choreography for two songs."

Meanwhile, producer Anil expressed his gratitude towards the chief guests of the event said, "With their arrival, a small movie has become a big movie. I hope that the audience will also watch this film theatres and make it a big film."

Suchitra said, "I have worked as a dance master on many movies starring Jayalalitha garu. Now, I am very happy to have done the choreography for the film that she has acted and produced."

# Urvashi Rautela collaborates with Oscar-Academy award winner choreographer Prem Rakshit for Cult Mama

In the world of entertainment, collaborations can often lead to remarkable outcomes. One such collaboration that has taken the internet by storm features the stunning Urvashi Rautela teaming up with Oscar Academy Award-winning choreographer, Prem Rakshit, for her song *Cult Mama* along side tollywood superstar Rana Duggabati. *Cult Mama* is a dance sensation like no other. It seamlessly blends traditional Indian dance forms with contemporary choreography, creating a visually

captivating and emotionally charged performance. Prem Rakshit, known for his remarkable choreography in the Telugu film industry, left an indelible mark with his work on the song *Naatu Naatu* from the blockbuster movie *RRR*. Urvashi Rautela, sultry sensuous dance moves brings all together a different spark in the song. As soon as *Cult Mama* was released, it took social media by storm. The dance video garnered millions of views within hours, and fans couldn't stop raving about Urvashi Rautela's flawless dance moves and Prem Rakshit's visionary choreography. The chemistry between Urvashi and Rana is unstoppable as we could see in a video Urvashi wearing a sensuous golden deep plunging neckline sleeveless dress which is highly embellished and has tassels attached this body con dress flaunts Urvashi sultry figure.

Urvashi first every collaboration with Prem Rakshit has created waves in the industry and its very evident that the actress has made this song mega hit by making Prem Rakshit choreography vision to life. Urvashi on her collaboration with Oscar winning choreographer Prem Rakshit Says, "Collaborating with the renowned Oscar-winning choreographer, *#NaatuNaatu* Prem Rakshit, was an absolutely surreal and awe-inspiring experience. It's difficult to put into words just how creatively invigorating it was. I felt like I was on cloud nine, constantly pushed to explore new dimensions of my artistry," she wrote on Instagram. *Cult Mama*, is a viral sensation that not only celebrates the talents of its creators but also serves as an inspiration to aspiring artists worldwide, reminding them that with dedication and creativity, anything is possible in the world of entertainment.




# Saiyami Kher associates with the UN to champion disability welfare at the zero conference

Saiyami Kher, known for her impactful roles in cinema, has stepped forward to lend her voice to the movement of inclusion for people with disabilities. Building on the inspiration drawn from her recent film *Ghoomer*, in which she portrayed a cricketer with a physical disability, Kher is set to address a distinguished audience at the upcoming Zero Project India Conference which is affiliated with the United Nations.

The conference, to be held in Delhi, will serve as a dynamic platform bringing together eminent stakeholders, policymakers, influencers, and champions of disability rights from both India and around the globe. Through a series of engaging panel discussions, interactive workshops, and knowledge-sharing sessions, the event is poised to spark innovative ideas, forge strategic alliances, and ignite actionable solutions towards building a more inclusive India.





# Pushpa 2 sparks curiosity; Is there a patriotic angle to the actioner?

The anticipation for Icon Star Allu Arjun's *Pushpa 2: The Rule* is at its peak among cine-goers. Recently, the makers unveiled a brand new poster for the film and announced the release date of August 15, 2024, for the much-awaited actioner. The intense and intriguing poster piqued the audience's interest and spoke volumes about the grandeur of the craft of this action entertainer, which is poised to set the bar high in every aspect. Besides the curiosity-raising poster, the one thing that draws attention is the surprising release date of August 15, which also marks the Independence Day of the nation. As the release date of *Pushpa 2: The Rule* is announced, we wonder why the makers chose this date. Are they planning to bring out something different for the masses on a patriotic flavor front, or will *Pushpa 2: The Rule* leave any strong message? Well, the release date is building suspense for the biggie, and everyone is eager to know what uniqueness the makers have in store to offer this time.

*Pushpa 2: The Rule* is directed by Sukumar and stars Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna, and Fahadh Faasil.

Produced by Mythri Movie Makers and Muttamsetty Media.

# SAMANTHA RUTH PRABHU I LOVE ACTION AND IT'S QUITE A BIG COMING UP WITH CITADEL

"Can we get a little sneak peek at your next project?"

The actress responded to the fans and said, "My next project is actually not one; I do not have a plan. Let's see. I know I want to be most selective about the things that I work on and the things that push me out of my comfort zone, and unlike when I get any roles, I am okay."

While another fan asked, "Maam, can we expect a full-fledged action film from you?"

Talking about her upcoming projects, Samantha said, "One thing I am really excited about is action. I don't know why; I've never been a goody person, but I love action, and I just love it, and I think that it's quite a big deal coming up with Citadel. The action in it was really hard and fun, but I love it, and I love the challenges. I can't wait for you guys to see it and enjoy it, but yes, I think the action is for me".

Meanwhile, on the work front, Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who was last seen in *Kushi*, is gearing up for the global release of her much-awaited show 'Citadel', co-starring Varun Dhawan.





# A Never before teaser by Uppendra for #UiTheMovie in the history of filmmaking

Kannada Superstar Uppendra celebrated his birthday on the 18th September amongst all his fans and on this special occasion, the master story teller met his fans at Urvashi Theatre in Bengaluru. During this event among Superstar Shiva Rajkumar & Salaga Vijaya kumar unveiled a unique never before teaser in the history of filmmaking for his most awaited upcoming directorial project *#UiTheMovie* bankrolled by Lahari Films, G Manoharan & Venus Entertainers, K P Sreekanth and Co-Produced by Naveen Manoharan.

Uppendra renowned for his directional versatility and who features in the Top 20 best directors in the world on IMDB once again showcased his creative vision, by releasing a teaser of a film without even a single frame of visual being shown in the video. Leaving fans awestruck and what makes this teaser distinct is

that it has his stamp of him being "Unique" with an unconventional approach that is it relies on immersive spatial audio and Dolby atoms sound experience without a single frame of visual other than just logos.

This being a ground breaking move in the history of filmmaking the audio-only teaser immerses the audience with 3D sound effects into a world of suspense and tension, featuring chilling screams and unsettling sounds. As the teaser reaches its climax, a mysterious female voice whispers huskily, "This is not the world of AI...this is the world of UI...Use your imagination to escape!" The teaser concludes with a compelling statement saying: "This teaset is for your imagination."

Leaving audiences wanting for more and awestruck with his creativity. This teaser has further garnered huge craze for this magnum opus film *#UiTheMovie* slated for release this year end making it one of the most awaited movie of this year.

This film also stars Uppendra (Lead Actor), Reeshma Nanaiah (Lead Actress), Nidhi Subbaiah, Murali Sharma & P Ravi Shankar in prominent roles and Industry leading Technical crew like the Music is Composed by Ajanesh Loknath (*Kantara* Fame), Art Direction by Shiva Kumar J (*KGF1&2* Fame), Cinematography by HC Venugopal (*A & H2O* Fame), VFX Supervised by Nirmal Kumar (*Vikranth Rona* Fame).

