

KCR needs support from TDP, YSRCP for settlers' votes

Barat Rashtra Samiti chief and Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, a staunch critic of his political guru and former chief minister of combined Andhra Pradesh N. Chandrababu Naidu, has been intriguingly silent over the arrest of the latter in connection with the Rs. 371 crore skill development scheme scam that allegedly took place during the Telugu Desam Party regime. KCR's stoic silence for three weeks, with Naidu's judicial remand entering the third week, has raised eyebrows. For, KCR has criticised Naidu on several contentious issues, including the moving spirit behind the development of Hyderabad city and specifically the setting up of Cyberabad as the hub of IT industries in the capital city. KCR has disdainfully brushed aside the view in many quarters that Naidu was instrumen-



tal in initially bringing several IT behemoths to Hyderabad. KCR has gone to the extent of describing Naidu as an 'outsider' in Telangana. KCR's cryptic silence now is attributed to the BRS' eyes on the sizeable vote bank of TDP, including those of settlers across TS. Besides, the arrest of Naidu has drawn widespread condemnation from people across the globe with protests being reported from at least two dozen countries. Considering Naidu's arrest, apparently at the behest of AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, the TS Chief Minister was expected to extend at least moral support to Naidu. But KCR played it cool. He did not want the fallout of Naidu's arrest in Telangana, considering the upcoming Assembly elections in the state. Since the political equation has changed

As for settlers spread across Telangana State, they are going to play a crucial role in the forthcoming T-elections. Given the sympathy factor expected to work in favour of Naidu over the manner of his arrest, it is now believed the Andhra people are one in TS, particularly in the case of the politically influential Kamma community.

In the wake of Naidu's arrest, KCR is watching the situation closely without making derogatory remarks against Naidu or condemning his incarceration. It was during the Congress regime in the combined Andhra Pradesh that then president of YSR Congress Party YS Jaganmohan Reddy was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with the disproportionate assets (DA) cases and he was in jail for 16 months before getting bail a decade back. Jagan surprising-



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

ple are one in TS, particularly in the case of the politically influential Kamma community. There are no stakes for TDP in TS; so, the BRS leadership is believed to have come to an understanding with the TDP leadership for shifting the vote bank to the ruling party. During the 2018 elections, the settlers chose to back BRS (then TRS) in their own inter-

ests. That trend continued in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation polls - the biggest local body in the two Telugu states -- captured by TRS. BRS emerged victorious in the GHMC polls because of the support extended by non-local people living in Hyderabad. The TDP got good results in the 2014 general election via seat sharing with the Bharatiya Janata Party, which got a lion's share of the seats. With his strategic silence, KCR is now trying to impress TDP cadre for his possible hat-trick win in TS. No wonder, TS Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivasa Reddy has condemned the arrest of Naidu as an undemocratic act on the part of the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government. BRS leader and five-time MLA Motkupalli Narasimhulu also condemned the arrest of Naidu. He questioned whether Naidu, who had spent Rs. 8

lakh crore for the people during his 14-year-old regime, would have indulged in the scam. These leaders of BRS would not have spoken positively about Naidu without reading the mind of KCR. It is a different matter that Narasimhulu is unhappy with the attitude of KCR towards him. The TS Speaker's home turf i.e. the combined district of Nizamabad is crucial when it comes to settlers' vote bank. That is why the ball rolled from there. The powerful Reddy community in TS is influenced by settlers from the Rayalaseema region of present Andhra state. They comprised a solid vote bank for the Congress in the erstwhile undivided AP. During the 1999 elections, voters from the Rayalaseema settled in Hyderabad had rallied behind Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy, then APCC president. So, they voted against even then Congress Legislature

Party (CLP) leader P. Janardhan Reddy in the Khairatabad constituency. If the community shows such unity again, both Congress and BRS might vie for their support. In such eventuality, Jaganmohan Reddy might extend support to KCR by influencing the Reddy community of Rayalaseema origin settled in TS. If his sister and YSRTP president YS Sharmila merges her party with the Congress in time, she will have to garner support from the same group for the Congress! That is a different story. If KCR manages to achieve a hat-trick, it would clearly only with the support of settlers' vote bank. Voters in Telangana State may respond to political parties in a mixed way because of their perception about the BRS' rule. But the settlers' response is predictable. That is why KCR badly needs the support of settlers.

Council Chairman refuses to entertain adjournment motion

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a dramatic turn of events during the fourth day of the 43rd session of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, Chairman Koyye Moshenu Raju firmly refused to entertain the adjournment motion brought forth by Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) MLCs KS Lakshmana Rao, I Venkateswara Rao, and Shaik Sabjee. The motion pertained to the critical issue of regularising and ensuring job security for contract and outsourcing employees currently employed in Samagra Shiksha and Kasturba schools across the state.

Before the proceedings began on Tuesday, PDF MLCs made a valiant attempt to introduce their adjournment motion, pressing for a discussion on the plight of approximately 11,117 contract and outsourcing employees within Samagra Shiksha and Kasturba schools alone. They also high-

Council Chairman Moshenu Raju swiftly rebuffed the pleas of PDF members, citing a prior commitment to a short discussion on the Council's agenda. This refusal left the PDF MLCs visibly disheartened as their quest for justice for contract and outsourcing employees faced a roadblock.

lighted the staggering figure of an additional 60,000 to 70,000 contract and outsourcing employees laboring in various other government departments. KS Lakshmana Rao, an ardent PDF MLC, underscored that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had previously committed to the regularization of the aforementioned 11,117 employees, yet this assurance remains unfulfilled. Expressing similar concerns, MLCs Shaik Sabjee and Venkateswara Rao echoed their colleague's sentiments. However, Chairman

Moshenu Raju swiftly rebuffed their pleas, citing a prior commitment to a short discussion on the Council's agenda. This refusal left the PDF MLCs visibly disheartened as their quest for justice for contract and outsourcing employees faced a roadblock. Despite this setback, the legislative session pressed on, with the Chairman eventually allowing the question hour to proceed. During this segment, members posed inquiries related to the Agriculture, Education, and Water Resources departments. In response, Minister for

Agriculture, Horticulture, and Marketing, Kakani Govardhan Reddy, and Botsa Satyanarayana provided comprehensive answers to the queries posed by their fellow council members. Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Minority Welfare, Amzad Bhasha, took the opportunity to outline the various schemes aimed at benefiting minority students in the field of education. He emphasized the government's commitment to establishing coaching centers for Group 1 and 2 examinations, intended to assist minority candidates in their pursuit of success. The proceedings of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council witnessed a blend of passionate advocacy and procedural challenges, underscoring the complex nature of addressing pressing issues within the state's governance framework.

Stable governance needed for developmental journey: PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said clean, clear and stable governance is necessary for the country's developmental journey to continue as he credited positive developments taking place in India to political stability, policy clarity and democratic values. Addressing students, faculty members and heads of educational institutions at the finale of the G20 University Connect here, Prime Minister said India's diplomacy touched new heights in the last 30 days and some decisions taken during the G20 Summit have potential to change the direction the 21st century world takes. "In today's polarised international atmosphere, it is not a small thing to get so many countries together on one platform," he said, referring to the G20 Summit in Delhi earlier this month. He noted he met 85 world leaders in last 30 days.

Assembly passes bill changing designations of judges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP State Legislative Assembly passed a bill to amend the Andhra Pradesh Civil Courts Act, 1972 seeking substitution for Junior Civil Judge and Senior Civil Judge. On behalf of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Adimulapu Suresh presented the bill in the Assembly on Tuesday. He said that the Supreme Court of India directed all the High Courts that the designations of judges, therefore, ought to be uniform across the country. In this regard, the First National Judicial Pay Commission (FNJPC) suggested the nomenclature to be adopted pan-India as Civil Judge (Jr. Div), Civil Judge (Sr.Div) and District Judge." Minister Suresh stated that the Supreme Court in other words directed all the High Courts to change the nomenclature of the Judges of District Judiciary across India. So far as the State of Andhra Pradesh is



concerned, as per the Civil Courts Act, 1972 and the A.P. State Judicial Service Rules, 2007, the Judicial Officers are being called Junior Civil Judges, Senior Civil Judges, and District Judges. The Minister further stated that it is now necessary to amend the A.P. Civil Courts Act, 1972, and the A.P. State Judicial Service Rules, 2007. As of now, in the A.P. Civil Courts Act, 1972, and in the A.P. State Judicial Service Rules, 2007, it has been mentioned in the nomenclature of Judicial Officers of the District, as

'Junior Civil Judge' and 'Senior Civil Judge'. Wherever the nomenclature of Judicial Officers of the District Judiciary is mentioned as Junior Civil Judge and Senior Civil Judge in the Andhra Pradesh Civil Courts Act, 1972, they are to be amended as Civil Judge (Junior Division) and Civil Judge (Senior Division) to be in consonance with the directions of the Supreme Court. Minister Suresh said that for the words Junior Civil Judge and Senior Civil Judge wherever they occur in the Andhra Pradesh Civil Courts Act, 1972 and Andhra Pradesh State Judicial Service Rules, 2007 or in any Act or in any Rules, the words 'Civil Judge (Junior Division)' and 'Civil Judge (Senior Division)' shall be substituted. He added that accordingly, the Government has decided to amend various Sections of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Courts Act, 1972 suitably. Further, the AP Assembly passed the amendment to the bill unanimously.

'175/175 possible...

Continued from Page 1

"Just because some don't get tickets, they should not think they are not my men. They will get opportunities in some other way," he told them, adding that the surveys are also reaching a final stage. He asked the party cadre to be amidst the people attending on their issues to get good results. In the next two months, there should be wide publicity on the welfare and developmental programmes being implemented for the last four years and explaining to the people 'Why Andhra Pradesh Needs Jagan'. The Chief Minister also asked the party leaders and cadre to make the Jagananna Aarogya Suraksha successful saying that the MLAs must participate in the programme, which begins on Sept 30 and runs for 45 days in five phases.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Trayodashi: Sep 27 01:45 AM to Sep 27 10:19 PM

Chaturdashi: Sep 27 10:19 PM to Sep 28 06:49 PM

Nakshatram: Shatabhisha: Sep 27 07:10 AM to Sep 28 04:29 AM

Purva Bhadrapada: Sep 28 04:29 AM to Sep 29 01:48 AM

Rahukalam: 12:07 PM to 1:36 PM

Yamagandam: 7:38 AM to 9:08 AM

Varjyam: 10:10 AM to 11:35 AM

Gulika: 10:37 AM to 12:07 PM

Amritakalam: 10:05 PM to 11:30 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 34°

Humidity: 77%

Sunrise: 5:57 AM

Sunset: 6:01 PM

Updated: September 26, 2023 5:00 PM

AP student delegation @ The World Bank

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The delegation of students from Andhra Pradesh government schools comprises 10 students, two teachers, and two senior officials including B Srinivasa Rao, State Project Director, Samagra Siksha along with Rathnakar Pandugayala. The various initiatives taken up by the AP state government continue to perform by making the state and the nation proud in the United States of America.



Their latest outing was none other than the World Bank at Washington DC where they were invited for an informal lunch followed by an elaborate ses-

sion on Education and health with leading World Bank officials including Rifat Hasan, Lead Health Specialist, Tracy Wilichowski, World Bank Analyst and Laura Gregory, Senior Education Specialist. At the onset of the engagement, the World Bank lauded all the initiatives taken by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy in the field of education including AmmaVodi, Nadu-Nedu, and the introduction of English and the usage of bilingual textbooks. The

World Bank expressed its deep desire to get more involved in the YSRCP government's objective to invest in human capital. Later, the World Bank officials asked the government school students to throw light on the ideas of how this engagement can be more effective in the future. The delegation of students proposed a programme designed specifically to sensitise the parent community to priorities and encourage education.

Vizag abuzz...

Continued from Page 1

other infrastructure initiatives for Visakhapatnam, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy neither confirmed nor denied any deliberations regarding the potential capital relocation. However, Minister for Industries and Commerce, Gudivada Amarnath, informally shared with the media that a committee headed by the Principal Secretary of Infrastructure is expected to provide a report on the gradual relocation of several key officials and offices to Visakhapatnam within the next 10 to 15 days. YV Subba Reddy, a prominent figure within the YSRCP, announced that he had evaluated the preparations for 'Visakha Vandanam', scheduled for October 15. This event aims to celebrate Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's decision to relocate to Visakhapatnam and establish it as the administrative hub during the Dasara festival. Subba Reddy reiterated their dedication to surmounting the challenges associated with the three-capital plan, underscoring their commitment to decentralised development.

AP govt forms expert panel...

Continued from Page 1

During his address in the legislative assembly today, he announced the formation of a high-level committee comprising six senior officers. This committee's primary task is to thoroughly examine the feasibility of conducting a caste census and subsequently submit its recommendations. Following the successful passage of the resolution, leaders and ministers representing the Backward Classes (BC) community, which has been a driving force behind this initiative, expressed their gratitude. Apart from Chelluboina, Health Minister Vidadala Rajini, Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh, Women and Child

Welfare Minister KV Ushasreecharan, Government Whip Karanam Dharmasree, as well as MLAs M. Shankaranarayana and Ponnada Satish attended. They collectively met with the Chief Minister to extend their thanks for this significant step. It's worth noting that this is not the first time the YSRCP has advocated for a caste-based census. In January of this year, during an all-party meeting convened by the Centre in anticipation of the Budget Session, the party reiterated its call for a nationwide caste-based economic census. This demand aligns with their previous resolution, made in November 2021, urging for a detailed enumeration of the Backward Classes within the state.

Lokesh named...

Continued from Page 1

The FIR was filed based on a complaint from the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Mangalgiri MLA A. Rama Krishna Reddy. It was alleged that certain illegal and corrupt activities were committed by highly

placed government officials between 2014 and 2019 with regard to the design of a master plan for the Andhra Pradesh capital and alignment of the ring road to cause wrongful gain to certain individuals. Heritage Foods is a company owned by

Chandrababu Naidu's family. The ruling party has accused Naidu of large-scale irregularities in land acquisition and other aspects of the development of the state capital Amaravati. On September 19, the CID also filed a PT warrant petition against Chandrababu Naidu in the FiberNet scam. According to CID, the work order for the first phase of the AP FiberNet Project of Rs 321

crore was allotted to Terasoftware in violation of rules and by manipulating the tender process. The project was aimed at providing optical fiber connectivity to villages and towns across the state. The CID has already stated that it is probing Lokesh's role in all three scams. The scams allegedly took place when Naidu was the Chief Minister and Lokesh a minister in his cabinet.

'3,282 teaching posts...

Continued from Page 1

Furthermore, Minister Satyanarayana informed the House that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is actively considering the vacant teaching positions in the universities. Following discussions on this matter, a notification regarding the recruitment process will be issued soon. He also confirmed that the APPSC will conduct the recruitment test for these teaching positions. Upon successful completion of the written test, the respective state universities will conduct interviews for the selected candidates. Minister Satyanarayana assured that this entire process will be completed within two to three days. He expressed Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's keen interest in ensuring that state universities achieve a rank within the top 100 universities

in the country. Meanwhile, the Minister advocated for the regularization of the service of Contract Vocational Junior Lecturers currently working in junior colleges across the state. Approximately 1,246 contract, outsourcing, and time-scale lecturers are expected to be regularized in the near future. The matter is currently under examination and will be finalised in due course. In addition, Minister Satyanarayana highlighted the effective implementation of the 'Jagananna Gorumudda' scheme in government schools. Since the 2019-20 academic year, the State government has allocated Rs. 6,262.29 crore for this initiative, benefiting around 1.54 crore students. This represents a substantial increase compared to the Rs. 2,790 crore spent by the previous TDP government on the scheme.

Order reserved in CBN's...

Continued from Page 1

On August 9, police booked Naidu and other TDP leaders for an attempt to murder, rioting, and criminal conspiracy in connection with Angallu incidents. Chandrababu Naidu has been named accused number one in the FIR registered at Mudivedu police station. Former Minister Devineni Uma, senior leader Amarnath Reddy, MLC Bhumireddy Ramgopal Reddy, Nallari Kishore, D Ramesh, G Narhari, S Chinnababu, P Nani and others have also been named in the FIR. Naidu is currently in judicial custody in Skill Development Scam while the Crime Investigation Department (CID) is also seeking his custody for questioning in two more graft cases.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

No. 12/ATO/e-Procurement/2023-24 Date: 21-09-2023

Online tenders are invited for execution of 160 works of fixing taps to households under the Bapafila Division of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation department under Jal-Jeevan Mission with an estimated cost of Rs 2095.90 lakh. Tender documents can be downloaded from e-procurement site from 28-09-2023. For details, contact: www.approcurement.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bapafila.

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Nallamala Sagar Reservoir to be filled with 5 TMC water

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources, Ambati Rambabu, has said that the State government has plans to replenish the Nallamala Sagar Reservoir with 5 TMC of water by the end of December this year.

Disclosing this in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, he said as part of this initiative water would be drawn from the twin tunnels of the Poola Subbaiah Veligonda Project through gravity.

Ambati acknowledged that delays in the tunnel boring works had caused a setback in completing the second tunnel of the Poola Subbaiah Veligonda Project. Despite these challenges, the government is determined to wrap up the entire project by August 2024.

Responding to a question during the Question Hour, the Minister confirmed that the first tunnel of the Poola



Subbaiah Veligonda Project has already been successfully completed. However, the manual progress of the second tunnel is a result of ongoing delays in tunnel boring works. Once completed, this project is expected to bring substantial benefits to the Prakasam and Nellore districts.

Minister Rambabu further outlined plans to bolster the drought-prone Prakasam district by replenishing the Nallamala Sagar Reservoir with

5 TMCs of water by year-end. This measure aims to increase the groundwater levels in the region, providing much-needed relief.

In pursuit of these goals, the government is striving to conclude the PS Veligonda Project by August of the following year. Minister Rambabu disclosed that the state government has already allocated a substantial budget, with Rs. 32,059.61 crore expended as of now out of the allotted Rs. 61,573.15

crore for the years 2019-20 to 2022-23.

In addition to these efforts, Rs. 1,250 crore has been allocated for the Varikapudisela Lift Irrigation Scheme, with the forest clearance process already completed. The department is set to invite tenders for the extension of the Guntur Channel, with an estimated cost of Rs. 250 crore.

In response to queries from Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) MLCs KS Lakshmana Rao and Shaik Sabjee, the Minister clarified that the Union government holds the responsibility for the construction of the Polavaram Project, which is classified as a national project.

However, the State government serves as the implementing agency. To complete this ambitious endeavour, an estimated Rs 55,000 crore in funds would be required, based on the current Standard Schedule of Rates (SSR).

Efforts on to contain vector-borne diseases

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Due to a surge in dengue cases in Visakhapatnam district, health authorities are intensifying preventive measures. The district has reported a significant increase, with 734 cases. Teams from GVMC and the malaria division of the Visakhapatnam District Medical and Health Department are conducting an extensive door-to-door survey to combat dengue and improve the management of vector-borne diseases, especially malaria and dengue, which worsen during the monsoon season.

Health officials have completed multiple rounds of fever surveys across the city, with upcoming rounds specifically focused on identifying dengue and malaria cases for early detection. District Malaria Officer M. Tulasi said Health secretaries and their support staff from each secretariat are actively involved in collecting fever surveys. Additionally, health secretaries and personnel have received comprehensive two-day training covering various aspects of managing dengue and malaria cases, preventive measures, roles and

responsibilities, and community awareness.

Dr MV Ramanaiah, the State president of Praja Arogya Vedika (NGO), highlighted that reported fever cases are ten times higher than official figures due to unreported private hos-

pitals. He called for the government to collect and transparently publish comprehensive data.

Dr P Jagadeesh Rao, the District Medical Health Officer, said the implementation of an action plan involving door-to-door surveys and larval breeding eradication is already under process. New survey rounds, exclusively for dengue and malaria identification, have already begun. Village/ward volunteers, along with ASHA workers, visit every household. Suspected cases are reported



734 dengue cases detected in Visakhapatnam district

In the 'Friday Dry-Day' initiative, ANM and ASHA workers visit households to inspect potential breeding spots like refrigerators, washing machines, and air conditioners, where water may accumulate. Efforts are focused on preventing larvae breeding in densely populated areas within the One Town zone near the fishing harbour, which recorded the highest cases last year. Increased cases were also noted in other areas like Jabbari Thota, Relli Veedhi, and ASR Nagar.

Emphasizing the State government's commitment to controlling the increasing cases, Director of Public Health Dr Rami Reddy mentioned, "We are conducting free sample collection at the village level for anyone exhibiting fever symptoms. Previously, there was less enthusiasm for testing for every fever case until the situation escalated. However, with the active involvement of ANMs and Asha workers at the village level, we are now effectively monitoring the situation."

Support prices for 22 crops announced

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Agriculture Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy said that the Agriculture Products Supportive Prices list will be displayed in secretariats. The Minister unveiled a wall poster displaying the support prices for various agricultural products for the year 2023-24 at the State secretariat on Tuesday.

The Minister emphasised that these support prices have been announced to ensure that farmers receive fair and affordable prices for their crops, alleviating their concerns. He recalled that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that the support prices for the agricultural produce grown by the farmers before the start of the farming season in the state. He stated that in line with the promise given by Jagan Mohan Reddy, they are announcing the support prices of various agricultural products for the year 2023-24. Minister Reddy told the media that the support prices have been announced in such a way that the farmers will not get remunerative prices for the crops grown.

'Skill Development and Fibernet scams classic examples of swindle'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

While raising some pertinent questions about the ongoing Skill Development Scam investigation, IT & Industries Minister Gudivada Amarnath, on Tuesday, said that the Skill Development scam and Fibernet Scam are critical case studies that give an insight into how public money has been looted by the Telugu Desam nexus.

Addressing the members in the Assembly, he highlighted that in the deposition given by Shujayat Khan to CID, who was the principal director of CITT (Central Institute of Tool Design), Khan said that, he had not conveyed that an independent evaluation had to be done on the software and he only went by the information being received from the officials of Siemens and APSSDC. I further want to highlight here that Shujayat Khan clearly stated that the CITT did not have the wherewithal to calculate the value of the software.

'Moreover, It is very strange



that even before receiving the report from CITT, 90 percent of Rs 371 crores, were already released by the government as agreed in the project. But now TDP and its friendly media are attempting to present the CITT report as the preliminary evaluation, however in reality, TDP manipulated that report,' he added.

When we look at the Siemens website, they have mentioned being roped in the Gujarat, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh Projects but there is no mention of the Andhra Pradesh Project. In an internal audit report conducted by Siemens and with

CM Jagan warned about Fibernet Scam

The Minister recalled that CM Jagan Mohan Reddy warned about the Fibernet scam in 2016, when he was in the Opposition. While playing a video clip from 2016, where CM Jagan can be seen explaining the Fibernet scam in the Assembly, Minister Amarnath said, 'When Jagan Mohan Reddy was the opposition leader in 2016, he had already raised his voice for the investigation of the Fibernet scam. This is not a new scam.' In the five-minute-long video from 2016, CM Jagan was seen fiercely exposing the Fibernet Scam and questioning the then chief minister Chandrababu Naidu to answer the people of the State about his involvement in the scam.

input from investigating officers, it was clarified that Siemens denied being aware of the project. They said they were not part of the original 90 percent grant-in-aid project and were not involved in the AP skill development project,' Mr Amarnath said.

From the financial year 2014-15 to 2018-19, a total of Rs. 745.66 crore was spent by APSSDC, including the Rs. 371 crore released for Siemens. All the money invested by the Skill Development Corporation was public money, out of which Rs 371 crore was siphoned off by the TDP henchmen, Can TDP lead-

ers apprise us about where did the investment by Siemens go? How can they claim millions of people were trained under a project that didn't involve Siemens? he asked

He further went on to mention that on scrolling through the Siemens website, we found that the software being provided to the Engineering students, which TDP claimed that they had purchased from the German Tech company, was being offered for free. The 90:10 agreement created by the Naidu government is nothing but a farce, a tool to operate TDP's modus operandi for looting money.

Two NSS volunteers from Andhra bag national awards

Jaya Maruthi and Sathvika selected for awards by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State has bagged two National Service Scheme (NSS) Awards from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS), Government of India, for 2021-22. The ministry announced the NSS Awards in the categories of Programme Coordinator, Programme Officer and Volunteer.

State NSS officer Dr P Ashok Reddy said on Tuesday that NSS volunteers K Jaya Maruthi of Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur, and P Sathvika of Jagan's Degree and PG College affiliated to Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore, were selected for the national-level awards. They will receive the awards from President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan on September 29, he said.

The awardees will receive cash award of Rs.1 lakh, silver



medal and a certificate from the President. The State NSS Officer further said that Andhra Pradesh received the NSS Awards every year. He stated that a total of 2,173 NSS functionaries of the State under 36 universities were conducting various activities.

'Swachh Bharat initiatives, awareness programmes, campaigns against plastic, Digital India initiatives, blood donation camps, medical camps, tree plantation drives, women empowerment and youth empowerment programmes,

campaigns for health and hygiene, sanitisation programmes, awareness programmes on abuse of drugs, tobacco and alcohol, AIDS awareness programmes, routine immunisation programmes, women's safety awareness, gild child issues, awareness on early marriages, environment sustainability programmes, coastal cleaning camps, fire safety and road safety awareness campaigns and skill development activities are the main activities of the NSS," he added.

Expedite works relating to TIDCO houses: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector P Raja Babu has asked the officials concerned to expedite the construction works of the AP TIDCO houses across the district. He instructed them to register the houses in the names of the beneficiaries.

On Tuesday, the Collector conducted a review meeting to discuss the progress of the AP TIDCO houses in Gudivada, Machilipatnam and Vuyyuru at his chamber. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Raja Babu directed the officials to sanction mortgage loans for those who got their houses registered. He said that as many as 6,701 beneficiaries belonging to Gudivada Mallayapalem

TIDCO housing layout got their houses registered.

Further, he asked them to register the remaining 2,211 houses of the layout in the names of the beneficiaries. If they don't come forward for registration, those houses should be allocated to new beneficiaries. He asked the authorities concerned to take special steps to preserve the greenery in the housing layouts.

Meanwhile, he said that all layouts should be equipped with electricity, drinking water, roads and all other necessary amenities. He instructed the Municipal Commissioner to oversee the progress of the construction works from time to time.

Govt aims to improve living standards

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Revenue Minister Dharmana Prasada Rao laid the foundation stone for the road works with an estimated cost of Rs Rs 3.40 crore in the 64th division of Vijayawada Central Constituency. The Minister also inaugurated two new Secretariat buildings built at a cost of Rs 1.40 lakhs in 60 and 61 Divisions.

Speaking on this occasion, the minister heaped praise on MLA Malladi Vishnu for the development works in the constituency and for addressing the problems of the people. He expressed hope that everyone here will be together with their leader in the future. Briefing about the various government policies, the system brought in after the formation of the YSRCP govern-



ment is the secretariat system. Everyone saw the benefits after setting up this system and true administrative decentralization is possible today. He said that the government was working to raise the standard of living of the people.

Minister Dharmana said that in these four and half years, YSRCP government has worked hard to rectify the short comings of every department. He pointed out at, the opposition making a lot of fuss about increase

of prices which is across the country which is managed by the central government. He said that the government was providing quality education to a child from a BPL family.

Also, we are implementing Amma Vodi to encourage mothers who send their children to school. We are telling them to compete with the world. We are implementing schemes in their name to empower women economically. He said that Rs 2.3 lakh crore rupees are

being provided directly to the beneficiaries without middlemen. While doing so much good, some media organizations are misleading people as if nothing is being done by publishing false articles.

The minister asked can anyone tell what development Chandrababu Naidu did when he was the Chief Minister those days. The middle class was looted by the TDP government by appointing Janma Bhoomi Committees.

But the YSRCP was distributing government money to the poor and implemented the schemes and brought significant reforms in governance. The difference between the previous government and the YSRCP government should be recognized, Minister Dharmana Prasada Rao said.

Vijayawada to host Soft Tennis Junior Nationals from October 15 to 19

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For the first time after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, the State will be hosting the 18th Soft Tennis Junior Nationals. The nationals will be conducted at the Tennis Complex on the premises of Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium from October 15 to 19.

In this connection, NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao launched brochures at the Collectorate in Vijayawada on Monday. Also, he appreciated the Andhra Pradesh women's team members while the team is going to participate in the Federation Cup in

Ahmedabad from September 27 to 29.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Dilli Rao said that the organising committee should provide good hospitality to the players who will be coming from all States to this city. He assured that the Sports Authority and the district administration would give support in successfully conducting the Junior National Soft Tennis Tournament, he added.

Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Association chairman Daram Navin Kumar, NTR District Sports Authority CEO U Srinivasa Rao, Chief Coach SA Azeez, tennis coach Ahmed and others were present.

AP govt to fast-track Vizag Metro and other projects

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The recent announcement by NITI Aayog, including Visakhapatnam in the initial group of four cities alongside Varanasi, Surat, and Mumbai for transformation into a mega metropolis, has reignited the discussion on addressing long-pending projects like the metro rail system.

Furthermore, the decision of the Andhra Pradesh Government to designate Visakhapatnam as the administrative hub starting from the Dasara festival is expected to usher in significant changes to the city's landscape. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has strongly hinted at relocating to Visakhapatnam as part of this initiative.

With a hopeful tone, Minister for Industries and Commerce, Gudivada Amarnath, shared with the media after a comprehensive review meeting, stating, "We have several projects in

progress, including the metro rail, and we are committed to expediting them." Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy, who was present at the meeting alongside senior officials, directed the Visakhapatnam Metro Rail Corporation to wrap up the technical evaluation of the metro rail project by the beginning of the New Year.

The metro rail project has lingered in the conceptual phase for approximately nine years. The revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) from last year escalated the project cost to Rs 14,309 crore, a significant increase from the previous estimate of Rs 8,300 crore under the former TDP regime. The revised DPR, which is still pending submission to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for approval, envisions joint funding from the Central government, the State government, and private sector investors through a Public-Private



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Partnership (PPP) model.

The Viability Grant Funding for this project is expected to receive a 20 percent grant from the Government of India, with an additional 20 percent contribution from the State government. The remaining funds will be sourced from private-sector PPP partners. This project envisions the establishment of a network spanning 76.9 km, linking Kurmannapalem Junction (in close proximity to the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant) to Bhogapuram International Airport. The initial phase of the airport's development, which comes with a price tag of Rs 5,000 crore, is currently underway and being undertaken by the GMR Group.

The project will feature four corridors connecting Kurnannapalem to Kommadi, Gurudwara to Old Post Office, Thatchilapalem to China Waltair, and Kommadi to Bhogapuram. Additionally, there

are plans for a six-lane expressway, with a significant portion of its funding coming from the Union Government, to link Bhogapuram as well.

In the course of the review meeting, discussions centered around various initiatives, including the development of a beachfront corridor, the establishment of a natural history museum, the construction of a signature tower, and the creation of a convention center in Kapuluppada.

Other topics on the agenda included plans for an aqua sports complex in Mangamaripeta, the development of a science city on the summit of Kailasagiri hilltop park, and the proposal for a crescent-shaped ring road. Furthermore, the meeting also featured deliberations on the transformation of the Kalavani auditorium, mirroring the model of Ravindra Bharat in Hyderabad.

Ramayapatnam Port will spur growth of Nellore, Prakasam

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Press Academy Chairman Kommineni Srinivas has said that the Ramayapatnam seaport would ensure the development of the Prakasam and Nellore districts.

The press Academy chairman visited the Ramayapatnam port and saw the construction works of Ramayapatnam port while going to Vijayawada from Nellore on Tuesday. Later talking to the media here on Tuesday, he said that the construction works of Ramayapatnam port are going expeditiously. Construction of a port is a long pending dream of the people of the area, he added.

The first berth of the port would be made available by December 2023. The construction of the port also ensured a real estate boom in the area as the cost of even barren lands has gone up, he claimed.



Kommineni Srinivas Rao said that the works of the fishing harbor, which is being constructed near Juvvaladinne, have been completed by 95 percent.

He appealed to the media to highlight the development programmes being carried out by the government. The autobiography of senior journalists including Mutnuri

Krishna Rao, Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao Pantulu, Kotamraju Rama Rao, Kasa Subba Rao, and GK Reddy would be brought as a book, he stated.

Lightning kills two women

PNS ■ ELURU

Two women were killed and a girl was injured when lightning struck them at Patchsya village in Lingapalem mandal on Tuesday.

The deceased women Songa Manisha (19) and Devamata (50) were agriculture workers. The incident occurred when they were working in the fields. The deceased women took shelter under a tree when lightning struck, killing the two women instantaneously. Another girl Songa Jyotsna suffered injuries in the incident and she was admitted to the GGH.



Take steps to check ganja, illicit liquor menace: SP

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg has directed the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) officials to take stringent steps to check the illicit liquor, and ganja menaces and expedite the investigation on the pending cases.

The SP held a review meeting with the officials of SEB here on Tuesday at the district police office on the supply and sale of narcotic drugs (NDPS) like illicit liquor, ganja, sand-related cases, unsocial activities like gambling, and other issues in the district.

The SP reviewed the pending cases by the police station and inquired about the progress of the investigation of the respective cases, arrested the accused, and gave them various suggestions and advice.

The investigating officers should speed up the pending cases and increase the resolution of cases. Charge sheets should be filed in the cases where the investigation is completed and the progress of the cases pend-



ing in the court should be closely monitored and punishment should be given to the accused. The SP told the officials.

"Stringent measures should be taken at the field level to completely eradicate the brewing and transportation of country-made in the district, to continue surveillance on the old criminals. If they commit crimes again, they should be bound over along with the cases," SP Malika Garg directed the SEB officials.

The SP ordered the officials to identify areas where country-made liquor is brewing in rural areas, conduct raids, cordon & search operations in those areas,

and destroy the raw material being used to distill country-made liquor.

SP Malika Garg directed the SEB officials to pay special attention to the illegal transportation of ganja on national highways and remote areas, to break the network. The origin of the ganja supply should be detected and cases should be registered so that all of them would be severely punished which helps to completely prevent ganja menace.

The SP said that the youth and students should be made aware of the ill-effects caused by drugs and ordered to take stringent action if cannabis was transported and used in the district.

The SEB police personnel were ordered to prepare an action plan to conduct raids from time to time in order to stop the sale and transportation of illegal liquor and prohibited tobacco products and country-made liquor and ganja. ASP (Admin) K Nageswara Rao, SEB AES M Sudhir Babu, and other officials were present.



Police foil Paritala Sunita indefinite fast

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

The police foiled the indefinite fast of Telugu Desam party leader for former minister Paritala Sunita by forcibly shifting her to hospital in the wee hours on Tuesday.

Paritala Sunita, along with other TDP women leaders, embarked on an indefinite fast at Papampet, near here, in protest against the arrest of former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The police conducted medical tests on Sunita and other leaders last night.

Later the police forcibly took Paritala Sunita to the

Government General Hospital. The other TDP women leaders were arrested and whisked away to the Third Town police station.

Talking to the media, Paritala Sunita said that they embarked on an indefinite fast in private and questioned how the police foiled their fast.

They observed the fast peacefully protesting the arrest of Naidu but the police foiled their fast, she said. All should remember that the YSRCP government would not exist permanently, she said, and warned that they would not forget those who troubled them.

Braindead boy gives new lease of life to five persons

PNS ■ GUNTUR

An 18-year-old boy, who was declared brain dead after being critically injured in a road accident, has given a new lease of life to five persons as his parents agreed to organ donations.

K Krishna (18) was studying Intermediate second year at Narayana College. When he was waiting for a bus on the roadside, a private tourist bus ran over him at Chilakaluripet on September 23. He was critically injured in the accident.

However, the doctors declared



him brain-dead on Tuesday. Ramesh Hospital doctors apprised about organ donations to Katt Raju and Malleswari couple who are the parents of Katta Krishna. The parents agreed to donate the organs of their son.



The doctors of Ramesh Hospital harvested the liver, two kidneys, heart, and eyes.

The officials arranged a 'green channel' to transport the harvested organs to the Gannavaram airport.

Significantly, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy responded with a human gesture by giving a helicopter to take the harvested heart to

Tirupati to transplant it to the needed patient. The heart was taken to Tirupati where the Padmavathi hospital doctors were transplanting it to the 33-year-old patient. The Chief Minister, offering a helicopter to transport the harvested heart in a speedy manner, won accolades from all.

OC will not be issued if rules violated by builders: Civic Chief

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri has said that the Occupancy Certificates would not be issued if the constructions were made violating the rules.

The Municipal Commissioner inspected some of the buildings at Sarada colony, Malikharjun Pet, Bharatpet, and Srinagar areas on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri has clarified that multi-storied building constructions in the city should not come on the road with ramps, no construction should be done in the setback area. The Occupancy Certificate would not be issued to those who do not follow the rules, she warned.

The Commissioner said that



construction of multi-storied buildings should be done in the city only as per the rules laid down by the government and ordered the town planning authorities to take appropriate action if the rules are violated.

She said that the LTPs must apply online for permits for new multi-storied buildings in DPMS in accordance with the prescribed documents and regulations. Otherwise, the issuance of further permits would be

stopped, she warned. Occupancy permits would not be given for building constructions not in alignment with the Master Plan, or made in the Master Plan.

"Occupancy will not be allowed in the setback portion and road widening portion even if it exceeds the prescribed height. According to the sanctioned plan, there should be an allocation for the greenhouse, and the connection should be made so that the rainwater harvest pits are not only nominal but also functional," the Commissioner made it clear.

Steps should be taken to prevent the ramps from coming on the roads, she said. At the time of the construction, the Ward Secretariat Planning Secretaries were ordered to check whether the construction was being car-

ried out as per the sanctioned plan. The planning secretaries must have a comprehensive understanding of building permits, regulations, and laws related to the planning department, she told them.

Keerthi Chekuri inspected the sanitation works in many areas. She said that the secretaries should be responsible for the sanitation works within their secretariat and the report of the gang work should be sent to them every day. Dumper bins should be kept clean and garbage should be removed from secondary collection points at specified times, she ordered the staff.

City Planner Pradeep Kumar, Deputy City Planner Kotaiah, Assistant City Planners Babu Rao, TPO Naga Valli, and other officials were present.

Re-examine if number of voters in households exceeds 10: DC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector P Prashanthi has directed the officials to re-examine every household if the voters exceeded 10.

The Collector on Tuesday visited some of the houses where there are more than 10 voters in each house at Narasayya Agraharam and bank colony.

The District Collector inquired whether they were all residing in that house or in some other area. The Collector asked the Booth Level Officials whether the details and door numbers of the houses have been entered in the computer. On this occasion, the Collector said that according to the rules of the Election Commission, the polling station should be set up within two kilometers.

Additions, changes and deaths of voters are to be discussed with the representatives of various political parties



on the setting up of new polling stations and the requests of the local people should also be taken into consideration. The polling stations should be checked to provide basic facilities.

According to the list of voters, if the population exceeds 1,500, proposals should be prepared for setting up an additional polling station.

Collector P Prashanthi ordered the officials to take care in the rationalization process so that all the voters living in one street, one family and one apartment can exercise their right to vote at one polling station.

13-year-old boy electrocuted



NARASARAO PET: The Ganesh immersion procession turned tragic as a 13 years-old-boy was electrocuted when he came into contact with a high-tension wire during an immersion procession here on Tuesday. Police said that Mirayala Ganesh (13) went to see the Ganesh immersion procession. He came into contact with a high-tension wire accidentally. He was immediately taken to the GGH where he was declared dead. The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem.

INTER STUDENT ENDS LIFE

NARASARAO PET: An intermediate student committed suicide by hanging himself to the ceiling fan in his hostel room here on Tuesday. Police said that the deceased Pawan (17) was studying first year at Bhavana College here. The police recovered a suicide note in the hostel room. The police registered a case, shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem.



3 idol immersion revellers drown in stream



NARASARAO PET: Three persons drowned in a stream during the Ganesh immersion at Ganapavaram village in Nadendla manal on Tuesday. Police said that some of the spinning workers brought Ganesh idols to immerse in the stream. However, three of them accidentally slipped and fell into the stream during the immersion and drowned. The bodies of Pravin (18) and Mukesh (40) were fished out from the stream while a massive search is on to trace the body of M Santosh (18).

CM condoles death of scribe

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has expressed shock and grief over the sudden demise of veteran journalist U Anand Kumar, media coordinator, in the Office of Advisor (National Media) to AP Government in Delhi. Conveying his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members, the Chief Minister said that Anand worked as a journalist in Delhi for the past 35 years for various media houses.

Organise CBN solidarity rallies in AP, not Hyd: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Even though Hyderabad is the common capital for 10 years for both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Industries Minister KT Rama Rao while responding to a question by 'The Pioneer' at a press meet on Tuesday said, "What is happening in Andhra Pradesh has no consequences in Telangana or its people. It is a political issue

of another state. What happens in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh or Chhattisgarh has no consequence in Telangana. If someone wants to come here and do drama, I would say 'Begani Shaadi mein Abdullah Deewana'."

He added that TDP Chief Chandrababu Naidu is fighting legally and the matter is sub judice.

"Why are you taking out a rally in Hyderabad? Today you will do, tomorrow the opposition will do. Should the issues of neighbours be sorted out in Hyderabad? Conduct rallies in Rajahmundry (where Chandrababu is jailed). We are running the government here. What if there is a law and order issue? Don't they have Vijayawada, Amaravati, Rajahmundry and Kurnool?

Who is stopping them? Both political parties have no place here in Telangana," KTR said.

"I am a friend of Lokesh, Jagan and Pawan. I have no issues with AP and I need not go to war for them. We are happy in Hyderabad and those from AP too are happy. Lokesh called me for permission for rallies through his friend. I said what will happen to law and order. Even during the

Telangana agitation, there were no rallies in the IT corridor. That government never allowed. We are trying to make sure that the economy is not destroyed. Lots of Andhra brothers are investing in Hyderabad. If their investments and future returns should be good Hyderabad must be peaceful. We took a stand like that," KTR said.

"If any individual of our

party has taken a stand it is theirs and not our party. As the BRS working president I am saying it is a political battle between two parties," KTR clarified.

"Everyone is united in Hyderabad and the people of Andhra Pradesh are happy here. Why instigate them," KTR said.

Meanwhile, he avoided questions on Group-1 prelims.

Women's Reservation Bill a post-dated cheque: CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM politburo members MA Baby and BV Raghavulu have said that the ruling YSRCP and the Opposition TDP in Andhra Pradesh still support the BJP, though many political parties are coming out of the National Democratic Alliance. They said that the case against former Chief Minister and TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu was not registered without the knowledge of the Central government.

While addressing a press conference at the Balotsav Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday, Baby and Raghavulu dubbed the Women's Reservation Bill as a "post-dated cheque." The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had enacted a "political drama" only to delude the women, who were badly ill-treated by it on various occasions, as the elections were fast



CPM politburo member M A Baby addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Tuesday
Photo: **CH. VIJAYA BHASKAR**

approaching, they said. Further, they said that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP had any real intention to prioritise women's empowerment, the Women's Reservation Bill would have been implemented immediate-

ly without ifs and buts and all other conditions. "The Bill is a mere election stunt and doesn't deliver anything concrete. The RSS and the BJP have been humiliating women ever since they came to power, they added.

"President Draupadi Murmu was insulted right from the inauguration of the new Parliament building to the commencement of the session in the new building. Is it because she hails from a downtrodden community or for being a woman," they asked. Likewise, the plight of women wrestlers was not addressed, they pointed out.

They said that the women in Manipur were assaulted and there were many such instances where the women were not given due respect. As the elections are approaching, the BJP brought the Bill with much fanfare, they said, adding that women's reservation should be implemented at once.

CPM State secretary V Srinivas Rao said that the police should tender an apology for their comments that anti-social elements would take advantage if permission was given to Anganwadi workers to protest.

POLYTECHNIC SPOT ADMISSION ON OCT 3

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chadalavada Nagarani, Commissioner of Technical Education Department, has said that the remaining seats in the State's government and private polytechnic colleges will be filled through the spot admission process to be held on October 3. Interested students can check the details of available seats by visiting the polytechnic colleges on September 30. She clarified that the details of vacant seats would be displayed on notice boards.

She added that the students who wish to get spot admission should have passed Class 10, even if they had not written Polycet entrance or got a rank. She said that the admission process would end on October 3 and that candidates should appear with their original certificates.

Fee for admissions in private polytechnic colleges is Rs 25,000 and in government polytechnic colleges, Rs 4,700, which has to be paid on the same day. The students who get seats in spot admission should attend the classes immediately.

Chak De! India

Women cricket team's maiden gold in the Asian Games final is a fine achievement

India has won its first gold medal at the ongoing Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, thanks to India's women cricket team. In a display of unwavering determination, unrelenting spirit and unmatched skill, the women's cricket team secured a historic victory in the Asian Games cricket final. The nation watched in awe as our talented cricketers etched their names in the annals of sports history with an exemplary performance. Indian women's cricket team won their maiden gold medal in the Asian Games 2023 by defeating Sri Lanka by 19 runs after successfully defending their 116 runs on the board. It was a low-scoring match. On a difficult pitch, Titas Sadhu was undoubtedly the star as she bowled a devastating first spell, taking three wickets for six runs, and played a major role in restricting Sri Lanka to 97 for eight in 20 overs. It is not all. There was more good news for India from Hangzhou as India's 10m air rifle team shattered world record to win gold medal.



Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar won an individual bronze after teaming up with Rudranksh Patil and Divyansh Singh Panwar for the gold medal. India's 25m rapid fire pistol team also won bronze. This is nothing short of a dream run for Indian squad. But it was the women's cricket team that stole hearts. It has been overshadowed by men's cricket for decades now, getting a fraction of the allowances and perks that their male counterparts get. But that should soon change and sponsors are likely to make a beeline to sponsor their events after their emphatic and historic win. The Asian Games victory marks a significant milestone for women's

cricket in India. It not only highlights the incredible talent of our sportspersons but also serves as an inspiration for the generations to come.

The Indian women's cricket team has been steadily rising in stature, captivating the hearts of cricket fans across the country. Their victory in the Asian Games final is a testament to the hard work and dedication that these remarkable athletes put into their craft. From fierce batting to exceptional bowling, every aspect of their game has shone brightly on the international stage. The emergence of women's cricket leagues, greater media coverage and increased investment in infrastructure are all signs of a brighter future for the sport in India. The Indian women's team's triumph in the Asian Games cricket final is a cause for nationwide celebration. These incredible sportspersons have not only showcased their cricketering prowess but have also laid the foundation for a brighter future for women's cricket in India. As we celebrate this historic win, let us remember that it is not just a victory on the cricket field but a triumph of 'nari shakti.' The Indian squad has shown what can be achieved with talent and unwavering determination. Let these wins be a harbinger of more success for sportspersons—a true Amritkal for sports.

PICTALK



Saints Of Swaminarayan Gurukul pray to Lord Swaminarayan on the 'Jal Jilani Ekadashi', in Surat PTI

Hypertension is a global health challenge

Hypertension affects individuals from all backgrounds and its consequences can be dire

In a significant revelation during the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the World Health Organization (WHO) presented its inaugural report on the worldwide impact of high blood pressure, delivering a poignant message – nearly 80% of individuals suffering from hypertension are not receiving adequate treatment. This revelation, however, comes with a ray of hope. If countries can expand their healthcare coverage, an estimated 76 million lives could be saved between 2023 and 2050. In India alone, taking proactive measures to control blood pressure among half of its hypertensive population could prevent at least 4.6 million deaths by 2040. It is bewildering that preventable deaths persist due to untreated hypertension despite advancements in healthcare and infrastructure. The number of people living with hypertension has doubled from 650 million in 1990 to 1.3 billion in 2019 globally.



Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is marked by elevated blood pressure in the arteries, typically diagnosed when readings consistently reach or exceed 140/90 mm Hg. A misconception persists, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged societies, that hypertension is an ailment reserved for the affluent. However, WHO's report dispels this myth, revealing that over three-quarters of adults with hypertension live in low and middle-income countries.

Paradoxically, diagnosis and treatment rates are abysmally low in these regions, leading to a high mortality rate. While age is an uncontrollable risk factor, various modifiable factors, such as a high-salt diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and

excessive alcohol consumption contribute to hypertension. Tobacco usage triggers 28% of cases in India, while physical inactivity accounts for 34%. Efforts to combat this pressing issue have been made, but much more needs to be done. The India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI) launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare aims to tackle this growing problem. WHO acknowledges that IHCI made significant strides in ensuring healthcare facilities had adequate protocol medicines and minimal stock-outs by 2020. WHO underscores the importance of prevention, early detection and effective management of hypertension as the most cost-effective healthcare interventions.

Lifestyle adjustments like physical activity, proper sleep and reduced exposure to pollution can aid in prevention. Regular check-ups are crucial for early detection and the report emphasizes five components for effective hypertension care: protocols, medication and equipment supply, patient-centered services, team-based care and informa-

tion systems. WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, points out that "Hypertension can be controlled effectively with simple, low-cost medication regimens and yet only about one in five people with hypertension have controlled it."

This state of affairs must change for a safer and healthier future. The revelation that hypertension, a highly manageable condition, continues to claim millions of lives worldwide in an era of medical advancements and improved healthcare access is astonishing and disheartening.

WHO's report serves as a clarion call to governments, healthcare providers and individuals alike. One of the key takeaways from the report is the need for greater awareness. Public health campaigns and educational programs must be intensified to reach every stratum of society. People must understand that hypertension affects individuals from all backgrounds and its consequences can be dire.

(The writer is a researcher. The views expressed are personal)



BISHAL KUMAR SAHA

ronmental monitoring. The launch of commercial satellites by India of friendly foreign countries is sure to boost India's clout, not only as a regional player in Asia but also globally. This collaborative effort of the private and public sectors is bound to give dividends economically and also usher in prosperity amongst humanity in general.

Can the space program help humanity? Is it the bird's eye view we have been talking about for almost all the humanitarian challenges that exist? Let's face it, humanity faces challenges of resources, and among them, energy is one of the most critical. So can space exploration in the long run help humanity to solve the crisis of a resource crunch, including that of energy? The possibility for the same is huge, and so is the possibility of Indian Industry making it big in the decades to come. It is estimated that thousands of satellites would be required to be sent into space if the requirement of humanity is to be met. Over 100 satellites have been launched solely for monitoring the Earth's atmosphere.

Helium-3 is one moon resource that could potentially be cheaper to mine from the moon. Helium-3 is a very attractive fuel for future

Indian space industry at the inflection point

Indian space industry must be given a fillip to make the country future-ready for space. It will be good, both for India's standing and its economy

Indian space programme has come a long way and has catapulted India to the world stage. Space technology ushers in possibilities for the future which are huge and varied, and some of these possibilities are yet to be explored. Few would understand that India's success in space technology enhances possibilities of trade and the earning of foreign exchange by providing services that are intrinsic to excellence in this domain. The private players have started playing an important role in bringing it to a level where it can be the leverage India requires for setting a benchmark for the world.

Certain joint endeavours by private and public players have given rise to exceptional dividends in the last year. The successful launch of 72 satellites by OneWeb through ISRO has boosted the broadband internet services in the country. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) has worked to enable and facilitate the participation of private players in the space domain. The Indian Space Association, set up for the collaborative development of the private space industry in India facilitated the launch of India's first private rocket by Skyroot Aerospace and the establishment of the Mission Control Centre by Agnikul Cosmos. The launch of the world's first commercial Space Weather Monitoring System by Digantra, the launch by ISRO of Anand hyperspectral satellite of Pixal, and the collaborative effort of L&T and HAL to improve the efficiency of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle are some of the giant leaps in space technology that will help India to bring in a lot of foreign exchange in the days to come. ISRO, through its commercial arms, has already earned

\$279 million in foreign exchange by launching satellites for global clients, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. According to the Director General of the Indian Space Association, the launch of the Shakuntla constellation by Pixxel has bolstered India's Earth observation capabilities and will help in agriculture, disaster management, and envi-

ronmental monitoring. The launch of commercial satellites by India of friendly foreign countries is sure to boost India's clout, not only as a regional player in Asia but also globally. This collaborative effort of the private and public sectors is bound to give dividends economically and also usher in prosperity amongst humanity in general.

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nuclear fusion reactors. If this becomes possible in the future it could solve a lot of clean energy-related issues that humanity faces today. It could also unlock a lot of economic value for the Indian Space Industry in the future. Lunar resources could also be used to help build up an industrial infrastructure in near-Earth space in the future. Satellites provide accurate weather reports which also help to track increasing rates of climate change and its effects, such as rising seas, moisture levels, and incidents of floods, wildfires, and atmospheric changes, helping us stop deforestation. Satellites cover the entire globe enabling high-capacity connectivity over wide & hard-to-reach areas including deserts, mountain ranges, islands, rainforests, or wetlands. Around fifty per cent of illegal mining activities can be monitored from space only. Ninety-nine per cent of weather forecasts can be from space alone. Space technology provides information regarding water and food production, precision irrigation and farming techniques. The direct economic impact of the sector is important, but it is the indirect impact that highlights how critical space is going to be for our life on

Earth. The UN has been urging for use of space technology to attain sustainable development goals.

The private sector and public sector milieu in the Indian context are best suited to exploit these opportunities in the future. Private players that are into satellite communication, GPS technology, surveillance, and disaster management are likely to benefit most from advancements in space technology. The Indian Space Industry would also be required to collaborate and work towards the transfer of technology with players in countries like the United States and France to enhance the scope of their achievements in space. The calmness and maturity of the public sector, along with the dynamism and initiative of the private sector, when invested in the development of space technology can for sure help in solving some of the challenges confronting humanity today. We are at an inflection point from where the Indian Space Industry is only destined to go up, and this is going to increase India's clout in the international community many fold.

(The writer is an expert on geopolitics and international Affairs. The views expressed are personal)

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UMANG KOHLI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WINNING IS A HABIT

Sir — The game of cricket is a team sport where performance is the key. The Indian women's cricket team secured a victory over Sri Lanka women by a margin of 19 runs, clinching the gold medal at the 2023 Asian Games. This marks India's second gold in Hangzhou. Rajeshwari Gayakwad bowled the final over, conceding only five runs while taking a crucial wicket. The Asian Games 2023 has proven to be a successful platform for the Indian cricket team. This victory represents India's second gold medal at the 2023 Asian Games. Harmanpreet Kaur, as the toss-winning captain, chose to bat first in the final. Opener Shefali Verma was the first to depart, with Sougandika Kumari claiming her wicket. Subsequently, Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues built a vital 73-run partnership to steer India back into contention. Winning is indeed a habit, and the women's team executed it splendidly. Congratulations to Team India. Jayanthi CK Maniam | Chennai

WORLD TOURISM DAY

Sir — Tourism is known to provide a massive boost to a nation's economy. Responsibility on the part of travellers is key to sustaining tourism because travellers aware of their obligations towards maintaining the purity of a destination are godsenders for tourism. Sustainable tourism, movie tourism, medical and religious, and ecotourism—form the crux of tourism. In India, nearly six per cent of the GDP is accrued from tourism. It is also a large avenue for employment with as much as 25 million workers earning their livelihood from this sector.

In a country as diverse as India, it is a laborious task for the government to keep tourist places spic- and- span which is why the role of citizens in overseeing the orderliness of key places is so vital. There are plenty of attractions in the country that can set the visitors' pulse racing. Good connectivity, adequate cleanliness and the so-called certainty factor

Vande Bharat: A game changer



With nine additional Vande Bharat trains put into service, the stations they traverse are set to undergo renovations, creating more job opportunities in catering, cleaning, and operational services, which will contribute to the cause. Vande Bharat is an innovation that has rev-

olutionized train travel. Many of us cherish the prospect of securing window seats to relish the scenic views. This project, a testament to our domestic capabilities, is an accomplishment for Indian Railways, which boasts a legacy spanning 170 years. It is indeed an engineering marvel.

The acceleration is exceptional, living up to its acclaim, with a nearly silent ride, except for the coaches with traction motors, which produce some noise. The team of officers at ICF, Chennai, has made the most of this opportunity, creating history. It stands as the largest coach manufacturing facility. Art plays a role in cleansing the soul, and this is exemplified by the presence of an art gallery within the factory. The leadership and passion of all involved have transformed our dreams into reality.

Akhilesh Krishnan | Mumbai

make a tourist place much sought after one. Needless to say, the role of local population has a far reaching impact in making this a reality. Some exquisite tourist centres centres are a far cry from what they were earlier.

Since it takes two to tango, the travellers have a huge task of keeping the attractions noise free and hygienic. Preventing the centres from deteriorating to mere structures, maintaining the liveliness of the places and ensuring no tourist is harassed are critical to preserve the name and fame of a place.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

ESCALATING COURT CASES

Sir — Delivering justice to the common people is a fundamental pillar of a democratic system. It is a right that citizens must have access to. However, we currently face a concerning situation in our country. The number of pending court cases has doubled in the last five years, with more than five crore cases awaiting resolution. This means that, on average, one case is pending for every three and a half people. Uttar Pradesh alone has over one crore pend-

ing cases. The backlog is exacerbated by the fact that one-third of the judge positions in the country remain vacant. This shortage of judges, along with inadequate staff and resources, contributes to delays, especially in criminal cases. Uttar Pradesh, for instance, has nearly 98 lakh pending criminal cases. Maharashtra follows with 51 lakh pending cases.


Interestingly, the central government allocated over 54 crore rupees in the fiscal year 2022-2023 to handle these cases. Paradoxically, there are 61 lakh 57 thousand cases in court due to a lack of lawyers. Moreover, in many cases, plaintiffs and defendants fail to appear, accounting for 8 lakh 82 thousand such instances. Reducing the backlog of cases demands serious attention and action from the government. It is essential to ensure that the people receive timely justice.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

CALLING GEN-NEXT: BE A CHANGE CATALYST



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

India has a sizable youth population and if they do not affect social change, who will?

A simplified tax regime can prevent tax evasion



An archaic and complicated tax system, with too many amendments, not only confuses the taxpayers but also leads to leakages and corruption

A complicated tax system in India with a six-decades-old Income Tax Act 1961 with too many amendments in the form of a lot of confusing patchwork is in force. Likewise, ever since the reformative step of introducing the Goods & Service Tax (GST) Act was introduced on 1st July 2017, there has been a regular practice of changing tax structure in an ever-confusing GST regime with too many confusing and complicated provisions incorporated in the system.

An altogether new tax regime should be introduced without patches of useless and largely misused exemptions. Implementation of Raja Chelliah Committee recommendations to fix the highest tax slab at 30 per cent to be in tune with most countries in the world, had largely abolished the practice of converting black money into white money. Gradually increasing this highest slab also through imposing cess and surcharges has undone the good achieved.

The highest tax slab of 30 per cent should be restored so that people may find it advantageous to bring complete income to books. Rather a permanent Voluntary Disclosure Scheme should be introduced whereby provision may be there in tax-return to declare at the highest suggested tax rate of 30 per cent, any income without disclosing the source of income. This will make cash transactions, especially in property deals accounted for if registration fees on the property are also reduced to say just three per cent. Names of all those disclosing incomes under the suggested highest 30-percent slab should be on the website according to income disclosed so that status-conscious persons may race to disclose more incomes.

Basic tax exemption should be fixed at rupees five lakhs abolishing most tax-exemptions including on charity, donation, contribution to political parties and even agricultural income which are largely misused. An ordinary farmer does not earn more than rupees five lakhs per annum, and the provision is grossly misused by ultra-rich persons including known celebrities to declare their unaccounted income as agricultural income through some village-land purchased only for the purpose without practically having any agricultural produce.

Income Tax slabs can then be 10 and 20 per cent for incomes between 5-10 lakhs and 10-15 lakhs respectively and thereafter 30 per cent for the rest. LK Jha committee recommendations to make the calendar year a financial year should be implemented to be in line with most countries of the world, thus abolishing another British legacy of following April-March presently as a Fiscal Year. It is ridiculous to have different depreciation rules for Tax and Corporate audits. There should be a single and unified Tax and Corporate Audit.

Rather than concentrating more on small cash transactions, all sale-purchases above rupees 10000 must be compulsorily through bank transactions. For this, transaction charges on credit cards should be slashed down to just half per cent (GST-exempted) which too to be borne by the central government with all incentives on purchases made through credit cards abolished. Present high two-percent transaction charges on credit cards make traders charge it separately from customers especially where trade margins are low. Such a system will fetch much higher tax revenue for the government, than through half-per



THE HIGHEST TAX SLAB OF 30 PER CENT SHOULD BE RESTORED SO THAT PEOPLE MAY FIND IT ADVANTAGEOUS TO BRING COMPLETE INCOME TO BOOKS

(The writer is an RTI consultant; views expressed are personal)

cent transaction-charges to be borne by the government.

Banks issuing credit cards will get much more earnings even with a half-per-cent transaction charge because of the manifold use of credit cards. Two sets of credit card machines should be compulsory for every GST-registered dealer dealing in cash to avoid payment receipt through credit cards with the usual excuse that the swapping machine is out of order. Strict action must be there against those refusing payment through credit/debit cards.

The input-tax-credit system in the GST-regime in manufacturing is the biggest corrupt practice of tax evasion where left-out GST invoices by ordinary customers are sold by traders to consuming manufacturers or producers to avail false Input-Tax-Credit where cash is paid back by traders to those purchasing left-out GST-invoices of actual consumers bringing more currency in circulation, this being the reason of basic motive of currency-demonetisation being failed where currency in circulation rapidly increased rather than projected decrease. An annual forensic audit may be made compulsory on claims made for Input-Tax-Credit by manufacturers/producers to avoid false claims of excessive input tax credit in these sectors. Rather study should be made if, with the abolition of an excessively high 18-percent GST slab, Input-Tax-Credit can be altogether abolished from manufacturing/producing sectors, retaining it only on tradable commodities.

But such reform in the Input-Tax-Credit system can be practically possible with drastic reform in the GST tax structure wherein initially only three tax slabs of 6, 12 and

30 per cent may be there abolishing all presently existing GST rates. India is the only country that has so many GST rates. Gradually even slabs of 6 and 12 percent may also be replaced by a new 10-percent tax structure. Zero-percent GST may only be retained on totally unbranded raw materials that cannot be consumed without giving a finishing touch like agricultural products, fish, meat, cotton yarn etc.

All items of long-term use like cars, air-conditioners, TV sets, refrigerators etc. may attract 30 per cent GST while their parts may uniformly attract 12 per cent GST. Unmindful policy framers brought clutch-plate and clutch-bearing under different GST slabs of 18 and 28 per cent. Likewise, similar items sold by confectioners like sweets, biscuits, napkins etc. attract different GST slabs with luxury sweets causing diabetes attracting just 5 per cent GST.

Invoices for items like gold jewellery can be drawn in two parts, one for metal and embodied items and the other for making charges so that the suggested 12-cent GST may be payable only on making charges. Cess on extra-luxurious items should be replaced by additional GST slabs in multiples of 60 per cent, also bringing petroleum products under the GST regime to ensure uniform pricing of petrol and diesel in all states. Abolishing an 18-percent GST slab will be more than compensated by clubbing lower slabs of 3 and 5 percent into a single 6-percent GST slab. The input-tax-credit (ITC) system should not apply to non-tradable commodities and services like has been done, and rightly too, in the case of car expenses for non-commercial use.

With the GST slab of 18 per cent abolished and the service sector attracting just 12 per cent GST, those with income of rupees ten lakhs or more (instead of the present rupees 20 lakhs) can be brought under the GST regime like was the system before the GST-regime. It is illogical to keep lawyers out of the purview of the GST regime. The useless system of Tax-Deducted-At-Source for GST, which is hardly used in practice, should be altogether abolished. Otherwise, any such deducted tax should be auto-reflected in the GST accounts of affected ones, abolishing the cumbersome practice of filing a new monthly return to get credit for deducted GST.

All government payments can be considered to be exempted from GST to avoid unnecessary government accounting by putting tax from one government pocket to another. It is illogical that some premium postal services like Speed Post may attract GST while other postal services do not attract GST. Even illogical postal rates (both inland and foreign) need simplification for the equal rise of postal tariff for the equal rise in slab-weight in multiples of 50 gms. of inland postal-article with all postal tariffs being in multiples of rupees ten except for registered newspapers and post-cards which may cost rupee one with the abolition of outdated Inland-Letter-Cards. Presently a postal-article weighing 200 gms sent locally by reliable and fast Speed Post costs just rupees 30 but if sent by unreliable ordinary post, it will cost rupees 50. Likewise, foreign-mail tariffs can be fixed for 20 gms or part slab-weight independently for air and sea-surface-mail.



But, have the potentialities of the youth been utilised for the work of national reconstruction so far? Have they been given the opportunities and guidance to fulfil their dreams of taking the world into a new era of peace and prosperity? Well! If we take into view the Indian situation, we can say, in general terms, that the youth are restless and disappointed because their abilities have not been provided with enough channels for self-expression and fulfilment. Today most of them have a complaint against society in general and against those who are in the seats of authority in particular.

They say that their energies- both mental and physical - are not being used in wider spheres of national development because the older generation denies them adequate participation, thinking that the youth are inexperienced and immature. Against this thinking, the youth argue that what the elders call "experience" and "maturity" is, in fact, a hindrance in breaking new grounds and what is required at present is new initiatives, new ideas adventures and innovativeness which is a characteristic that's mainly present in youth.

All would agree that to bridge the ever-widening gap of emotional estrangement between the older and the younger generations and to stop further erosion in values, whosoever may have been responsible for it until now, is to have such formal and informal educational centres and institutions which can inspire the youth to some higher principles and ideals and can fire their imagination with a new paradigm of society where there will be no violence and where all would live peacefully as loving members of the family of mankind. These institutions should have persons of ennobling character, pleasing manners, and loving demeanour who can awaken the potentialities of the youth for social reconstruction and can also bring change in the older generation and enable them to play a useful role in the work of nation-building.

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

Medical treatment facilities must be available in the campus

The provision of medical facilities within the university premises is an urgent requirement to address the health concerns faced by students from different states

It is indeed a pressing concern that students from different states face difficulties in accessing medical treatment facilities at the university. The lack of proper healthcare services can hurt their health, leading to various diseases. Students often have to rely on private hospitals, which may not be affordable for everyone. Additionally, the language barrier further exacerbates the problem, as students can be taken advantage of due to their lack of knowledge.

In light of these challenges, the university must prioritise the provision of adequate medical facilities within the campus itself. By establishing medical services on-site, students would have easier access to healthcare, promoting



(The writers worked as Assistant Professors at SSD Girls' College, Bathinda; views expressed are personal)

ing their overall well-being. Having healthcare facilities within the university premises would not only benefit the students' physical health but also contribute to their peace of mind and academic performance.

Moreover, by addressing this issue, the university demonstrates its commitment to the students' welfare and creates an inclusive and supportive environment. It is essential to ensure that students' health needs are met, enabling them to focus on their studies and personal growth without the added burden of seeking medical care outside the campus.

By investing in proper medical facilities within the university, students will have convenient and affordable



access to healthcare. This step acknowledges the diverse needs of the student population and emphasises the value of their well-being. It is a significant initiative that promotes a healthy, thriving university community.

Students on university campuses, often encounter a slew of health-related chal-

lenges. One pressing issue is the accessibility of medical facilities on campus. It's no secret that university campuses can be vast and bustling, making it essential for students to have easy access to healthcare services.

One common challenge students face is the lack of convenient healthcare options.

Many campuses have limited medical facilities, or they may be located far away from student residences or academic buildings. This can pose difficulties, especially in emergencies or when students require immediate attention for illness or injuries.

Additionally, the availability of specialised healthcare services can be a concern. University students, coming from diverse backgrounds with unique healthcare needs. Campuses need to offer a range of medical services to meet these diverse needs, including mental health support, reproductive health services, and specialised care for chronic conditions.

Another aspect to consider is the cost of healthcare. University students often face

financial strains, and the burden of medical expenses can further add to their challenges. Accessible medical facilities should take this into account by providing affordable or subsidised healthcare options, such as low-cost consultations, medication, and tests.

To bridge the healthcare gap, universities can take proactive steps. They can establish on-campus medical clinics or health centres with extended hours of operation to accommodate students' busy schedules. Moreover, partnerships with local hospitals or healthcare providers can enhance accessibility by providing specialised services or urgent care facilities.

Prioritising accessible medical facilities on university campuses is crucial to

ensure the well-being of students. By addressing the challenges and offering comprehensive, affordable, and conveniently located healthcare services, universities can support students in maintaining good health and thriving academically.

In conclusion, the provision of medical facilities within the university premises is an urgent requirement to address the health concerns faced by students from different states. This step will not only enhance their physical well-being but also contribute to their overall success and happiness during their time at university. Let us strive for a healthier and more inclusive academic environment where students' health is given the attention it rightfully deserves.

MONEY MATTERS

India's cut, polished diamond exports to dip by 22%

India's exports of cut and polished diamonds (CPDs) is likely to decline by 22 per cent to USD 17.2 billion in 2023-24, amid weak underlying demand conditions in key destinations including the US and Europe, a report said on Tuesday. CPD exports have been on a declining trend since the second half of FY23 and during the first five months of this financial year shipments witnessed a sharp year-on-year decline of 31 per cent, Icara said in a report. The decline in CPD exports was led by a fall in both export volumes and polished diamond prices, it added. While some sequential improvement in volume is expected in the coming months, driven by the onset of the festive season, overall exports are still expected to contract by 22 per cent this fiscal, it stated. The rating agency has thus revised the sector outlook to 'Negative' from 'Stable'. "The export contraction is primarily being driven by weak underlying demand conditions in key consuming nations like the US and Europe due to the inflationary pressures, leading to a shift in spending away from diamonds.



India one of most competitive markets: Pieter Elbers

India is an incredible and one of the most competitive aviation markets in the world, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers said on Tuesday and asserted that the airline is seeking to become bigger and more global. The chief of the country's largest airline said it is building its own international network, adding new overseas routes from existing cities and enhancing partnerships with other carriers. Besides, the carrier is taking various mitigating measures to deal with issues related to Pratt & Whitney (P&W) engines that power its A320 fleet. It has grounded many aircraft due to the engine woes. IndiGo, which started flying more than 17 years ago, operates nearly 1,900 flights daily with more than 320 planes and has a domestic market share of over 63 per cent. In recent months, the carrier has commenced flights to various overseas destinations, including Nairobi and Almaty.



Tea Board to revert to old English auction system pan India

The Tea Board India has written to registered auction organisers across the country, producers associations and buyers associations that it has been decided to revert to the old English auction system for which it has issued necessary timelines. The letter issued on Monday said that it has been decided to introduce the practices of the erstwhile English auction system under the ambit of the Bharat auction model. Earlier, the Bharat auction system was introduced in North India in April 2023, while the same was already in force in South India earlier. The letter said that the Tea Board had already held consultations with NSEIT Limited regarding the re-introduction of the features of the English auction system in the newly configured software. While the Tea Board had earlier suggested dropping of sale numbers 39 and 40 in all the auction centres across India, the statutory body revoked the decision after producers' bodies said the tea companies would suffer financially if these two sales were dropped.



'Pharma industry needs to focus on innovative products'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday asked domestic pharmaceutical industry to focus on the research and development of innovative products to move up the value chain and achieve global leadership.

Mandaviya, who also holds the Chemical and Fertilisers portfolio, asked medical technology companies to produce critical equipment in India for the global markets.

While formally unveiling the National Policy on Research & Development and Innovation in the Pharma-Med Tech Sector here, Mandaviya said the domestic pharmaceutical companies invest less on research and development when compared to multinational companies.

"International MNCs spend 20-25 per cent of their profits in research and innovation while for Indian companies the average is around 10 per cent...Till the time we do not come out with research-led

"International MNCs spend 20-25 per cent of their profits in research and innovation while for Indian companies the average is around 10 per cent...Till the time we do not come out with research-led innovative products, we cannot lead the segment globally," he noted.



innovative products, we cannot lead the segment globally," he noted.

He said the government wants to make the pharma industry self-reliant by 2047.

"Today is a historic day, an inflection point in the journey of 'Atmanirbharta' in the pharma & medical devices sector. We need to transform Indian Pharma & MedTech sectors from a cost-based to a value-based & innovation-based industry," the minister said.

Mandaviya asked the pharma industry to focus on developing quality products and

not just focus on the quantity.

"India can only achieve self-reliance in pharmaceuticals and medical devices by strengthening its research and development infrastructure that would drive the expansion of access to life-saving medicines and drugs and help India become a global pharmaceuticals and medical exports hub," he added.

He said the government has been working closely with the industry and academia to bring about the changes in the domestic pharma industry in order to lead it to leadership

position.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) notified the National Policy on Research & Development and Innovation in the Pharma-Med Tech Sector in India in August this year.

The policy aims to encourage R&D in pharmaceuticals, including traditional medicines, phytopharmaceuticals and medical devices.

It acknowledges the need for greater emphasis on encouraging R&D through indigenously developed products and technologies across the value chain so as to sustain global competitiveness.

The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers also formally unveiled the Scheme for Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma MedTech Sector (PRIP), which intends to transform the domestic pharma and medical technology sector from cost-based to innovation-based growth by strengthening the research infrastructure in the country.

Infosys collaborates with Microsoft for generative AI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT major Infosys is partnering with Microsoft to enhance enterprise functions with AI-enabled solutions across multiple industries, according to a release.

Both organisations will bring together their respective artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities -- Infosys Topaz, Azure OpenAI Service and Azure Cognitive Services -- for transitioning to AI from digital, thus driving efficiency and productivity among businesses, the domestic IT firm said.

Infosys Executive Vice President and Global Head AI and Automation, Application Development & Maintenance - Balakrishna DR said, "Through our strategic collaboration with Microsoft, we will continue to lead the generative AI revolution, helping businesses amplify human potential and navigate their next towards becoming AI-first enterprises".

Govt accepts 10k MSME claims worth Rs 256 cr for refunds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has accepted more than 10,000 claims of MSMEs involving refunds worth Rs 256 crore under a dispute resolution scheme Vivad se Vishwas-I.

Under the scheme, MSMEs could claim a refund of 95 per cent of performance or bid security and liquidated damages forfeited by government departments and public sector entities during the COVID-19 period.

The scheme, announced in 2023-24 Budget, opened on April 17 and the last date for submission of claims for relief on the GeM portal was July 31.

"In a major relief to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), various Ministries/Departments of the Government of India have accepted more than 10,000 claims of MSMEs under Vivad se Vishwas-I scheme aimed at providing relief to MSMEs for the COVID-19 Pandemic period. This has led to grant of more than Rs 256 crore to MSMEs and increased flow of

VIVAD SE VISHWAS

The highest relief of Rs 116.47 crore has been granted by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. This includes claims settled and the amount paid by the agencies under the administrative control of the MoPNG.



bank credit through freeing up of guarantees," a finance ministry statement said.

The highest relief of Rs 116.47 crore has been granted by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. This includes claims settled and the amount paid by the agencies under the administrative control of the MoPNG.

The settlement in the case of agencies under the Railways and Defence ministries would be a total of Rs 79.16 crore and 23.45 crore, respectively. The ministries of steel and Power

would settle MSME refund claims worth Rs 14.48 and 6.69 crore, respectively.

The scope of the scheme also include works procurement and earning contracts. Relief was also provided to MSMEs debarred for default in execution of contracts.

"The relief provided under this scheme was in continuation to the efforts of the Government in promoting and sustaining the MSME sector severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic," the ministry added.

Cipla introduces drone-powered critical medicine delivery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Cipla on Tuesday said it has introduced drone-powered deliveries of critical medicines for hospitals and pharmacies in Himachal Pradesh in partnership with Skye Air Mobility.

The Mumbai-based firm aims to deliver medicines for cardiac, respiratory and other essential chronic therapies as part of the initiative.

The use of drones will support on-time deliveries of the company's medicines to chemists and clinics in remote areas while minimising risks such as delays, temperature excursions affecting cold chain products, and roadside accidents, Cipla said in a statement.

"As we accelerate our digital agenda across all functions, implementing drone-powered distribution enhances our supply chain resilience, strengthens connects with channel partners, helps us stay future ready and maintain reliable, prompt delivery of our trusted high-quality drugs to stockists and patients in the region," Cipla Global Supply Chain Head Swapn Malpani said.

Over-regulation of internet services may have discriminatory consequences

Prominent startup founders write to TRAI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Founders and top leaders of many prominent startups, including Zerodha's Nithin Kamath and Paytm's Vijay Shekhar Sharma, have written a joint letter to regulator TRAI in support of net neutrality, and cautioned that any move towards "over regulation" of internet services categorised as OTT services could have "discriminatory consequences".

The letter, signed by representatives of 129 startups, calls



all content, application, and services equally, without discrimination.

This includes not putting a service at a competitive disadvantage, either by imposing additional network fees or other regulatory obligations such as licensing under a telecommunications framework, according to the letter addressed to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Chairman PD Vaghela.

for the internet to be maintained as an open platform where network providers treat

Digital payment via UPI spikes on person-to-merchant transaction growth: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Digital payment through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has seen a multi-fold jump with transactions crossing a landmark figure of 10 billion in August primarily driven by Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions, a report said.

The number of UPI transactions in January 2018 was 151 million, and it reached 9.3 billion in June 2023, primarily driven by the growth in P2M transactions, the report by Worldline said.

In January 2022, P2M trans-



actions accounted for 40.3 per cent of all UPI transactions compared to 57.5 per cent in June 2023 and this percentage

P2M transactions is the average ticket size (ATS), it said, adding, ATS for UPI P2M transactions which was Rs 885 in January 2022 has reduced to Rs 653 in June 2023.

This indicates that UPI is now being increasingly used for micro transactions, indicating a further entrenchment of UPI.

With regard to Electronic Toll Collection (ETC), the report said, it has really changed how "we pay for tolls on the country's roads and now increasingly at parking plazas among other use cases."

RBI cancels licence of Nashik Zilla Girna Sahakari Bank

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank on Tuesday cancelled the banking licence of Nashik Zilla Girna Sahakari Bank Limited as the Nashik-based lender does not have adequate capital and earning prospects.

Consequent to the cancellation of its licence, the bank is prohibited from conducting the business of 'banking', which includes accep-

tance of deposits and repayment of deposits, with immediate effect, Reserve Bank of India said in a statement.

It also said the Commissioner and Registrar of Cooperative, Maharashtra has also been requested to issue an order for winding up the bank and appoint a liquidator for the bank.

On liquidation, every depositor would be entitled to receive a deposit

insurance claim amount of his/her deposits up to Rs 5 lakh from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).

"As per the data submitted by the bank, 99.92 per cent of the depositors are entitled to receive the full amount of their deposits from DICGC," the RBI said.

DICGC has already paid Rs 16.27 crore of the total insured deposits

based on the willingness received from the concerned depositors of the bank.

RBI said the cooperative bank does not have adequate capital and earning prospects, and it has failed to comply with the requirements of provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

The continuance of the bank is prejudicial to the interests of its depositors, it added.



Ambani's children will get only fee for board meetings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's three children as directors of Reliance Industries Ltd will be paid only a fee for attending board and committee meetings, the company said in a resolution seeking shareholder nod for their appointment on its board.

While Ambani, 66, drew nil salary from the company since the 2020-21 fiscal year, other executive directors including his cousins Nikhil and Hital are paid a salary, perquisites, allowances and commission.

His three children - twins Akash and Isha (both 31) and Anant (28 years) - will get only a sitting fee and a commission on the profit earned by the

firm.

The terms of the appointment of the three are the same as the ones on which Ambani's wife Nita was appointed to the company board in 2014. She earned a sitting fee of Rs 6 lakh and a commission of Rs 2 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal year (April 2022 to March 2023), according to the company's latest annual report.

Ambani, 66, had at the company's annual shareholders meeting last month announced that his three children Akash, Isha and Anant would be inducted into Reliance's board of directors (BoD).

He also stated that he would continue to be the chairman and CEO of the company for five more years, with a focus on grooming and empowering its



'next-gen' leaders.

Reliance has now sent out a postal ballot to shareholders seeking a nod for their appointment as board of directors of the company.

"They shall be paid remuneration

by way of fee for attending meetings of the Board or Committees thereof or for any other meetings as may be decided by the Board, reimbursement of expenses for participating in the Board and

other meetings and profit-related commission," the notice said.

Reliance has five broad verticals - the oil-to-chemical (O2C) business that houses the world's largest single-location refining complex and petrochemical plants, telecom and digital business, retail (both physical and online), new energy, and recently launched financial services.

Ambani first talked of a succession plan at the oil-to-telecom conglomerate in 2022, where he announced that each of his three children would head various divisions of the company (Akash to head telecom, Isha to head retail, and Anant to head new energy).

He did not divulge the succession plan for Reliance's

mainstay oil-to-chemicals or O2C business division.

Reliance shareholders at the annual general meeting (AGM) last month gave a nod to Ambani getting another five-year term till 2029 as the head of India's most valuable company. And just like the past three years, he has opted to draw nil salary during this period.

As part of the succession planning, Nita resigned as a director of Reliance but she has been made a permanent invitee to all board meetings - a status which none on the board enjoy Mukesh Ambani and other directors need shareholders' nod for any extension beyond their current approved terms but she will continue on the board in perpetuity.

Tax department notifies 'Angel tax' rules

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department has notified new angel tax rules that comprise a mechanism to evaluate the shares issued by unlisted startups to investors.

While previously the angel tax - a tax levied on capital received on the sale of shares of a startup above the fair market value - applied only to local investors, the Budget for 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024) widened its ambit to include foreign investments.

As per the Budget, the excess premium will be considered as 'income from sources' and taxed at the rate of up to over 30 per cent. However, startups registered by the DPIIT are exempt from the new norms.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) in a September 25 notification spelled out the valuation methodology.

As per the changes in Rule 11UA of I-T rules, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) provides that the valuation of compulsorily convertible preference shares (CCPS) and equity shares issued by unlisted startups can be based on the fair market value.

The amended rules also retain the five new valuation methods proposed in the draft rules for consideration received from the non-residents -- (i) Comparable Company Multiple Method, (ii) Probability Weighted Expected Return Method, (iii) Option Pricing Method, (iv) Milestone Analysis Method, and (v) Replacement Cost Method.

Deloitte India Partner Sumit Singhania said from an investors' standpoint, revised rules offer a wider range of valuation methodologies to work with, and that ought to make compliance less onerous henceforth.



Babil reveals shooting for his first-ever dance number with an injured knee

The young and promising actor Babil Khan recently impressed the audiences and critics yet again in his second cinema outing titled *Friday Night Plan*. Currently streaming on Netflix, the film was highly anticipated post Babil's noteworthy debut in the psychological drama *Qala*. Speaking of *Friday Night Plan*, the high school drama has managed to consistently stay in the Netflix Top 10 charts across South Asia owing to its warm storyline and solid performances. While Babil Khan is now basking in the success of the film, the actor did go through his share of difficulties during an important sequence shoot of the film.

Sharing inside details, the actor revealed how just two days before the shoot of the film's central dance sequence of its song *Bahaane*, he twisted his knee and was in extreme pain. Being a thorough professional, Babil decided to complete the shoot of the *Bahaane* song as scheduled while taking breaks and necessary cures. Opening up about the same, he said, "As a performer, I really enjoy dancing, but this time around the pain was severe. Each time I was on my right leg, the pain spiralled through my back and head. It was a very difficult time and I was so nervous about how we would complete the song. I iced my foot and took multiple breaks while shooting it. Thankfully, with the support of our cast and crew, I was able to pull it up and everything turned out well. There's nothing more I could

have asked for. Everyone's support indeed played a big role in pushing me to do my best." Directed by Vatsal Neelakantan and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani, Kassim Jagmagia and Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment, *Friday Night Plan* also stars Amrith Jayan, Medha Rana, Aadhyana Anand, and Ninad Kamat with Juhi Chawla in a special appearance. Co-written by Vatsal Neelakantan and Sapan Verma, *Friday Night Plan* is streaming on Netflix from September 1 onwards.



what's brewing?

WAHEEDA REHMAN TO BE FETED WITH DADASAHEB PHALKE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Veteran actress and dancer Waheeda Rehman, who is known for films like *Guide*, *Pyasa*, *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, *Delhi-6*, *Kaagaz Ke Phool* and several others, is being honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award for her immense contribution to Indian cinema. The actress has played countless memorable characters on the celluloid and is known to be the pillar of Indian cinema with a career spanning over 5 decades,

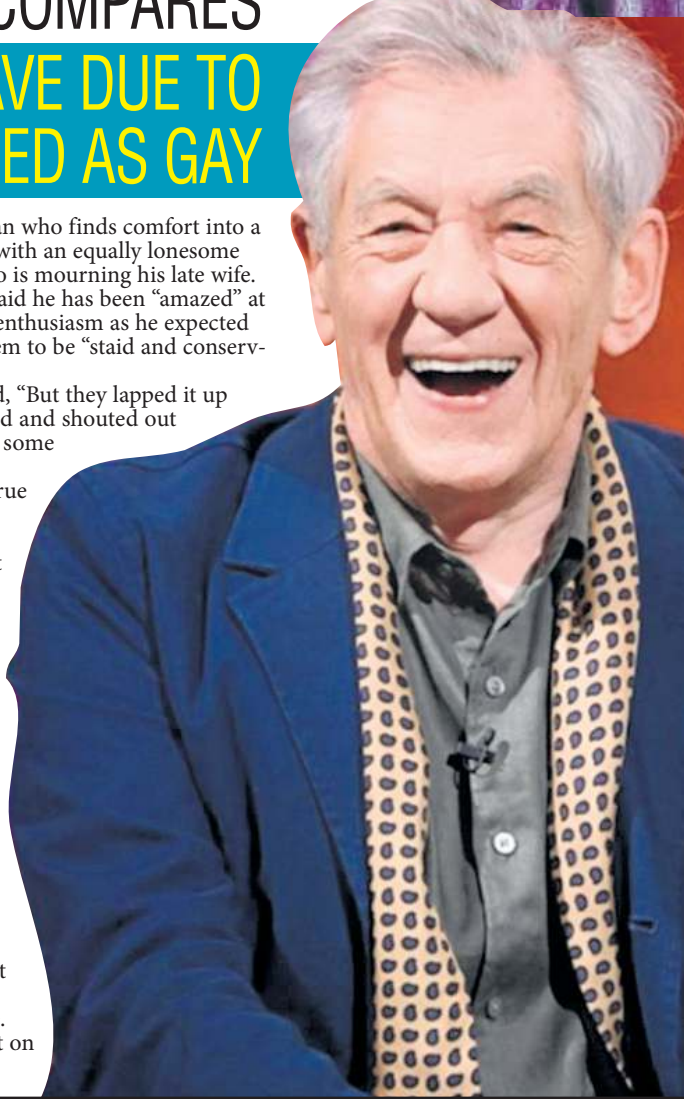
she has essayed her roles with extreme finesse, leading to a National Film Award for her role as a clanswoman in the film *Reshma and Shera*. He further mentioned, "A Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awardee, Waheeda ji has exemplified dedication, commitment and the strength of a Bharatiya Nari who can achieve the highest level of professional excellence with her hardwork. At a time when the historic Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam has been passed by Parliament, her being awarded with this lifetime achievement award is a fitting tribute to one of the leading ladies of Indian Cinema and one who has dedicated her life after films to philanthropy and the greater good of society. I congratulate her and humbly pay my regards to her rich body of work that is an intrinsic part of our film history."

Anurag Thakur, the Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, made the announcement on Tuesday as he took to his X (formerly called Twitter). He shared a long note announcing the honour for the veteran actress as he listed her achievements. He wrote, "I feel an immense sense of happiness and honour in announcing that Waheeda Rehman ji is being bestowed with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award this year for her stellar contribution to Indian Cinema. Waheeda ji has been critically acclaimed for her roles in Hindi films, prominent among them, *uide*, *Pyasa*, *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, *Delhi-6*, *Kaagaz Ke Phool* and several others. In her career spanning over 5 decades,

IAN MCKELLEN COMPARES HIMSELF TO SLAVE DUE TO OPPRESSION HE FACED AS GAY

Hollywood actor Ian McKellen feels devastated that some of the world's most famous footballers are too scared to come out as gay. The actor, who publicly came out as homosexual in 1988 and has since been a leading LGBTQ+ campaigner, said he finds it "astonishing" Premier League stars can be so confident on the pitch but still too fearful to admit their sexuality, reports *aceshowbiz.com*. "For me, coming out was an absolute revelation. I realised the oppression I'd been under whereas before I accepted it, like slaves do. If you've been oppressed, when you're released, you realise how stupid and cruel it was and how daft other people behave," he told the Daily Mail. "The shame of being gay is something a lot of gay people will say they've experienced. It comes from other people, not yourself, which they visit on you and you accept." "Even today there are moments I have to think, 'Am I going to have to watch my language or am I going to be myself?' There are Premier League footballers who are unable to say they're gay." "So it's astonishing today that people who are so confident on the field and so successful in life are frightened." McKellen's latest role in the play *Frank and Percy*, currently running in London, sees him play lonely sociology

professor Ian who finds comfort into a friendship with an equally lonesome teacher who is mourning his late wife. The actor said he has been "amazed" at audiences' enthusiasm as he expected some of them to be "staid and conservative." He added, "But they lapped it up and cheered and shouted out approval at some points. The same was true in Bath where you couldn't get a ticket. So it seems word has gone round that this is a bit of a crowd-pleaser. Yet in 1987 it would have been illegal for me to have sex. Back then I just thought that's how things were. You just got on with it."



Finally! Star Trek 4 writer confirms It's still on the tracks'

With years in development, *Star Trek 4* hasn't had an easy journey to the screen thus far. Back in 2022, it appeared as if everything was in motion, but it now seems as though we may have jumped the (stun) gun when updates to the project froze before the film lost its director. It might not yet be too late to hold out hope, though, as the film's writer recently provided a brief but encouraging update. The writer of the script for the sequel to *Star Trek: Beyond*, Lindsey Anderson-Beer, indicated the film was still in the planning stages. "It is, it's still on the tracks,"

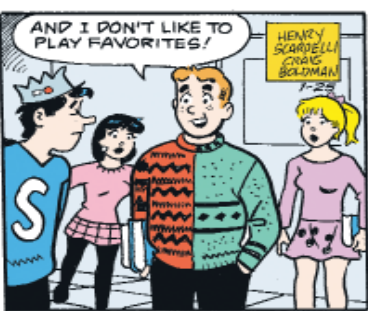
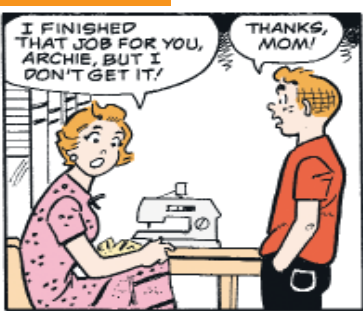
she revealed in an interview for her movie *Pet Sematary: Bloodlines with Collider*. "I had to leave another project that I loved in order to direct this one, and that was a difficult decision to make. However, I adore everyone associated with that initiative." *Star Trek 4* was announced as entering production back in 2022, but that update surprised the cast and crew who found out they were going to return via that introduction. Captain Kirk star Chris Pine said back in March 2023: "In *Star Trek* land, the actors are usually the last people to find out anything. I know costume designers

that have read scripts before the actors." Then in August, it was confirmed that Matt Shakman was leaving the project as director as he signed on to the Fantastic Four MCU movie. The latest update is more promising, but we've been burned before on *Star Trek* news so we'll have to wait and see what happens. For now, set phasers to standby.

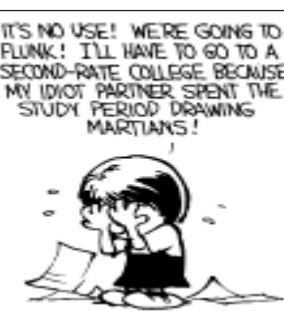
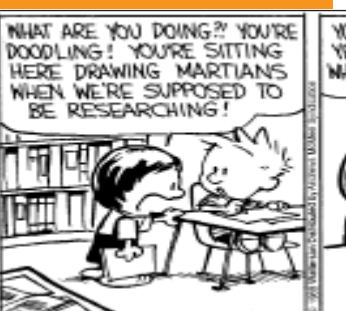


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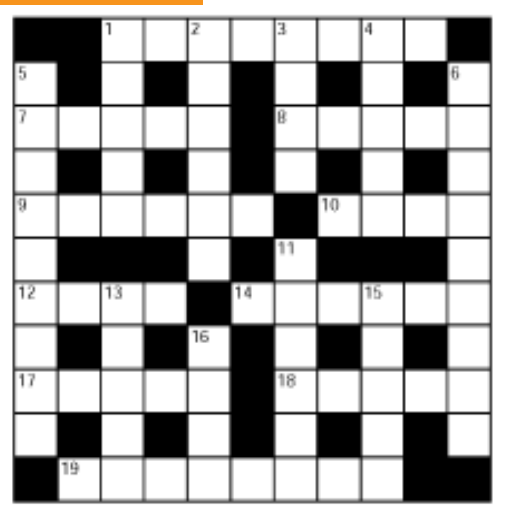
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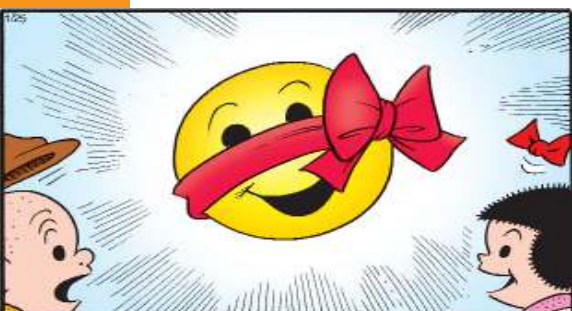
- The first teenage year
- A neck warmer
- This makes bread rise
- Having a meal
- Expensive
- A heat injury
- An artist's workshop
- Precise
- Shave with this
- A sheep minder
- A ship's right-hand side
- Be ill or die from lack of food
- Get to
- Stunned and not able to think properly
- Halt

DOWN

- Easily burnt breakfast food
- Young child
- Things to play with
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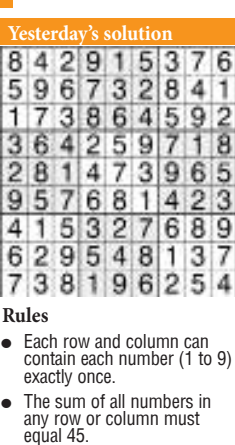
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



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.

'SAVDHAAN INDIA IS A FEATHER IN MY CAP, IT FEELS GOOD BECOMING AN IDENTITY OF THE SHOW'

Much to the excitement of its viewers, actor Sushant Singh is back to his podium hosting the new season of *Savdhaan India: Criminal Decoded*. Bringing a season with much more intensity this time, he gets candid with *The Pioneer* about making a comeback, challenges as a host of the crime show, and more.

TEJAL SINHA

Just like the stellar actor that he is, Sushant Singh has been a commendable host as well. So much so that he has been associated with the crime show *Savdhaan India* for more than 8 years now. Making the much-awaited comeback, he is seen donning a much different salt-and-pepper look in the brand-new season of the show, which aired on Star Bharat from Tuesday (September 26).

Renowned for its gripping real-life crime stories, *Savdhaan India* has acted as an informative platform, shedding light on the dark world of crime and its consequences. All excited to be back he says it feels like a 'home-coming'.

Looking at the positive outlook of the show, he begins, "*Savdhaan India* is a crime show telecasted in a general channel. But we sort of surpass that line of just being a part of an entertainment channel but an educative programme. Over the year, people appreciate the awareness that this programme has brought in consciously that it has become a part of their life. There are few programmes that have had that privilege. Every time that I go to any corner of India, wherever there's Indian diaspora, they've all heard about this programme, they've seen this programme. I don't even know what to call these phenomena. Any programme which creates awareness are all important."

After several versions including India Fights Back, Darr Kar Nahii Datt

Kar, and Special Crime Series, to name a few, the show is all set with the theme of 'Criminal Decoded', which has everyone talking already. "This season is going to be much more intense, now that we are coming back after sort of a head back," shares the *Ram Gopal Varma ki Aag* actor. "We are upgrading everything, including aesthetic production values. The novelty of this season is that we are calling it criminal decoded. We've had many seasons of *Savdhaan India* which has always been about India Fights Back, the victim's pov, the journey of how you could have prevented and fight back. It's the first time that we are going to look into the criminal mind because that is also one major aspect of any crime. The person who is committing the crime, what and how does that person think? That is what we are going to see in this new season. Research-wise, we have spoken to psychologists, and criminologists. Maybe this might help people in recognising and understanding the criminal mind."

With over seven seasons and a remarkable 3,162 episodes under its belt, the show brings some really nerve-wracking crime stories. And after continuously hosting crime stories for a long time, he shares there's a danger of an individual mind becoming desensitised towards the intensity of the crime. Going ahead and sharing more insights on it, he gushes, "I have

done more than a thousand episodes so there's a chance of it. The viewers who are watching it, that's not the case with them or the victim who is or has faced that, it's their first encounter. I have to make sure that I don't lose that empathy. Secondly, the way society sees crime, may not always be right. For example, it's a very common thing to say when we talk about a rape, Izzat luttt gayi, uske aatmasaman ke saath khilwad hua. Those are very very miss murmurs, shifting the grave. What I've been trying to say through *Savdhaan India* since a long time and still consciously do is if anybody is losing their respect in such a scenario, even the criminal, it cannot be the way it is. They stay away from such phrases. When we say Ek Tarfa Pyaar. Ek Tarfa pyaar kuch nahi hota, when somebody commits a crime of obsession, you cannot call it a Ek Tarfa Pyaar or Manchala. Those are again Miss Murmurs. You cannot just make anyone else suffer. I very consciously avoid such phrases and even if they are there, remove them and present crime as a crime and not as a stigma towards the victim."

The show has gained widespread recognition, becoming a household name, even within the ranks of the police force.

Recently, the law enforcement community has acknowledged Sushant's significant contributions and holds him in high regard, viewing his dedicated efforts as a testament to his unwavering commitment to enhancing the safety of our society. To them, Sushant has earned an honorary position among their courageous ranks, serving as a symbol of unity in the ongoing fight against crime and disorder. The *Rana*

Naidu was extremely grateful and to him, it was no less than a 'positive acknowledgment'.

The new season not only brings a new theme but as we already mentioned, a new look of him. This distinguished look exudes a certain maturity and sophistication that perfectly complements the show's serious and thought-provoking themes. Commenting on his new look, he shares, "I'm trying to keep it natural since I'm also shooting for some other projects. So, when the new season was offered, we tried to work around it and my attempt has been to look the way I am, age with dignity and hopefully that would bring more gravity to the programme. It definitely feels good that people have now known me for the show. It makes me feel that I've made a positive impact on the show and the show has of course made an immense contribution to my life, besides the popularity, love, and fame. It feels good to become the identity of a show and show becomes your identity. I feel like it's a feather in my cap."

The *Baby* actor gracefully juggles between the role of an actor and an anchor at the same time. However, one cannot forget the fact that both require entirely different skill sets. So, what's something he looks for when taking up a project? Let's hear what he's got to tell us: "My first question when the makers approached me was back in 2012, 'If you're looking for an anchor who presents it in a very situational way', which is usually the case. But the makers were very clear that 'NO' we want empathy and we want to convey a good message so that what attracted me to *Savdhaan India*. However, for other projects, apart from the message, first and foremost is the story because at the end of the day be it a film or an OTT project, the main thing is the story. If the story excites me as a listener, then I'm attracted towards it, and then comes the role that should attract me. If I'm excited then my work would excite the audience."

Ending the conversation on a brighter note, he reveals coming up with a web series in the first week of October, and the second season of *Rana Naidu* by the end of the year, or January.

LAKSHYA KOCHHAR

Bambai Meri Jaan was my first big project

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The trending actor Lakshya Kochhar doubled down so well for a periodic piece — *Bambai Meri Jaan* is all over the news, and the artist doesn't forget to show as many shades as he can. His fans are finding a lot of enjoyment watching him on screen.

In fact, as per the reviews, it's a well-tread story! So in an exclusive interview with one of the leads, he gives the game away, "This was one of those scripts that do not come so often in an actor's life. I was held in great respect to even be considered to play a part in this show. But working on the sets was very difficult: we shot over a period of three and a half years.

On and off! We had the pandemic, a cyclone, and so many closures. What I am really grateful for is I made some solid relationships on this set! I have grown on this set as an actor, literally."

A take on the crime genre, his show at its very heart and core mastered the intricate storytelling. He explains, "I auditioned for it like any newcomer would. I am not in a position to choose right now. I was chosen to play this role. I had so much of prep time — I read the script for almost nine months during the lockdown without any intrusion. We were jamming on Zoom calls! I lost a few kilos also. We can rave about our performances because we had a lot of time to prepare in all true sense. I don't think anyone would have in the history of filmmaking must have got so much time to prepare!"

Showing the ruthlessness of both the good and bad guys, his character is fully fleshed out with very simple motivations. Well, he says, "I have previously worked with my director as an assistant director on *Rock On 2*, and I know his functioning. So it was an advantage for me! I was the youngest in the crew, so they protected me and taught me the technicalities. This was my first big

project. I was stuck in some places, so the ADs helped me get out of it. This cast was my backbone, for a change!"

He continued, "The director made the show look so international. We had zero compromises on the sets! We have even done one scene a day. It can give Hollywood shows a run for their money as well. Writing is superlative! There were almost eight writers working on the show and that's how it should be done. The mic operator had to come to me and tell that sir your heartbeat is going so fast, we had to cut that separate track. My mouth was watering, and my legs were shaking. So nervous but so at it!"

Amalgamation of many crime stories, the execution of it floored our interviewee. He blabs a little on the lines of morality scale also, "Morally there were complexities involved. For characters like us, we are not socially accepted! So I was trying to pierce into human emotions. I didn't judge my character! My director asked me to function out of love, period. Yes on the papers it's morally incorrect but I was playing someone grey. Four years ago I was twenty-six years old when I signed this show. There are a lot of action sequences going on so we had our taxing days also."

Making his fans enjoy the shades that he brings on screen, actor Lakshya Kochhar has once again made waves with his stint in the recently released *Bambai Meri Jaan*. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, he discusses working in the series, getting on board, and more.

Revolutionising the energy storage industry with its presence

PNS| HYDERABAD

Providing a comprehensive range of modern maintenance-free two-wheeler, automotive, UPS, and inverter batteries known for their reliability and quality is Tesla Power India Private Limited.

Something that makes them unique is their advanced battery management systems which ensure your battery's longevity, helping you save on costly repairs.

Kavinder Khurana, Managing Director at Tesla Power USA in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer* says, "Our decision to expand in Southern India was led by our mission to provide customized solutions to the region, making it the largest service network in all of South India. Our R&D investments allow us to create innovative customized solutions for our clientele. This community engagement builds the foundation for robust partnerships and alliances, raising the benchmark for the Indian battery market through our advanced automotive technologies."

With an aim to create an effecting working environment for its employees, they conduct rigorous training programs for the entirety of their team. With routine audits, we ensure the safety of their equipment, administering regular Reporting and Incident Analysis for streamlined operations. And with its continuous improvement efforts pave way for us to deliver the absolute best to all our customers, keeping their satisfaction paramount.

"We are proud of our proactive service team, ensuring quick resolution for our customers. Our dedicated service centers ensure to go the extra mile to address your concerns, providing solid services to maintain longevity in your battery life. With remote support and warranty coverage, Tesla Power boasts of strong cus-

tomers-centric operations, prioritizing their feedback to continue innovating solutions," shares Kavinder.

As a brand of themselves, they have a strong presence in India and is impressive, with a wide distribution network and various types of dealers. Taking us through how the company tailors its offerings to cater to the specific needs and demands of the Indian market, he says, "With continuous efforts towards product adaptation based on routine customer feedback and R&D efforts, Tesla Power has proudly established a strong presence in the Indian market for all our verticals, providing full charging infrastructure to allow for a seamless experience for all our customers. However, no operation comes without challenges and Tesla Power ensures constant management of these limitations. Price sensitivity, infrastructure gaps, supply chain hurdles are a few pain

points that our regular research and development initiatives work towards cultivating a stronger and more robust network."



INDIA AIM TO WHITEWASH OZ

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Skipper Rohit Sharma would fancy a perfect culmination to Indian team's World Cup preparations as hosts eye a rare clean sweep of Australia in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday.

Never before in the history have India whitewashed Australia in the ODI format. In fact, neither of them have achieved such a result, home or away, irrespective of the number of matches played in a series. Given how perfectly everything has panned out for the World Cup hosts in the lead up to the mega tournament, it would only be fitting that India finish with a deserving 3-0 score-line.

Dominant Indian team, despite the absence of its front-line players and still tinkering with playing combinations to make sure every member has had game-time under their belt, are in pole position to record a fourth consecutive ODI win before the quadrennial event begins.

Gill, Axar, Shami, Shardul & Hardik to miss 3rd ODI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Axar Patel, Shubman Gill and Shardul Thakur have not travelled to Rajkot for the third and final ODI against Australia on Wednesday.

Axar, who has been out with a left quadriceps strain since the Asia Cup and was in the squad only for the final ODI subject to fitness, is understood to be recovering well, and the team management expects him to be fit in time for the World Cup. He is currently recovering at the BCCI's National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. Rohit Sharma, the captain, and Virat Kohli, who both sat out the first two games of the series, are back in the line-up, but Mohammed Shami, who played the first two games, and Hardik Pandya, who skipped the initial games as well, are not with the squad.

ESPNcricinfo understands that with just 13 players around - Mukesh Kumar was called up ahead of the second ODI which Jasprit Bumrah missed - India might be forced to use local first-class players, who are part of the Saurashtra team, to chip in in the field if needed.



If they manage to clinch a 3-0 win, India would also have taken a massive upper-hand over the five-time world champions Australia before the two teams meet again in Chennai on October 8 for their World Cup opener.

It will be no exaggeration in saying India have battered Australia in the first two ODIs despite both the rivals making plenty of changes to keep their top guns fresh, while also putting

miles in the legs of those who would not usually feature in first-choice XIs. There could, however, be some respite for the Australian bowlers as India have rested their young gun Shubman Gill for the final ODI after his 74 and 104 in the first two games, alongwith Shardul Thakur.

In the 50-overs World Cup year, Gill is the only batter in the format with a thousand runs and counting - 1,230 runs to be precise at a staggering average of

72.35 - and his absence from the final game would certainly be felt. But India's batting mainstays Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are expected to return and so are the in-form Kuldeep Yadav and Hardik Pandya from a brief resting period during which KL Rahul has led admirably.

Facing some tough questions over squad composition, players' form, fitness and availability, India have turned the tide and how.

That India would end up with a problem of plenty was something not envisaged when the team embarked on the Asia Cup campaign just a few weeks ago. But the likes of Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Mohammed Shami and even Mohammed Siraj have transformed this Indian outfit into as formidable a unit can get.

He took some time to get going and again struggled with his back-related troubles, but

Shreyas Iyer utilised perfect batting conditions in Indore to record a century, which will also consolidate his position in the middle-order.

Much to the delight of the Indian camp, Rahul has delivered the goods with the bat and behind the stumps at the most appropriate time. Like Rahul, Jasprit Bumrah too has proven his fitness and form in a few matches after a long injury lay-off. After resting from the second ODI, India's premier bowler is available for selection.

Even though the team management appears tilted in favour of injured Axar Patel, oldest member of the Indian squad Ravichandran Ashwin would like to make this opportunity count before the contingent is finalised for the World Cup.

For Australia, it is not often that they flop both with the bat and the ball in India with the white ball as miserably as they have in the first two ODIs. The visitors need to gather themselves as the wheels seem to be coming off rapidly following five consecutive defeats in ODIs.

A few months ago, the same side beat India 2-1 with Mitchell Starc haunting the Indian right-handers with his perfect inswingers.

With one last game left before the World Cup begins, Australia would be tempted to play their preferred bowling attack with Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc coming in, even though the batting lacks the firepower of Travis Head at the top and Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne not enjoying a successful year of cricket in India across formats.



Smith's form not a concern: Starc

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Steve Smith might be taking a wee bit more time to adjust to sub-continental tracks but his poor returns in the first two ODIs against India is least of concern for the Australian team management, senior speedster Mitchell Starc said on Tuesday.

Usually a prolific scorer against India, Smith has scores of 0 and 41 in the first two ODIs on batting-friendly tracks, having flopped earlier in the Test series in February-March when he could only manage 145 runs across four Tests.

Starc, who himself is coming back from groin niggle, was speaking ahead of the third and final ODI scheduled on Wednesday.

"No. His (Smith) numbers speak for himself," Starc replied to a query on Smith's current form.

"He (Smith) has been a high class player and has been a massive part of all formats for Australia, so no concern there. It is the adjustment factor, coming back to India after a series in South Africa, some guys are coming off a break," Starc told reporters here ahead of Australia's training session at the Saurashtra Cricket Stadium.

Starc, who might make a comeback in the third game then underlined the reasons for Australia's back-to-back defeats in Mohali and Indore.

"I think we have seen the wickets change throughout both the games, depending on who batted first and in different places. Spin was a massive factor in the second innings the other night (in Indore). We played pretty well under lights in Mohali," Starc said.

The left-arm pacer said conditions are still proving challenging for Australian touring party, which comprises of a few fresh faces such as left-arm bowler Spencer

Johnson.

"We have got a lot of guys with IPL experience, we know that the wickets are going to be very different through the night and day, depending on which part of India we play as well — not too many grounds we have played back to back games so, conditions are going to play a part," he said.

Starc conceded that Rohit Sharma's India are favourites to win the World Cup while adding that adaptability will be key for Australia to find their form.

"We have used quite a wide squad of players, whether that be managing players or players coming back from injury, trying different combinations and what not," he said. The pacer admitted that Australia's current form isn't ideal in the run-up to a marquee event.

"Obviously, leading into the World Cup, it is not a position we want to be in but plenty to play for tomorrow - what the make-up of our team looks like, what we want to take into our World Cup campaign."

Starc said like him, Glenn Maxwell too has his sights set on the World Cup.

"He (Maxwell) is on track as well. I am not sure about his particular timeline but no doubt he will be looking to make an impact as soon as he gets his chance," Starc said.

"He has got a wealth of experience over here through IPL, through multiple tours. He is certainly an x-factor no matter whichever team he plays for. This is his third one-day World Cup, he is an x-factor for us who can take the game on."

"His ability with the ball, particularly in these conditions adds to another option in the bowling department as well. He seems in good spirits, (but) his return I am not sure what that looks like for this week but certainly on track for the World Cup," Starc added.

We have done our research: Babar

conference here.

"It is quite an honour for me to travel as the captain this time around, I hope we come back with a trophy this time," he added.

Azam, one of the leading batters in the game, will be expected to score a bagful for runs for his team in the ICC showpiece. He is especially looking forward to the big game against India in Ahmedabad on October 14.

"I am excited to play in Ahmedabad as it will be jam-packed. I will try my best to perform up to my potential. I am not worried about my individual accolades, I want to make sure whatever I do helps the result for the team ...

"Whenever there is a tour coming up, I spend some time planning for it. I prepare accordingly to [the teams I have to face



and make goals for myself. I try to set targets for myself and then I give my 100% in the ground."

"It is a chance to become a hero as every World Cup performance gives you a different kind of confidence. Everyone is at their best during the World Cup,

so whenever you perform there, it is an altogether different feeling," he said.

Babar said the team will be missing the services of injured pacer Naseem Shah. He also asserted that there is no bad blood in the dressing room fol-

lowing the Asia Cup disappointment.

"There is no ill will in the dressing room. There are discussions after every loss but they get twisted into something else entirely. The entire team is like a family and there is love and respect there."

Hasan Ali has been named Shah's replacement and Babar said he was picked because of his rich experience.

"Of course we will miss Naseem Shah as Shaheen [Afridi] and Naseem bowling together gave us a different edge. It was not easy to pick his replacement, but we all sat together and got input from [chief selector] Inzamam ul Haq."

"We went with Hasan Ali because he has experience. He has played the World Cup before. I cannot comment who will bowl the new ball or the old ball, as we cannot reveal our strategies right now."

Williamson targets World Cup return

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Less than six months after knee surgery threatened to rule him out of next month's ODI World Cup, the goal of captaining New Zealand in India has been the key driver in getting Kane Williamson through his recovery.

The 33-year-old tore the cruciate ligament in his right knee playing for Indian Premier League side Gujarat Titans in April, which looked to have scuppered his chances of making the showpiece tournament.

However, intense rehab work has meant a speedy recovery. Williamson hopes to be ready for the Black Caps opening game against defending champions England on October 5, a repeat of the 2019 final his side narrowly lost.

"It would be great. Naturally, you want to be back playing when you are fit and ready, sooner rather than later," he said.

"You hope that ends up being around that World Cup time, but I'm still being very focused on the rehab day-to-day and not wanting those targets to stretch it to a point where you take a backward step."

Williamson is already batting in the nets again, which the injured knee can handle.

"For running, it's not quite 100 percent, but making good progress," he added.

Black Caps coach Gary Stead said there was no fixed date for when Williamson will play again.

But his return will be a big boost. He was player of the 2019 tournament with centuries against South Africa and the West Indies in leading New Zealand to the cusp of lifting the trophy.

Williamson, who has chalked up over 6,500 runs in ODI cricket, is desperate to appear in a fourth World Cup, admitting the prospect "keeps



you in the gym every day and working hard".

"It's been really pleasing to see the progress and keep taking those little steps forward," he added.

While New Zealand have warmed-up for the World Cup with tours of England and Bangladesh, Williamson's injury has limited his preparations.

But he is not overly concerned.

"Naturally, it isn't ideal, but I didn't get too much of a say in it. It's the only option I have in front of me and the prospect of playing another World Cup is really, really exciting," he said.

"It's something you always want to be a part of but I didn't want that to dictate my rehab. At the same time, having a carrot at the back of your mind is helpful."

Despite a burning desire to play, the New Zealand skipper said he would have no problem withdrawing from the squad if the injury flared up.

"I only want to be there if I can add some value and I'm fit and ready to go," he said.

Williamson already knows about spending time on the sidelines after returning last year from a lengthy spell out with an elbow injury.

"Working through injuries are part of the job, so being ready for whatever's next is the goal," he said.

Boult looking for 'one more run' at WC title

AP ■ WELLINGTON

After 12 months out of one-day international cricket, New Zealand seamer Trent Boult is relishing a third crack at the 50-overs World Cup after bitter defeats in the last two finals.

Boult is back in the frame for October's ODI World Cup after signing a casual-playing agreement with New Zealand cricket chiefs.

"I fully appreciated the fact that in giving my contract back, you open the door for other players," he said. "The decision was solely made around just being away from home a lot."

"Selection for the World Cup was never guaranteed. I had to work for it, so I am very happy to be here."

"I've been very fortunate to play in a couple of World Cup finals and been on the wrong side of all of them," he said with a

wry smile.

"It's a cliché, but you learn more when you fail than when you succeed. I feel like I'm a better cricketer for that experience."

There is no changing past finals, of course, so Boult has his eyes fixed on the future in the hope it will be third time lucky. "I'm looking forward to hopefully get one more run and lifting the trophy in a couple of weeks time," he said. "That's the big focus for a lot of us."

Miller holds record he would prefer not to have

AP ■ CENTURION

David Miller holds an international cricket record he would prefer not to have.

No one has played more international cricket without playing in a Test match than Miller.

The hard-hitting left-hander has played in 274 white-ball internationals. The nearest contender for the non-Test record is retired West Indian Keiron Pollard on 224.

"I would have loved to play a Test, but it is what it is," says Miller, 34.

"I've achieved quite a lot in my white-ball stuff and I'm grateful to have played so many games."

Miller has built a solid first-class record, averaging 36.32 in 63 matches, with six centuries, which he backed up with electrifying fielding.

But it was a time of plenty in a South African Test batting line-up which included Jacques Kallis, Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers and Faf du Plessis, while white-ball cricket was becoming ever more prevalent — and lucrative.

In 2018, nearing his 30th birthday, he retired from first-class cricket.

"I wasn't being picked, even for the South Africa A side. There were guys ahead of me so I decided to concentrate on the white-ball stuff."

He is in demand from franchises around the world — playing for 22 different representative teams — and a crowd favourite in South Africa where supporters wave banners proclaiming 'Killer Miller' and 'It's Miller Time'.

He is one of only four players who has scored more than 3,000 runs in ODIs with an aver-



age above 40 and a strike rate above 100. The others are De Villiers and England's Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow.

Batting at number six in a side without established all-rounders, Miller will likely be in situations at the World Cup where he will have to take responsibility for rebuilding an innings.

"It's about summing up the situation. Sometimes you are batting with the lower order and you have to decide with your partner at the time how you are going to go about it."

"It's like a chess game at times. You are thinking about moves and what's important and what's not. It's about making clear decisions. It helps your execution when you are fully committed."

Both sides of Miller were on display when South Africa had to win the last three matches of a recent home series against Australia after losing the first two.

In the fourth match he thrashed an unbeaten 82 off 45 balls as he and an inspired Heinrich Klaasen added a scarcely believable 222 off 94 balls for the fifth wicket.

In the deciding match, in trickier conditions, he made a more measured 63 off 65 balls to enable South Africa to get to a defensible total after a difficult start.

"The World Cup is very open," he says. "We're a pretty experienced team. We're capable of doing it, so it's a matter of getting the basics right for longer periods of time."

Mangalavaaram locks its release date to Nov 19

Ajay Bhupathi, a protégé of Ram Gopal Varma, had a stellar directorial debut in the form of the surprise hit *RX 100*, and later went onto direct the lavishly mounted action drama *Maha Samudram* featuring a bevy of stars. He's back in the reckoning with a mystical thriller *Mangalavaaram*, where he reunites with his *RX100* co-star Payal Rajput. The film is gearing up for a release this November. While the team confirmed a November release, a few weeks ago, the release date was formally announced today. "Excited to show y'all a story that'll twist your heart like never before. #Mangalavaaram #Mangalavaaram #Chevvaikizhamai #Chovvazhcha. Releasing Worldwide in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada on November 17th. An @AJA-NEESHMB Musical," the director wrote.

With October already packed with a flurry of releases, the mid-November slot

looks apt for *Mangalavaaram* to make a mark among audiences. Nandita Swetha, Shritej, Chaitanya Krishna, Ajay Ghosh and Laxman play other key roles in the film that'll release in five languages on the whole. The film is bankrolled by Swathi Reddy Gunupati and Suresh Varma under Mudra Media Works.

The filmmaker, while discussing the project, called *Mangalavaaram* a rustic action thriller in a rural setting with intriguing characters where the lines between good and evil are blurred. The character-driven film is packed with questions and the answers aren't so easily found, he asserts and opines it's a perfect big-screen experience. Payal Rajput's character will have many surprises to offer, he adds. The producers assure a paisa-vasool experience in theatres, hail it's a never-seen-

before attempt with technical finesse. *Mangalavaaram* was shot for 99 days, over 50 of them being night shoots. Ajaneesh B Loknath, best known for *Kantara* and *Virupaksha*, is the composer. Award-winning sound designer MR Raja Krishnan is also part of the crew. The trailer will be launched shortly.

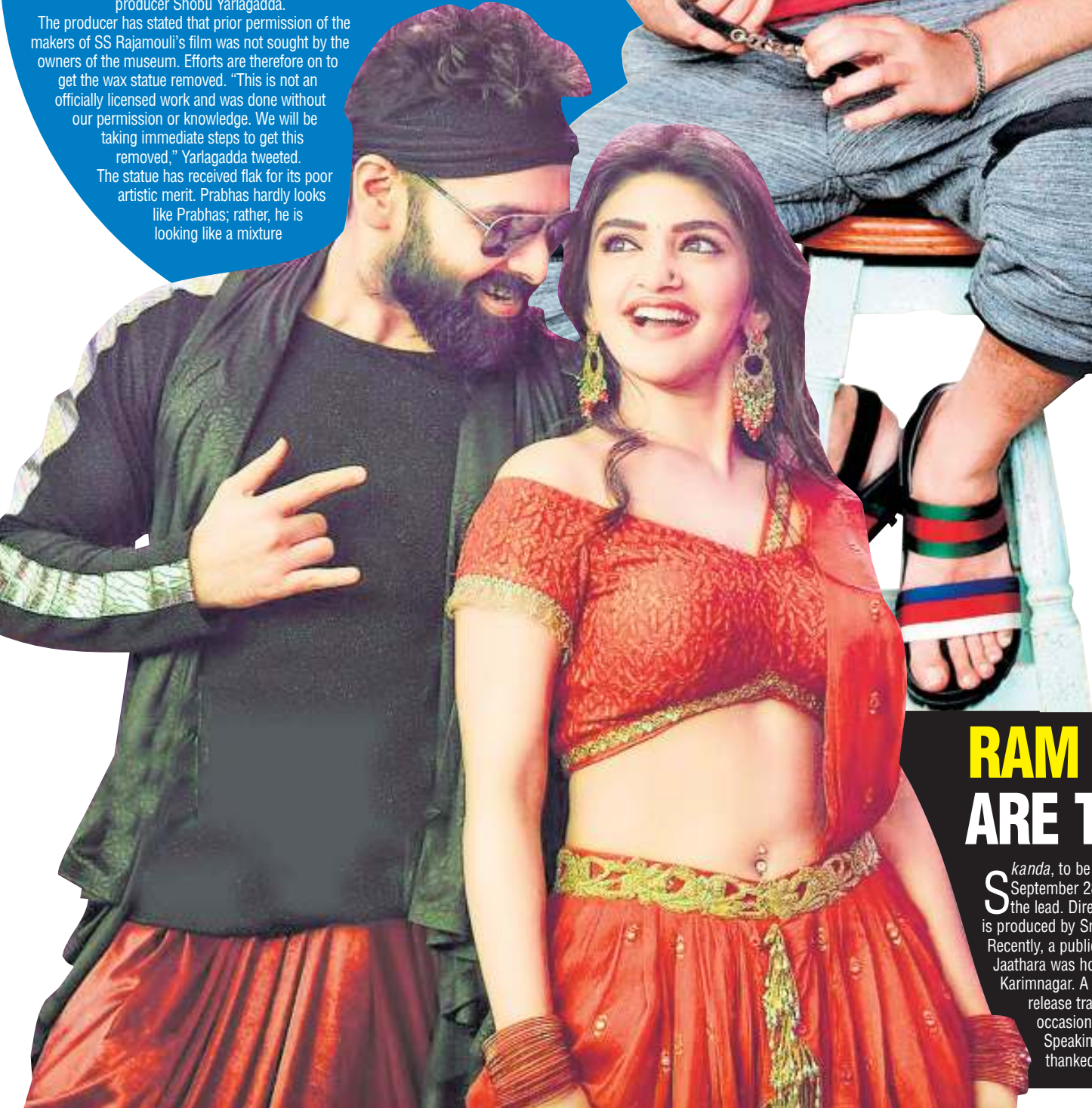


Shobu Yarlagadda irked over Prabhas' wax statue

A museum in Mysore, Karnataka, recently put out the wax statues of many historic personalities as well as a few fictional characters. Mahendra Baahubali's statue from *Baahubali* was one of them. A picture of the wax statue has gone viral on the Internet in the last few days. The same has come to the notice of *Baahubali* producer Shobu Yarlagadda.

The producer has stated that prior permission of the makers of SS Rajamouli's film was not sought by the owners of the museum. Efforts are therefore on to get the wax statue removed. "This is not an officially licensed work and was done without our permission or knowledge. We will be taking immediate steps to get this removed," Yarlagadda tweeted. The statue has received flak for its poor artistic merit. Prabhas hardly looks like Prabhas; rather, he is looking like a mixture

of cricketer David Warner and actor Ram Charan. Prabhas' fans would actually like the statue to be removed at the earliest. They are thanking Yarlagadda for his decision.



RAKUL PREET SINGH EXPRESSES STARRING OPPOSITE KAMAL HAASAN SAYS, 'IT'S SURREAL'

Rakul Preet Singh is truly in the best phase of her career, doing some of the best projects not just in Bollywood but also South Indian film industry. Having proved her mettle as a versatile actor in different genre films including *Chhatriwali* and *Doctor G* this year, Rakul is elated to be a part of a huge successful franchise *Indian 2* alongside the legendary actor Kamal Haasan.

With her impressive acting skills and ability to take on diverse roles, Rakul has become a sought-after name in the world of cinema. One of her upcoming projects that has fans buzzing with excitement is *Indian 2*, where she shares the screen space with none other than the legendary Kamal Haasan.

Rakul couldn't contain her enthusiasm when talking about this remarkable opportunity. In a recent interview, she shared her feelings, saying, "It's surreal. *Chachi 420*, for example, was my favorite film. Working alongside individuals you've admired—people

who've been in the profession for so long and had so much experience and have yet remained grounded—I think it's a very refreshing experience."

Rakul's journey in the Indian film industry has been nothing short of remarkable. She has not only proved her versatility but has also earned a dedicated fan base with her exceptional performances. Whether it's her role in *Chhatriwali* or *Doctor G*, Rakul has showcased her ability to excel in different genres. Her inclusion in the iconic 'Indian' franchise alongside Kamal Haasan is a testament to her talent and ever growing popularity in the South as well.

Ustaad Bhagat Singh's new schedule kickstarts in Hyd

Power Star Pawan Kalyan is currently balancing his roles in both movies and politics. He's actively involved in two upcoming films: *They Call Him OG* and *Ustaad Bhagat Singh*. According to a latest update, a mini shooting schedule is commencing today in Hyderabad. Pawan Kalyan will be joining the film's production, specifically for scenes related to the pre-interval sequence. This schedule is expected to run for a week.

In *Ustaad Bhagat Singh*, happening actress Sreeleela takes on the leading role, and the film is being produced on a grand scale by Mythri Movie Makers. The music for the movie is composed by Devi Sri Prasad.



Bobby Deol's look as ferocious antagonist in *Animal* revealed

The makers of the upcoming film *Animal* have shared another poster and this time featuring a "bloodied" look of actor Bobby Deol.

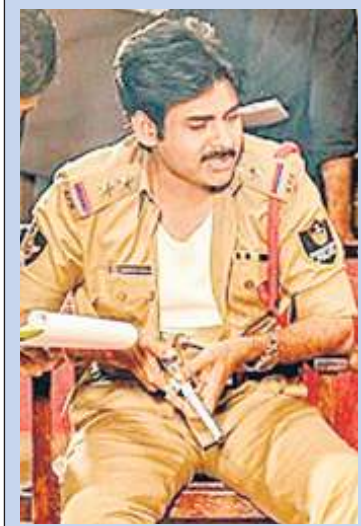
Bobby portrays the antagonist, the enemy to *Animal*. He embodies a character who is both fire and calm, a juxtaposition that adds depth to his portrayal. His fierce personality radiates through the new poster making him a formidable adversary for the film's protagonist.

Animal

is an action thriller film directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga and produced by T-Series and Cine1 Studios. The film stars Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol, Rashmika Mandanna and Tripti Dimri. The film was earlier scheduled to be released on August 11 but was pushed to December 1 due to pending post-production work.

The film revolves around a troubled father-son relationship, which is set in the backdrop of extreme bloodshed of the underworld.

Bobby is returning to the big screen after 2019. He was last seen on the silver screen in *Housefull 4*. The plot of the film dealt with reincarnation. Three brothers are set to marry three sisters. However, a peek into the distant past reveals to one of the brothers that their brides have been mixed up in their current reincarnation.



Hebah Patel-starrer mystery thriller The Great Indian Murders on October 6

Aha is all set to send chills down your spine with its upcoming mystery thriller, *The Great Indian Murders*, on October 6 featuring Ram Karthik and the versatile Hebah Patel in the lead roles. Under the visionary direction and production of Viplove Koneti and the compelling music of SriCharan Pakala, this movie promises to be a mind-bending rollercoaster ride, leaving you in suspense from start to finish. *The Great Indian Murders* also features a stellar ensemble cast, including Naresh VK, Pavitra Lokesh, Jaya Prakash, and many more, all delivering captivating performances.

In this unprecedented story, a family teeters on the brink of committing an unthinkable act – suicide. Their motive? To resurrect a loved one from the clutches of death. But as the tale unfolds, you'll be ensnared in a web of suspense, drama, and romance, unlike anything you've ever witnessed.

The spine-tingling intrigue of *The Great Indian Murders* draws inspiration from a real-life event in Madanapalle town, Andhra Pradesh. With its blend of heart-pounding thrills, emotional drama, and unexpected romance, this film promises to be a one-of-a-kind cinematic experience.

Hebah Patel recently delivered a remarkable performance in aha's crime-thriller *Odela Railway Station*, which takes centre stage once again in *The Great Indian Murders*. Naresh VK and Pavitra

Lokesh's venture, *Malli Pelli*, is also available on the aha platform for viewers to enjoy.

Prepare to embark on an enigmatic journey that will keep you guessing until the end. *The Great Indian Murders* is coming soon aha, and it's poised to redefine the thriller genre.



RAM POTHINENI: FAMILY EMOTIONS ARE THE BIGGEST MERIT OF SKANDA

Skanda, to be released in theatres on September 28, stars Ram Pothineni in the lead. Directed by Boyapati Srinu, it is produced by Srinivasaa Silver Screen. Recently, a public event named Cult Jaathara was hosted by the makers in Karimnagar. A massy, electrifying release trailer was unveiled on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Ram thanked his fans for being there

to cheer him and his movie. "Boyapati garu's films are synonymous with action sequences. But that's not what his mainstay is. His mainstay are the emotions behind those fights. Family emotions are the biggest merit of *Skanda*. Boyapati garu's movies are known for a social element built into the story. *Skanda*, too, has got one. And that element will be the soul of this film," the *RED* and *Nenu Sailaja* actor said.

Boyapati said that he is tense only while making a film. "I sweat out. I pour my blood into the film. Once I am done, I don't stress out. I am confident that I have made a very good product. *Skanda* will surely be blessed by the audience," he added.

The film's release trailer has since received a thumping response from netizens. Srikanth and a host of artists seem to have got strongly-written roles in the movie. SS Thaman has composed the music.