



The Pioneer

Paper with passion since 1864

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DELHI

LUCKNOW

BHOPAL

BHUBANESWAR

RANCHI

CHANDIGARH

DEHRADUN

HYDERABAD

**Sitharaman inaugurates
72 digital
libraries**



**INDIA-EFTA
MEGA TRADE PACT GETS
GREEN SIGNAL**



**First look of Vintara
Saradaga promises a quirky,
YOUTHFUL RIDE**



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

"We will love Hindi and we will feel Hindi as our language. Hindi is a common language that is connecting all of us. We are learning German and other languages but we are doing politics using Hindi. Why do we have to be ashamed of saying Hindi is ours? Opposing Hindi is nothing but limiting the development for future generations. Opposing Hindi language is foolish while accepting Urdu and Persian languages. We need Hindi for business but why are there objections to learning Hindi?"



- Pawan Kalyan, AP Deputy CM

DON'T MISS...

Water release to KC Canal urged

The Rayalaseema Saguneeeti Sadhana Samithi (RSSS) has appealed to the Nandyal District Collector to release water to the KC Canal to save withering crops. RSSS vice-president YN Reddy, along with other leaders, met District Collector Rajakumari on Friday and submitted a memorandum requesting immediate release of water into the canal. Speaking to the media, YN Reddy said that due to favourable weather and rains earlier in the season, farmers under the KC Canal ayacut cultivated paddy, soybean, maize ...

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Meat banned on Kanwar Yatra

To maintain the sanctity of the Kanwar Yatra route and ensure its peaceful conduct, the Meerut district administration has banned the cooking of meat, fish, and eggs in hotels, dhabas, and restaurants along the yatra route, an official said on Friday. Meerut District Magistrate Dr VK Singh told PTI, "Cooking of meat, fish and eggs has been banned in eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route. More than 10 teams of the Food Safety Department have been deployed for inspection." The move comes as part ...

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Beware of dealing with OBPPs

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE on Friday cautioned investors against dealing with unregistered Online Bond Platform Providers (OBPPs), amid the rising popularity of such platforms that offer easier access to various fixed-income instruments. In a joint statement, the exchanges asked investors to consider various key factors before investing through any online bond platform. These include checking the bond's credit rating, the issuer's repayment track record, the instrument's ...

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Gambhir backs BCCI's family rule

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has backed the BCCI's directive to limit the presence of cricketers' families during long overseas tours, saying players must realise they are not on vacation but on national duty. The BCCI introduced a revised travel policy after the Indian team's 1-3 defeat in Australia at the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, capping family members' stay to two weeks maximum for tours longer than 45 days. For shorter tours, the duration was restricted to seven days. "Families' roles ...

-SPORTS

FIRST AMARAVATI SUMMIT

Naidu flags falling fertility

Says population must be managed, not controlled

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Friday called for a national shift from population control to population management, declaring that human capital is India's strongest economic asset. He was addressing the inaugural Amaravati Summit on World Population Day at the State Secretariat.

Launching a new population survey campaign under the slogan "Population management starts with every family. Your opinion is our policy guide", Naidu emphasised the need for policies in tune with evolving demographic realities.

"Earlier, I supported family planning measures, including a law bar-



- New population survey initiative launched with public participation.

- Naidu says earlier laws like the two-child norm may need review.

- He stresses preserving India's demographic advantage amid falling fertility rates.

- AP's fertility rate is now 1.7, below the replacement level of 2.1.

- Global examples like Japan, China, and Hungary cited for pro-natalist policies.

- Rising costs and lifestyle changes discouraging young couples from having children.

- Survey findings show most respondents prefer two or fewer children.

- Naidu suggests expanding government support for larger families.

ring individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections," Naidu said. "But times have changed, and such laws may now need reconsideration."

Quoting Gurajada Apparao's line "A nation is made of its people, not just its soil," he stressed the importance of protecting India's demographic dividend. "With Andhra Pradesh's fertility rate at 1.7, below the replacement level of 2.1, we must act to sustain population equilibrium," he noted.

Naidu expressed concern over the global decline in fertility rates, citing figures from Japan (1.23), China (1.02), and Singapore (0.96), and pointed to international incentives to boost birth rates.

Continued on Page 2

'AP should be a role model in GST collections'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has called for Andhra Pradesh to become a national role model in Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections. Chairing a high-level coor-

dination meeting with Central and State GST officials at his camp office on Friday, the Chief Minister stressed the need for stringent measures to curb tax evasion and ensure efficient tax administration.

Continued on Page 2

Stray dogs maul girl to death

PNS ■ NANDYAL

In a heart-wrenching incident, a four-year-old girl was mauled to death by a pack of stray dogs at Kypa Colony in Banaganapalli village on Friday.

According to police, the deceased, Madhupriya (4), was playing near her house with other children when a group of stray dogs suddenly attacked her. Locals who witnessed the horrific scene rushed to her aid and managed to chase the dogs away.

She was immediately shifted to the Area Hospital in Banaganapalli, where doctors declared her



brought dead.

The girl's parents, Jayaramudu and Rameswari, were inconsolable with grief. Residents of the colony have urged the authorities to take urgent measures to address the growing menace of stray dogs in the area.



Three gates of Srisaillam dam lifted

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The Srisaillam reservoir is witnessing a heavy inflow of water following continuous rains in the catchment areas, prompting officials to lift its gates to release water downstream.

Project engineers said on Friday that the Srisaillam reservoir is receiving an inflow of 1,75,233 cusecs from the Jurala and Sunkesula projects.

Continued on Page 2

Padayatra by Min Satya Kumar marks one year of NDA rule in AP



PNS ■ DHARMAVARAM

To mark the completion of one year of the NDA coalition government in Andhra Pradesh, State Health Minister Satya Kumar

Yadav launched a padayatra (foot march) in Dharmavaram on Friday, highlighting the coalition's commitment to people-centric governance.

Continued on Page 2

Should Narendra Modi step aside at 75?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has stirred political debate with his remark that "anyone who turns 75 should step aside and make way for the younger generation." While he did not name anyone, the Congress party has claimed the comment was clearly aimed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will turn 75 in September 2025.

Bhagwat made the statement at a recent book launch, and his words have quickly become the centre of a national discussion. The timing is significant, as the BJP has previously enforced the 75-year rule within its own ranks—leaders like L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, and Jaswant Singh were sidelined once they reached that age.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's remark sparks fresh buzz



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Now, questions are being raised over whether the same principle will be applied to Narendra Modi. Despite such precedents, many political observers believe it is unlikely, given Modi's current stature as the most powerful figure in the BJP and Indian politics. Speculation over Modi's retirement isn't new. In March last year, Modi visited the RSS headquarters in Nagpur for the first time after becoming Prime Minister. That visit fuelled rumours that retirement discussions were on the table. However, leaders like Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis and other senior BJP figures swiftly dismissed those reports.

Continued on Page 2

Experiments, exercise mark Axiom-4 crew's final days on ISS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and other crew members of the Axiom-4 mission are making the most of their final days on the International Space Station, pushing forward a wide range of experiments that could shape the future of space exploration.

The SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft, carrying the four-astronaut crew, reached the orbital outpost on June 26 and is scheduled to undock from the International Space Station (ISS) no earlier than Monday, July 14, at 7:05 am ET (4:35 pm IST), according to an update on X by Axiom Space, which is spearheading the mission. Shukla and the other three astro-



nauts are expected to board the spacecraft about two hours before the undocking, wear their space suits and carry out the necessary tests before they begin their journey to the Earth.

The ISS is orbiting the Earth at a speed of 28,000 km per hour, and the spacecraft will initiate the autonomous undocking process to

gradually slow down and re-enter the Earth's atmosphere for a splashdown at a designated spot.

Shukla worked on the microalgae experiment, deploying and stowing samples that could one day provide food, oxygen and biofuels for deep space missions, Axiom Space said in a statement.

The resilience of the microalgae makes them a promising asset for sustaining life beyond Earth, it said. "Exercise research and spacesuit maintenance topped the schedule for the Expedition 73 and Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) crews on Thursday," a NASA statement said.

The crew also continued the Voyager Displays study, which examines how spaceflight affects eye movement and coordination.

Banakacherla reveals TG’s betrayal by Cong, BRS

Possession is nine-tenths of the law. In property law, if someone has physical possession of a property, they are presumed to be the owner of the property, making it easier for them to get support of the law to protect their possession. Politicians, especially from the BRS, the Congress, and the AIMIM, understand this principle very well. The numerous allegations of land grabbing against most of their leaders are proof that they are not only aware of this principle but also brazenly take advantage of it.

In case of rights over river waters, the same principle applies to water as much as it applies to land. Of course, in this case, it applies to rights over water among the riparian states. Any state that builds projects to utilise water from rivers flowing through multiple states gains a strong claim

over those waters, even if it does not have a rightful claim over those waters to begin with. That is why states aggressively pursue irrigation projects, without agreements with the other riparian states or permissions from the tribunals or applicable central authorities.

The upper riparian states possess an inherent advantage when it comes to river waters, as water flows from the upper to the lower riparian state. Hence, upper riparian states can deprive the lower riparian states of their rightful share by moving first and building projects to channelise river waters for drinking, irrigation or industrial needs. Once a state builds projects and presents a fait accompli, it isn't easy for the other states to reclaim their rights over those waters.

Historically, the Telangana region was robbed of its rightful share of the Krishna and

Compared to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana is richer. It had higher revenues and bigger budgets all through. It is the upper riparian state. Yet, the inept and corrupt BRS and Congress governments failed to leverage our advantages to secure our water rights

Godavari waters by the erst-while united Andhra Pradesh state's ruling class, which predominantly came from the present-day post-bifurcation Andhra Pradesh. This neglect and deprivation resulted in the demand for a fair share of Krishna and Godavari waters becoming a rallying cry for a successful separate Telangana statehood movement.

The leaders of BRS and Congress are well aware that the only way to ensure Telangana receives its rightful

share of Krishna and Godavari waters is to conceive and build projects on the two rivers. They know that, as the upper riparian state, if we construct projects, there's no way for Andhra Pradesh, the lower riparian state, to deprive us of our rightful share in the waters by building projects downstream.

Yet, the proposed Banakacherla project by Andhra Pradesh exposes the truth that Telangana remains as disadvantaged as it was in



KISHORE POREDDY

united Andhra Pradesh when it comes to ensuring its rights over Krishna and Godavari waters. The rightful blame for this sorry state of affairs lies at the doors of the Congress and the BRS.

The Congress, which ruled united Andhra Pradesh for decades, actively deprived

Telangana of its rightful share of Krishna and Godavari waters by its Chief Ministers focusing, designing and executing projects that benefit the Andhra region. Pothireddypadu Head Regulator is a classic example. Initially approved for a capacity of 1,500 cusecs to provide drinking water to Chennai, the Congress government of YS Rajasekhara Reddy expanded its capacity to 40,000 cusecs without sanction.

The BRS, which ruled Telangana for its first nine and a half years, totally neglected projects on the Krishna river, leaving many projects started even before 2014, like the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy project, unattended and incomplete. Kaleswaram, the one mega project built by the BRS government on the Godavari, lies defunct today, thanks to the

BRS turning the project into an ATM for the party's first family. The defunct project not only failed to utilise Godavari waters, leaving them to flow into the Bay of Bengal, but also saddled the people of the state with a humongous debt of almost one lakh crores.

The current Congress government, which came into power with a promise of quickly completing various irrigation projects, turned out to be equally inept. The SLBC (Srisailem Left Bank Canal) tunnel accident and the Sunkishala retaining wall collapse are the only notable highlights of its rule regarding water projects. Forget creating new capacities, the government even stopped talking about irrigation projects.

Compared to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana is richer. It

had higher revenues and bigger budgets all through. It is the upper riparian state. However, the inept and corrupt BRS and Congress governments, incapable of leveraging our advantages and securing our water rights, cunningly try to throw the blame on the central government to divert people's attention.

The latest example is the Banakacherla project proposal by Andhra Pradesh. Despite the BJP central government's repeated assurances to protect Telangana's interests and the Union Ministry of Environment returning the proposal citing the need to resolve inter-state issues before seeking environmental clearance, BRS and Congress continue with their deception. They will soon face the ire of Telangana.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)

Fertiliser supply streamlined for Kharif crops: Agri Director

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a move to ensure uninterrupted and timely fertiliser supply during the ongoing Kharif season, Agriculture Director Dr S Dilli Rao chaired a key coordination meeting on Friday at the Department of Agriculture Conference Hall in Mangalagiri. The meeting brought together fertiliser manufacturers, state-level wholesale dealers, and retailers to discuss supply chain efficiency, logistics, and shared responsibilities.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Dilli Rao noted that major irrigation projects across the state are now brimming due to heavy rainfall in upper catchment areas, and canal water has been released. As a result, agricultural activities such as paddy transplantation, weeding, inter-cultivation, and fertiliser application are in full swing.

He stated that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has given firm instructions to ensure no farmer faces difficulty in accessing fertilisers. Emphasising that manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers are essential links in the supply chain, Dr Dilli Rao called for coordinated efforts to ensure uninterrupted distribution.



A joint statement issued by all stakeholders affirmed their commitment to ensuring seamless fertiliser supply across the state. In response to departmental directives, fertiliser companies announced the provision of free lorry transportation from railway rake points directly to retail dealers, aiming to reduce transport costs and avoid delays.

Dr Dilli Rao further revealed that the State Government has proposed three new railway rake points—at Hindupur, Anakapalli, and Madanapalli—to minimise logistical expenses. Of these, the Central

Government has already approved the Anakapalli rake point, while the others are in the final stages of clearance.

He added that the Chief Minister is personally overseeing progress and is in active discussion with the Centre to expedite approvals and secure free transport support from manufacturers.

Expressing gratitude on behalf of the farming community, Dr Dilli Rao thanked the Chief Minister for his efforts in securing the Anakapalli facility and for his continued commitment to farmers' welfare.

The meeting also appreciated Dr Dilli Rao's proactive leadership in engaging all levels of the supply chain to ensure uninterrupted benefits to farmers.

Present at the meeting were Additional Director of Agriculture VV Vijaya Lakshmi, Joint Director (Fertilisers) Krupadas, Deputy Director Venkateswara Rao, AP Fertiliser Dealers Association President VV Nagi Reddy, AP State Wholesale Dealers Association President E Nanaji, Coromandel International GM Sachhidananda Reddy, and other key stakeholders.

Registrations open for SEMICON India

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SEMI and the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) have officially opened visitor registrations for SEMICON* India 2025, scheduled to be held from 2nd to 4th September 2025 at Yashobhoomi (India International Convention and Expo Centre), New Delhi.

Held under the theme “Building the Next Semiconductor Powerhouse”, the event will highlight India's growing stature as a global hub for semiconductor design and manufacturing.

Organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, SEMICON India 2025 builds on the success of last year's edition.

It aims to serve as a landmark platform for industry leaders, policymakers, investors, start-ups, and academia to connect, collaborate, and advance India's position in the global semiconductor value chain.

As one of eight premier SEMICON events held globally by SEMI, SEMICON India has rapidly risen in prominence.



TTD EO holds talks with L&T on enhanced security plans

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In view of future requirements and to ensure enhanced convenience for devotees, TTD Executive Officer J Syamala Rao and Additional EO C H Venkaiah Chowdhury held a detailed meeting with representatives of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Friday at Annamayya Bhavan, Tirumala, to discuss security enhancement plans.

During the session, the L&T team gave a PowerPoint presentation showcasing state-of-the-art security technologies aimed at modernising the existing TTD security systems.

The presentation covered plans for upgrading the Alipiri Checkpoint, installation of high-capacity scanners, streamlined inspection processes, improved parking management, traffic regulation, integrated surveillance systems, centralised alarm management, traffic enforcement mechanisms, helmet detection systems, automatic traffic regulation and clarification modules, and a comprehensive command and control system.

Speaking on the occasion,

EO Shyamala Rao emphasised the need to prepare security plans that would serve Tirumala for the next 40 years. He underscored the importance of special measures during peak devotee influx periods and directed L&T officials to draft both long-term and short-term plans accordingly.

TTD CVSO Muralikrishna, Chief Engineer Satya Narayana, L&T experts, Transport and IT GM Sessa Reddy, ASP Ramakrishna and other officials also took part in the meeting.

APCRDA signs MoU with ...

Continued from Page 1

Under the agreement, NaBFID will assist APCRDA in crafting a comprehensive financial roadmap for the capital city's infrastructure projects.

As a transaction advisor, NaBFID will support the formulation of financial strategies, explore implementation models such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), and identify viable revenue sources. The institution will also look into monetisation of land assets and facilitate engagement with stakeholders and potential investors to mobilise funds.

NaBFID Managing Director Rajkiran Rai G expressed optimism over the partnership. “We are pleased to collaborate with APCRDA in building world-class infrastructure in Amaravati. We aim to unlock innovative financing models to support robust, service-oriented urban growth,” he said.

APCRDA Commissioner K. Kannababu described the MoU as a major milestone in the development of Amaravati. “This partnership will strengthen the financial ecosystem required for the capital city's structured and sustainable growth,” he said.

Should Narendra ...

Continued from Page 1

Even in the past, opposition leaders like Arvind Kejriwal and Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut suggested that Modi would be made to step down after turning 75. Yet, with Modi firmly in control of the party and the government, many within the BJP believe such a move is unlikely.

For now, Bhagwat's remarks have opened a floodgate of speculation—will the BJP apply its own rule to its tallest leader, or will Modi remain the exception? That, many say, will be a defining test of BJP's internal discipline and RSS's influence.

CM calls on Guv Nazeer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu paid a courtesy visit to Governor Justice S. Abdul Nazeer at Raj Bhavan on Friday.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister briefed the Governor on the prevailing situation in the State and key governance-related matters.

The meeting assumes significance in light of the Chief Minister's upcoming visit to New Delhi. In this context, his interaction with the Governor has drawn attention in both political and administrative



circles.

The discussion between the two leaders was described as cordial, with the Chief Minister apprising the Governor of various developments in the State.

Padayatra by Min Satya ...

Continued from Page 1

Beginning the march from Tikkaswamy Nagar after offering special prayers at a local Shiva temple, Minister Satya Kumar engaged directly with residents, heard their grievances and assured swift redressal. He was accompanied by TDP Dharmavaram in-charge Paritala Sriram, Jana Sena State General Secretary Chilakam Madhusudan Reddy, and other NDA alliance leaders, reflecting a united front.

The Minister covered six municipal wards, including Shivanagar, Sanjay Nagar, Gandhinagar, Indiranagar and PRT Streets. He inspected civic conditions firsthand and issued on-the-spot instructions to officials to resolve long-pending issues.

Residents raised several concerns, including poor sanitation in drains, damaged CC roads, erratic drinking water supply, and broken electric poles.

Three gates of ...

Continued from Page 1

In response, three crest gates have been lifted to release 81,195 cusecs of water downstream towards the Nagarjuna Sagar project and the Pothireddy Padu head regulator. Additionally, 20,000 cusecs of water is being released through the Pothireddy Padu head regulator to the Rayalaseema region. Another 35,315 cusecs is being utilised for hydropower generation on the left bank, along with 32,237 cusecs on the right.

The water level in the reservoir has reached 882.2 feet against its full capacity of 885 feet. Out of the total storage capacity of 215.8 TMC, 203.4 TMC has been impounded, officials said. After a long interval, the reservoir—one of the largest in the state—began receiving substantial inflows from June itself and reached near full capacity by the first week of July, offering relief to the government and irrigation authorities.

Meanwhile, the Polavaram project is also receiving heavy inflows, with water levels rising in the river Godavari. The water level upstream of the Polavaram spillway has reached 29.300 metres, while it stands at 20 metres downstream.

AP pushes ahead ...

Continued from Page 1

We're integrating digital systems to ensure transparent and efficient service delivery.”

He also mentioned the online single-window clearance system under the “Speed of Doing Business” initiative, which enables industries to secure approvals without physical visits to government offices.

Senior officials including Special Chief Secretary G Anantha Ramu, Principal Secretaries Kumar Vishwajith and S Suresh Kumar, Secretaries Dr N Yuvaraj and Pratibha Devi, and Director of Fire Services Murali, along with Central government representatives, attended the meeting.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Krishna Paksha

Tithi:

Jul 12 02:08 AM to Jul 13 01:46 AM

Dwitiya:

Jul 13 01:46 AM to Jul 14 01:02 AM

Nakshatram:

Uttara Ashadha: Jul 11 05:56 AM to Jul 12 06:36 AM

Shravana:

Jul 12 06:36 AM to Jul 13 06:53 AM

Rahukalam:

9:07 AM to 10:44 AM

Yamagandam:

1:59 PM to 3:36 PM

Varjyam:

10:39 AM to 12:16 PM

Gulika:

5:52 AM to 7:30 AM

Amritakalam:

08:21 PM to 09:58 PM

Ahijit Muhurtham:

11:55 AM to 12:47 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy

Temp: 34°

Humidity: 58%

Sunrise: 5:41 AM

Sunset: 6:44 PM

Updated: July 11, 2025 5:00 PM

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Major push to end ganja cultivation

PNS ■ PADERU

Minister for Tribal Affairs, Women and Child Welfare and district in-charge Gummati Sandhyarani on Friday said that infrastructure projects worth Rs 1,000 crore are underway in Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district, including road works and public facilities.

Speaking at a public meeting held at the local junior college grounds to promote awareness on the 2005 anti-ganja policy and encourage alternative farming, Sandhyarani said the State government was distributing 2 crore horticultural saplings to tribal farmers to replace ganja with crops like mango, sapota, guava, lemon, and custard apple. She stressed the government's commitment to ending ganja cultivation and empowering tribal communities.

Referring to welfare measures, she said that the government had identified one lakh 'gold families' — economically backward households—and appealed to citizens and institutions to support them. She said 90% of ganja cultivation

had been eliminated, and tribal-grown coffee was receiving international attention, with plans to expand plantations to one lakh acres.

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha, who also addressed the gathering, described ASR as the "Andhra Ooty" and said that tribals had been exploited by middlemen in the ganja trade. She warned that cultivating even two marijuana plants was a non-bailable offence. Assets worth Rs 3.73 crore had been seized, she said, and 700 of 900 prisoners in Visakhapatnam Central Jail for ganja cases were tribal youth. She noted that 13,000 acres had been covered under orchard development last year, with 35,000 acres targeted this year, including the distribution of turmeric seeds under MGNREGS.

Collector A.N. Dinesh Kumar said saplings worth Rs 54 crore were being given to tribal farmers under MGNREGS. Coffee plantations would be expanded as per government plans. SP Amit Bardar said drone surveillance had helped clear 93 acres of ganja fields.



Ministers and senior officials unveil the Swachh Sankalp poster at a public meeting in Paderu on Friday.

YSRCP slams poor arrangements for SADAREM camp at GGH

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP NTR District Doctors Wing Chairman, Dr Ambati Naga Radhakrishna Yadav, criticised the poor arrangements made for the SADAREM camp held at the Government General Hospital (GGH).

In a statement issued on Friday, Dr Radhakrishna Yadav said he was shocked and disappointed by the hospital administration's negligence. He pointed out that the camp was set up on the second floor, despite the lifts not working, causing serious inconvenience to persons with disabilities.

He said, "This shows a complete lack of concern for the well-being and dignity of persons with disabilities. It is inhumane to expect them to climb stairs to access such important services."

The YSRCP leader demanded that the camp be relocated to the ground floor near the hospital entrance, where it would be easily accessible. "This is a basic human right. People with disabilities should not be made to struggle for services that are meant for their welfare," he added.



AP Chambers urges ban on raw human hair exports

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers) has urged Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to intervene and impose a ban on the export of raw human hair, particularly Non-Remy (comb waste/Goli/Chutti) hair classified under HS Code 05010010, in

order to safeguard the domestic hair processing industry.

In a detailed representation, AP Chambers pointed out that although demand for Non-Remy hair has surged over the past two decades, China — once a major legal importer — has increasingly resorted to smuggling through countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal to evade import duties. Despite a ban

imposed by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in March 2022, exports resumed shortly afterwards, allegedly involving even previously blacklisted traders.

Currently, Non-Remy hair accounts for about 85% of India's human hair exports, while Remy hair, typically sourced from temples and sold through auctions or direct sales, makes up just 15%.

The Chamber warned that the unchecked export of raw hair is adversely affecting domestic processors, especially in Andhra Pradesh's Eluru and Madepalli regions. The Indian human hair extensions and wig industry, valued at Rs 8,000 crore, has the potential to reach Rs 30,000 crore in the next decade and presently employs over 10 lakh women in rural areas. AP

Chambers' key demands include a strict ban on raw hair exports, limiting temple hair auctions to licensed Indian manufacturers, and encouraging value-added exports.

The federation also proposed the establishment of a dedicated R&D chair at IIT Chennai and incentives for exports to Africa, one of the largest markets for human hair products.

AISF demands revocation of GO 77, release of fee arrears

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Members of the All India Students Federation (AISF) staged a protest at the Visakhapatnam Collectorate on Friday, demanding the withdrawal of Government Order (GO) 77 and the release of pending fee reimbursement and scholarship arrears. The protest was organised following a call by the AISF Rashtra Samithi and ended with a petition being submitted to Administrative Officer Eshwar Rao.

AISF District Secretary U. Nagaraju said Education Minister Nara Lokesh had promised during the Yuvagalam Padayatra that GO 77 would be scrapped within 100 days of assuming office. However, he alleged that the government had not kept its word. He added that the order is still affecting students from low-income families studying in private postgraduate colleges, with many being forced to discontinue their studies due to a lack of financial support.



Nagaraju demanded the immediate release of Rs 6,400 crore in pending dues, pointing out that students who completed their courses have not received their certificates. He recalled announcements made during the budget session, where the government had said Rs 3,900 crore would be released first, followed by Rs 2,600 crore, but claimed that no funds had been provided yet.

He also urged the government to continue offline

admissions for degree courses and criticised the focus on political and public events like Mahanadu and PTM meetings, saying they do little to help students. Nagaraju warned of intensified protests if the government fails to respond to their demands.

AISF District President P. Shekhar, Assistant Secretary Hemanand, teachers J. Abhishek and Grace Prakash, and student leaders Ganesh, Surya, and Abhi also took part in the protest.

Move to privatise govt medical colleges opposed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Praja Arogya Vedita (PAV) has urged the State government to withdraw its proposal to privatise government medical colleges, citing serious concerns over corruption in private institutions.

In a letter to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, PAV leaders Dr MV Ramanaiah and T Kameswara Rao referred to the ongoing CBI investigation into irregularities in over 40 private medical colleges across India, including those in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Alleged malpractices include bribing officials, ghost faculty, fake patients, and illegal transactions.

PAV warned that privatising government medical colleges would lead to higher fees, reduced accountability, and denial of healthcare to poor communities. The group has held public forums, submitted representations, and collected thousands of signatures opposing the move.

Role of academia in confronting environmental issues stressed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The two-day National Seminar on "Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development: Addressing the Twin Challenges of Desertification and Climate Change (BSACDC-2025)" concluded successfully on Friday at Dr Lakireddy Hanimi Reddy (LHR) Government Degree College, Mylavaram. The seminar was sponsored by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), New Delhi.

The event served as a dynamic platform for interdisciplinary dialogue and knowledge exchange, reaffirming the need for collaborative efforts to address the twin environmental challenges of desertification and climate change through science-based policies and grassroots initiatives.

Speaking at the valedictory session, College Principal Dr Illa Ravi highlighted the vital role of academic institutions in confronting global environmental issues. He stressed the importance of raising awareness and fostering active

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHEMES Central team to visit 16 villages in Krishna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji has directed officials to extend full cooperation to the visiting Central team and provide all necessary information related to the implementation of various Union government welfare schemes.

A national-level monitor from the Union Ministry of Rural Development has arrived in the district and will tour 16 villages across three mandals until July 20 to assess the rollout of key schemes.

On Friday, Collector Balaji, along with trainee Collector Farheen Zahid and National-Level Monitor Prabhat Sharma, held a coordination meeting with officials at the Collectorate in Machilipatnam to plan the inspection process.

During the meeting, the Collector stated that inspection reports would be submitted daily to higher authorities. The review will focus on a range of schemes including the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, National Rural Watershed Mission, Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, National Social Welfare Programme, Rural Self-Employment Training Institute, Krishi Sinchai Yojana, and the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme. Additionally, the team will

evaluate works related to water resources, rural drinking water supply, and Anganwadi centres.

The central team is scheduled to visit six villages in Vuyyur mandal — Kalavapamula, Saipuram, Peddaogirala, Kadavakollu, Akunuru, and Chinnavogirala. In Thotlavallur mandal, the villages of Garikaparru, Kummamuru, Boddapadu, Vallurpalem, Ailuru, and Bhadrarajupalem will be covered. Four villages in Gudumandal — Kalapatam, Jakkancherla, Gandram, and Maddipatla — will also be inspected.

Collector Balaji advised officials to prepare a village-wise schedule to facilitate the visits and ensure that all field-level officers are available to furnish relevant details. He informed that the DRDA Project Director would serve as the nodal officer at the district level, while MPDOs would act as nodal officers at the mandal level.

The meeting was attended by Central Team Assistant Nandalal, DRDA PD Hariharanath, ZP CEO K Kannam Naidu, DWAMA PD Sivaprasad, RWS EE Nataraju, ICDS PD MN Rani, Housing Development Corporation District Officer Venkata Rao, Survey and Land Records AD Joshila, District Agriculture Officer Manohar, Panchayat Raj SE Ramana Rao, District Skill Development Officer Naresh, and other district officials.



Krishna District Collector DK Balaji, along with trainee Collector Farheen Zahid and National-level Monitor Prabhat Sharma, review the implementation of Central welfare schemes with district officials at the Collectorate in Machilipatnam on Friday.



engagement from students, researchers, and faculty members to support long-term ecological sustainability.

Seminar Convener and Head of the Botany Department, Dr J Ramudu, emphasised the urgency of tackling climate change and desertification, noting the significance of public awareness and sustainable practices in combating environmental degradation.

The seminar drew a diverse gathering of participants from across the country, including eminent scientists, professors, researchers, and scholars. Keynote addresses and invited lectures explored key themes such as biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable environmental management.

As part of the academic sessions, research scholars and academicians presented oral and poster papers, offering valuable insights into areas including biodiversity protection, climate adaptation, land degradation, and eco-centric development.

Prominent attendees included Prof N Mathivanam (University of Madras), Prof A. Madhusudhan Reddy (Yogi Vemana University), Prof SM Khasim (Department of Botany, ANU), Dr Brahmaji Rao (Department of Environmental Science, ANU), Dr Shankara Rao (Botanical Survey of India), Dr M Pradeep (Government Degree College, Srikakulam), and Dr Ahmed Abdul Haleem Khan (Telangana University, Nizamabad), among others.

Speaker Ayyanna promotes mechanisation of farming

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyanna Patrudu on Friday inaugurated an agricultural mechanisation exhibition at the Market Committee grounds in Anakapalli. The event highlighted the State government's push to modernise farming through technology.

The exhibition featured various farm machines from different companies. Patrudu toured the stalls, interacted with company representatives, and took part in a demo by driving a mini tractor.

Speaking to farmers, he urged them to make use of

government subsidy schemes to adopt modern tools. He said efforts were being made to develop Narsipatnam as a model farming constituency within a year. Citing the example of pesticide-spraying drones, which cost around Rs 10 lakh but are available at a subsidised price of Rs 2 lakh, he said mechanisation helps overcome labour shortages, lower costs, and boost output.

Patrudu also expressed concern over the low response from youth to job opportunities.

He said only 70 out of 348 selected candidates had taken up jobs offered at a recent job fair. He called for a change in mindset and stressed the

need to restore respect for farming as a profession.

A cold storage facility is also planned for the area, with dedicated space for banana produce.

Patrudu praised local farmer Shiva Ganesh of Gairampet for cultivating a five-acre orchard with banana and palm trees, calling him a role model.

He assured that the government would help farmers secure loans for equipment. The Agriculture Department arranged live machinery demos using LED screens for better understanding. The event saw participation from public representatives, officials, and farmers.



Waltair DRM stresses need for adaptive leadership at IIMV event

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Divisional Railway Manager of Waltair Division, Lalit Bohra, emphasised the importance of adaptive leadership in the public sector during the valedictory session of the Leadership Development Programme (LDP) at the Indian Institute of Management Visakhapatnam (IIMV).

Addressing 21 senior officers from Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL), Bohra said leaders must be agile and forward-thinking to deal with today's complex industrial challenges. "Leadership requires the ability to handle complexity with foresight. Effective leaders are

those who adapt and stay ahead of change," he stated.

The LDP, held from 7 to 11 July 2025, focused on enhancing the managerial and leadership skills of senior MCL officers. The five-day course included sessions on "Negotiating with Impact," "Effective Communication," "Emotional Intelligence," "Corporate Finance," "POSH and Gender Sensitisation," and "Leadership Perspectives for Public Sector Leaders."

Prof. M Chandrasekhar, Director of IIM Visakhapatnam, inaugurated the programme and spoke about the significance of transformative leadership and institutional excellence.



Release of water to KC Canal urged to save withering crops

PNS ■ NANDYAL

The Rayalaseema Saguneeti Sadhana Samithi (RSSS) has appealed to the Nandyal District Collector to release water to the KC Canal to save withering crops.

RSSS vice-president YN Reddy, along with other leaders, met District Collector Rajakumari on Friday and submitted a memorandum requesting immediate release of water into the canal.

Speaking to the media, YN Reddy said that due to favourable weather and rains earlier in the season, farmers under the KC Canal ayacut cultivated paddy, soybean, maize, and other wet crops in around one lakh acres.

These crops are now in the flowering and fruiting stages. However, the failure of the monsoon has led to the drying of the crops, causing distress among the farming community.

The RSSS leaders urged the Collector to intervene and ensure the early release of water to the canal to protect the standing crops. YN Reddy said that a similar request was

made to the Water Resources Department officials 15 days ago, but there had been no response.

He expressed disappointment over the indifferent attitude of the KC Canal Executive Engineer when the issue was brought to his notice on Wednesday.

He criticised the department for taking up canal repair works during the rainy season instead of summer. "Despite adequate water in the reservoirs, the delay in completing repairs has halted water release, leaving farmers to suffer," he said.

Reddy appealed to the Collector and irrigation officials to understand the gravity of the situation and act swiftly.

He said the Collector assured them that the Irrigation Advisory Board meeting would be held on Saturday to decide on water release.

B. Rama Subba Reddy, Ramakrishna Reddy, P. Ramudu, Maheshwar Reddy and N. Sudhakar were also part of the delegation that met the Collector.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF PARA-MEDICAL STUDENTS

Four lab technicians arrested

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Four lab technicians of Rangaraya Medical College have been suspended and arrested after 60 female para-medical students complained of repeated sexual harassment.

Kakinada Collector Shan Mohan, along with SP Bindu Madhav, announced the arrests at a joint press conference held at the Collectorate on Friday. He said criminal cases were filed against the lab assistant and three technicians based on the complaint.

The students, all pursuing a BSc in Medical Laboratory Technology, sent an email to Principal Dr Attaluri Vishnuvardhan alleging that the college lab assistant, V. Kalyana Chakravarthy, had been behaving inappropriately and harassing them sexual-



ly.

The Principal promptly referred the matter to the Internal Complaints Committee set up to address such issues. During the inquiry, 55 of the 60 students confirmed the misconduct and also named three lab techni-

cians—S. Gopalakrishna, B. Zimmiraju, and G.V.S. Prasad Rao are involved.

Based on the committee's findings, Dr Vishnuvardhan suspended the four staff members and filed complaints at One Town and Two Town police stations. The accused

were arrested immediately.

The Collector praised the students for their courage in coming forward and appreciated the Principal for acting swiftly and following due procedure. He added that internal committees in all educational institutions would be strengthened to prevent such incidents in future.

SP Bindu Madhav said the police responded swiftly and arrested the accused within hours of receiving the complaint. He urged girl students and working women to make use of the 'Sakthi' mobile app, developed by the police department for women's safety.

Among those present were Principal Dr Vishnuvardhan, GGH in-charge superintendent Dr Srinivasan, and RMC para-medical courses coordinator Dr Sathish.



GODAVARI FLOOD

Shift people to safer places, officials told

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K. Vetri Selvi has instructed officials to evacuate people from low-lying areas on a war-footing, following heavy flooding in the Godavari River.

The Collector held an emergency teleconference with concerned officials on Friday evening to review the ongoing evacuation and relief measures.

She emphasised that residents of Lachigudem and Gommugudem villages in Kukkunur mandal—classified under the first danger warning zone—must be immediately relocated to the Dacharam R&R Colony.

She directed officials to keep tractors ready for transportation and to issue alerts to those living in the second warning zone. Special attention should be given to pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with serious health conditions, who must be shifted to the nearest Community Health Centres (CHCs), she said.

The Collector further instructed the Marketing

Department to ensure the supply of vegetables as needed. She ordered that tarpaulins, boats, life jackets, expert swimmers, and rope teams with trained personnel be deployed in Kukkunur and Velerupadu mandals for effective flood relief and rehabilitation operations. "There should be no scope for negligence in handling the rehabilitation efforts," she stressed.

The District Panchayat Officer (DPO) was directed to maintain proper sanitation and cleanliness in the relief centres, while officials were asked to set up medical camps in these locations.

She also stated that flood relief efforts must be closely monitored by the Jangareddygudem RDO, ITDA Project Officer, and special officers of Kukkunur and Velerupadu mandals. Field staff are to remain on high alert and respond promptly to evolving situations.

Lastly, the Collector ordered preventive measures to stop people from crossing culverts, causeways, and roads inundated by floodwaters.

SANITATION WORKERS STAGE DHARNA

Regularisation of services and better wages demanded

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Sanitation workers affiliated with the AP Municipal Workers' Union staged a dharna in front of the Collectorate here on Friday, demanding regularisation of services for workers employed under the Andhra Pradesh Corporation for Outsourced Services (APCOS).

The protestors raised slogans calling for the implementation of a minimum wage of Rs 26,000, along with pension and gratuity benefits for retired APCOS workers. They also urged the government to provide employment to the family members of deceased or retired workers.

Union president Bobbili Srinivasarao and AITUC district general secretary Thokala Prasad, addressing the demonstrators, alleged that sanitation workers were being deputed for office duties rather than sanitation work. This, they



said, was adversely affecting sanitation services. They demanded an end to the deputation system and called for the appointment of additional staff to improve sanitation.

The leaders also sought implementation of dearness allowance (DA), surrender leave, service scales, gratuity, and leave encashment. They strongly opposed the ten-hour work system currently in place. Highlighting issues in

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's Pithapuram constituency, the leaders claimed that toilet workers were being paid a meagre wage of Rs 4,000 per month. They demanded an immediate hike in their pay.

Additionally, they pressed for a minimum wage of Rs 21,000 for Kakinada's special sanitation workers, toilet workers, park coolies, school sweepers, and watchmen.

Police conduct surprise checks in trains at Eluru Railway Station

PNS ■ ELURU

Police teams carried out surprise checks on passenger trains passing through Eluru railway station on Friday as part of efforts to curb the illegal transport of cannabis.

Additional SP (Administration) Suryachandra Rao stated that the checks were conducted on the instructions of

Superintendent of Police K Pratap Shiva Kishore. Sniffer dogs were deployed during the operation to detect the presence of ganja in the trains.

The ASP said a strict vigil had been imposed across the district to prevent the smuggling and consumption of cannabis. The operation at Eluru railway station was led by GRP SI Cymon and RSI Uday Bhaskar.



Gottipati distributes drones to farmers

PNS ■ KANIGIRI

Minister for Energy, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, emphasised the need for modern technology in agriculture to make farming profitable. Participating as chief guest in the 'Suparipalana Toli Adugu' and 'Intintiki Telugu Desam' programmes in Kanigiri, Prakasam district, he distributed three agricultural drones to farmers from Kanigiri, Chandrasekharapuram, and Veligandla mandals.

Each drone, valued at Rs 10 lakh, is being provided with a government subsidy of Rs 8 lakh. The minister urged farmers to adopt modern farming techniques to increase productivity and income, stating that only profitable agriculture can genuinely uplift the farming community.

Later, the minister conducted a door-to-door campaign and interacted with beneficiaries to review the implementation of welfare schemes. He



noted that within just one year, the coalition government had spent Rs 400 crore under the Arogyasri health scheme and the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), underscoring the government's commitment to public health under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership.

On the issue of rising electricity consumption, which is growing by 6–8% annually, the minister assured that the coalition government is taking adequate measures. He said free electricity is already being

provided to handloom and power loom workers, and a new scheme to offer 200 units of free power to barbershops will be launched soon.

He further stated that the government is working to ensure 24x7 uninterrupted power supply in rural areas through new substations and power lines. He encouraged citizens to take part in the Surya Ghar Bijili Yojana scheme to help reduce electricity bills and power losses.

Local coalition leaders also attended the event.

100 autos seized as SP makes surprise inspections

PNS ■ KAKINADA

District Superintendent of Police (SP) Garikipati Bindu Madhav personally inspected key junctions across the city on Friday and seized 100 school autos for overloading, rash, and negligent driving, despite the scorching sun.

The SP conducted surprise checks, thoroughly verifying documents such as vehicle registration and pollution clearance, and inspected safety standards.

He imposed penalties on all 100 errand drivers for violating traffic norms.

Later, SP Bindu Madhav conducted a counselling session for the drivers at the Two Town Traffic Police Station. He

advised them on the importance of adhering to road safety measures and the Motor Vehicles Act, especially while transporting schoolchildren. He also obtained undertakings from the drivers, assuring compliance with traffic regulations and safety protocols.

The SP warned that such special drives would continue and that any future violations would be dealt with strictly, including possible cancellation of driving licences.

Kakinada Sub-Divisional Police Officer Manish Devaraj Patil, One Town Traffic Inspector N. Ramesh, Two Town Traffic Inspector D. Ramarao, and traffic sub-inspectors from both stations participated in the drive.



Sribharat visits HSL, vows to resolve staff issues

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam MP M Sribharat visited Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) on Friday and met with the Chairman and Managing Director, along with senior officials, to discuss issues concerning employees, pensioners, and nearby residential areas.

During the visit, employees and retired staff raised concerns about pending Provident Fund dues, unresolved pension benefits, delays in promotions, and inadequate medical services. Sribharat also inspected the condition of infrastructure in HSL's residential colonies and urged the management to reinstate welfare schemes withdrawn during the COVID-19 period.

He also discussed the future of Hindustan Shipyard Junior and Degree College, which has been serving students from poor backgrounds for over 50 years. He assured that steps would be taken, in coordination with HSL, the alumni, and the Educational Society, to keep the college running.

YSRCP slams govt's 'unconstitutional' borrowing through APMDC bonds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has come down heavily on Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, alleging unconstitutional financial practices in the name of development. Addressing a press conference, the YSRCP accused the State government of misusing the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC) to raise funds through bonds by pledging the state treasury and mineral wealth as collateral.

A YSRCP spokesperson stated that instead of responding to pointed questions on the issue, the Finance Minister appeared irritated and issued vague statements during a party event in Anantapur, causing confusion among the public.

The party questioned how funds raised through APMDC bonds were diverted to the government instead of being used for the corporation's growth. They alleged that the government allowed lenders direct access to the



state treasury and raised loans at a steep 9.3% interest rate, pledging mineral assets worth Rs 1.91 lakh crore — a move the YSRCP described as unprecedented and financially reckless.

Refuting the Minister's claim that the previous YSRCP government had also planned to raise Rs 7,000 crore through APMDC bonds, the party clarified that although a GO had been issued, no such borrowing ever took place. "Strict conditions in the GO ensured that the state was not held responsible for repayments, which were to be solely managed by APMDC," the party explained.

The YSRCP highlighted that during its tenure, bonds worth Rs 2,000 crore were issued through the AP Beverages Corporation in 2022 without pledging state assets, and the issue was oversubscribed four times, allowing the government to raise Rs 8,300 crore.

Accusing the current coalition government of portraying dangerous borrowing as sound financial management, the YSRCP warned of the long-term consequences of mortgaging state wealth. They urged the Finance Minister to address the concerns from the State Secretariat rather than issuing statements from party events.

'Dry Day Friday' drive gains steam in NTR district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the onset of the monsoon, NTR District Administration has stepped up precautionary measures to combat seasonal diseases and vector-borne fevers, announced District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha.

As part of this initiative, 'Dry Day - Friday' activities are being strictly observed across all villages, towns, and Vijayawada city with active public involvement.

On Friday, Dr Lakshminsha participated in a Seasonal Disease Awareness Rally held at Prasadampadu in Vijayawada Rural Mandal. Addressing the gathering, he warned against the environmental harm caused by plastic use and encouraged a

shift to eco-friendly alternatives like cloth and jute bags.

The Collector also tested drinking water quality on the spot, checking pH levels and other safety parameters, and stressed the need for safe water consumption during the rainy season.

He urged residents to adopt preventive measures against diseases such as malaria, dengue, and chikungunya, and to seek immediate medical care if symptoms arise.

To curb mosquito breeding, he recommended removing stagnant water, cleaning storage containers, and covering tanks with proper lids. He also instructed field-level staff to maintain drainage systems and ensure regular sanitation drives.



ACROSS THE STATES



Three locations at J-K raided in terror-funding case

Jammu and Kashmir Police's State Investigation Agency (SIA) on Friday raided three places in the Union Territory in connection with a terror funding case involving the use of cryptocurrency. Three suspected locations in Jammu, Doda and Handwara were searched, a police spokesperson said. He said the searches were aimed at collecting critical evidence to unravel a conspiracy involving cross-border funding through cryptocurrency for fuelling terrorism and destabilising peace in Jammu and Kashmir. The search operations were also aimed at identifying individuals inciting youth against the Union of India, thereby threatening national security, the spokesperson said. The raids were part of an ongoing investigation under FIR No 12/2022, registered under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and the Indian Penal Code. "The search operations yielded vital evidence, marking a breakthrough in exposing the clandestine financial networks that keep the pot of terrorism boiling in Jammu and Kashmir," the spokesperson said.



Home Secy Govind's tenure extended till Aug 22 next yr

Centre on Friday extended the tenure of Home Secretary Govind Mohan till August 22 next year, according to an official order. Mohan, a 1989 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Sikkim cadre, was named as the Home Secretary in August 2024. He took over the charge from Ajay Kumar Bhalla on completion of his tenure on August 22 last year. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved Mohan's extension in services as Home Secretary beyond the date of his superannuation on September 30 up to August 22, 2026 or until further orders, in terms of the provisions of FR 56 (d) and Rule 16 (1A) of the all India Services (Death-Cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958, said the order issued by the Ministry of Personnel. The rules have provisions to extend the services of such officers.



Newborn baby mauled, left near drain by stray dogs

A newborn baby was allegedly mauled by stray dogs to death and left near a drain in Hatabazar area, police said on Friday. Police said the baby was three to five days old and was found wrapped in a cloth. A girl cleaning her courtyard allegedly saw dogs attacking the baby. She immediately informed her father, Tahir, who drove the dogs away and alerted other locals. Tahir then contacted the Gagaha police who took custody of the infant's body. According to preliminary probe, the newborn appeared to be between three and five days old. A forensic team was dispatched to the site, which collected samples for examination. Station House Officer (SHO) Sushil Kumar said CCTV from the nearby intersection will be thoroughly examined to determine how the infant's body came to be at the location. "Further details would emerge following the post-mortem report. Investigations are underway," the SHO said.

LAYS FOUNDATION STONES FOR KEY PROJECTS IN MEGHALAYA

Sitharaman inaugurates 72 digital libraries

PNS ■ SHILLONG

Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday inaugurated 72 digital libraries and laid foundation stones for multiple key infrastructure and development projects worth over Rs 1,500 crore in Meghalaya.

Accompanied by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, Sitharaman also launched the IICA North East Conclave 2025 at IIM Shillong and laid the foundation stone for the IICA Northeast Regional Campus.

The Union Finance minister also laid the foundation for the redevelopment of Umiam Lake at a cost of Rs 99.99 crore. It will be funded under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme. The project aims to boost tourism and conserve the lake's ecosystem.

Sitharaman also inaugurated the groundwork for the Mawkhanu Football Stadium at a cost of Rs 732 crore for a 40,000-seating capacity world-class football stadium which will enhance local sports infrastructure.

She also launched the devel-



opment of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) infrastructure at Mawkhanu at a cost of Rs 99.99 crore, also under the SASCI scheme, to support business tourism in the region.

In addition, foundation stones were laid for Working Women's Hostels in Shillong, Jowai, Byrnihat, and Tura (Rs 132 crore) to provide safe and affordable accommodation for women professionals and students.

Another key project unveiled was the CBIC

Integrated Complex at Umsawli, intended to streamline operations of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs in the state.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the Digital Libraries initiative will 'significantly enhance access to knowledge, especially in rural and remote areas, and empower youth through digital learning resources.'

The 72 Digital Libraries, spread across all 12 districts of Meghalaya, are designed to provide free access to e-books,

online courses, research materials, government services, and digital skill-building tools.

These libraries are built at a cost of over Rs 100 crore and will operate as community knowledge hubs, equipped with internet connectivity, computer terminals, and trained facilitators to assist users.

The initiative is aimed particularly at helping students, job seekers, and lifelong learners. Sitharaman is on a four-day visit to Meghalaya from Thursday.

After MEA disapproved his remarks on Modi, Mann says can't he ask about foreign policy

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after the external affairs ministry disapproved of his criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign visits, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Friday asked whether he doesn't have the right to query about the foreign policy.

He again said that the prime minister has time to tour abroad but has no time to address the concerns of 140 crore Indians.

The MEA on Thursday disapproved of Mann's criticism of Modi's foreign visits, terming his comments 'irresponsible'.

Without naming Mann, the ministry said the government of India "disassociates" itself from the "unwarranted" comments made by a "high state authority" that undermined India's ties with friendly coun-



tries.

to a question about the MEA's response, Mann on Friday asked, "Do not I have a right to question about a foreign policy that what are you going to do there? What have you done there? Tell us. Don't we have a right?"

"I asked about the foreign policy that wherever you go, why Adani's business starts there. It means he takes him out there. Why do not you accept that you go there to get someone business? Don't we have the right to ask? We will ask. I will ask him in the future also," said Mann.

Ex-CJIs flag some provisions of ONOE Bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former chief justices of India, D Y Chandrachud and J S Khehar, on Friday flagged certain provisions of the constitutional amendment bill for simultaneous elections, including powers it vest with the Election Commission, but rejected the suggestion that the idea falls foul of the Constitution, sources said.

Khehar is the third ex-CJI to question the wide leeway the bill confers on the poll body under its 82A(5) Section in deciding on holding the election of an assembly after Ranjan Gogoi and Chandrachud.

While Chandrachud appeared before the Joint Committee of Parliament headed by BJP MP P P Chaudhary after Khehar, he had submitted his written opinion earlier.

Cooking meat, fish, egg banned on Kanwar Yatra route

PNS ■ MEERUT (UP)

To maintain the sanctity of the Kanwar Yatra route and ensure its peaceful conduct, the Meerut district administration has banned the cooking of meat, fish, and eggs in hotels, dhabas, and restaurants along the yatra route, an official said on Friday.

Meerut District Magistrate Dr VK Singh told PTI, "Cooking of meat, fish and eggs has been banned in eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route. More than 10 teams of the Food Safety Department have been deployed for inspection."

The move comes as part of extensive preparations for the holy month of Sawan, during which lakhs of Kanwariyas undertake the annual pilgrimage.

Police have stepped up surveillance, dividing the yatra route into 57 zones and 155 sectors.



Over 8,000 policemen, including 1,166 women personnel, have been deployed in the region. Drone and CCTV surveillance is also in place, officials said.

Preparations for 'Jalabhishek' have been completed at major temples, including Baba Augharhnath, Nageshwar Mahadev, and Mahabaleshwar.

According to the Augharhnath temple committee president Satish Singhal, over

two lakh devotees are expected this year.

The administration has set up 838 camps across the district, including 464 on highways, providing facilities such as bhandaras and health check-ups.

Meerut Divisional Commissioner Dr Rishikesh Bhaskar Yashod said that all food establishments along the route must display rate lists, owners' details, and valid food safety registration certificates.

'Books discontinued in Raj schools as they glorified Nehru-Gandhi family'

PNS ■ JAIPUR

School students in Rajasthan will no longer study two-part supplementary textbooks with state Education Minister Madan Dilawar arguing that these reading materials are not required because they glorify the Nehru-Gandhi family and carry no marks for students.

The Congress has attacked the minister over the decision, saying that the government can remove textbooks from the syllabus but cannot change people's minds.

Minister Dilawar said that



the books 'Azadi ke Baad ka Swarnim Bharat' Part-1 and Part-2 carry no marks and, therefore, he directed the officials of the department to discontinue teaching these books.

"These books, which the previous Congress government introduced, do not carry any marks for the exams. They were only meant for reading,

Without any academic weight, there was no point in continuing them so I have directed that the Education Department will not teach such books," Dilawar said.

Stressing that positive things should be taught, he said that the contributions of those who served the country and the state should be equally mentioned but those Congress leaders who imposed the Emergency and killed democracy have been glorified in these textbooks.

"The books only glorified Congress leaders, specifically the Gandhi family. Key figures

such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Ambedkar and even Congress leader Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who later founded the Bharatiya Janata Sangh, were ignored. The textbooks failed to highlight their contributions while extensively promoting the Gandhi family," he said on Thursday.

The book talks about the freedom movement, the role of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and others. The book also focuses on the contributions of former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

BJP attempts to steal polls in Bihar as it did in Maha: Rahul

PNS ■ BHUBANESHWAR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused the BJP of making attempts to 'steal (chori) the upcoming elections in Bihar, as it did in Maharashtra' last year.

Congress leader also accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of not doing its duty but working for the interest of the BJP.

Addressing the party's 'Samvidhan Bachao Samavesh (Save Constitution rally)' here, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha also said the

INDIA bloc, of which Congress is a part, decided to prevent the BJP from stealing the Bihar assembly polls.

The Congress has been alleging that the manipulation of the voters' list helped a BJP-led alliance win the Maharashtra assembly polls in 2024.

"Like Maharashtra, attempts are being made to steal the elections in Bihar. The BJP is attacking our

Constitution across the country... At a meeting yesterday, the INDIA bloc decided to prevent the BJP and ECI from stealing the elections in Bihar," Gandhi said.



AAP will go it alone in Bihar polls: RS MP Sanjay Singh

PNS ■ PATNA

Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh on Friday said his party will contest the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections independently, even as he backed INDIA bloc's allegation of voter list manipulation at the behest of the BJP.

In a free-wheeling conversation with PTI Videos here, the Rajya Sabha MP also strongly defended his party colleague and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, who is under fire for ridiculing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to small countries.

The AAP leader also claimed that Modi has been given "a big signal" from RSS chief Mohan



Bhagwat, who has said that people aged over 75 years should not remain in active public life. "We will contest the upcoming Assembly polls alone," said AAP's Bihar in-charge emphatically, when asked about the possibility of an alliance with INDIA bloc, of which the party was a part during last year's Lok Sabha elections.

Singh, whose party had adjusted seats with the Congress

in Delhi but refused to do the same in Punjab, added, "Look at the state of affairs in the (INDIA) coalition. Leaders like Pappu Yadav and Kanhaiya Kumar were shoved aside. What can one say of such a formation."

The allusion was to an alleged incident that took place earlier this week when a section of the media claimed that Yadav, an Independent MP who supports Congress, and Kanhaiya, the national in-charge of the party's students' wing NSUI, were prevented by security personnel from getting on to an open vehicle, atop which Rahul Gandhi, Tejashwi Yadav and other key leaders of the INDIA bloc addressed the public.

India presents candidature for IMO

PNS ■ LONDON

India has presented its candidature for re-election to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council at the organisation's 134th session in London, where the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways highlighted key aspects of maritime safety and gender inclusivity.

At a special India-themed reception at the IMO Headquarters on Thursday evening, Ministry Secretary T K Ramachandran and Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami announced the decision to seek re-election in Category B of the Council.

The election for the 2025-26 biennium will take place at the organisation's Assembly later



this year and follows India's re-election with the highest tally back in December 2023.

"India embraces the philosophy of One Earth, One Family, One Future, and we bring this vision to life through fostering robust and collaborative maritime efforts," said Ramachandran in his address at the reception.

"Under our Vision 2047, we see maritime growth as a cor-

ner of global progress, and we deeply value a growing engagement with the IMO and its member states... we have several pillars, including ship building, ship recycling, ship financing, ship ownership and ship flagging, the entire ecosystem," he said.

The senior official highlighted the ministry's plans to invest USD 1 trillion in the sector over the next 25 years as he invited

representatives from around the world to "partner with India in this quest for us to become one of the leading maritime nations in the world, and I trust that we will continue to receive your support as we seek re-election to the IMO Council".

India's candidature falls under the Category of 10 states with "the largest interest in international seaborne trade", alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"I do want to emphasise how much we value the partnerships that we have forged with many delegations here, across the years, and our effort to see the IMO as a central pillar of the international order in

the international maritime system, but most of all, as a technocratic body staffed by highly skilled professionals who do so much to ensure that our world functions in the way to which we have gotten used to," said Doraiswami.

The IMO is the premier body that oversees the maritime sector, which in turn underpins international trade, transport and all maritime activities.

The Council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the organisation. The Assembly normally meets once every two years in a regular session.

It is responsible for approving the work programme, voting the budget and determining the financial arrangements of the organisation.

Editor's
TAKE

SC steps in on Bihar voter list row

SC nudge to EC boosts hopes for inclusive Bihar polls with Aadhaar, Voter ID and ration card as valid proofs

The democracy is a fragile political framework and needs to be safeguarded with fervour. As it is often said, 'democracy dies in darkness,' the challenges to democracy can come from different quarters, often from the constitutional institutions themselves. What was turning into a political battle in Bihar has now been interrupted by the intervention of the Supreme Court. This is how the Constitution had intended the Supreme Court to be — a saviour of democracy.

In a prelude to the 2025 Assembly elections in Bihar, the revision of electoral rolls by the Election Commission (EC) has triggered a major controversy, with the Opposition alleging that the process being followed is opaque and exclusionary. The Congress and RJD alleged that the process risked disenfranchising a significant number of voters, particularly those from marginalised and rural communities, due to a lack of clarity around acceptable documentation and limited avenues for verification.

It all began with the Election Commission's decision to revise the voter lists and ask voters to furnish identity proofs if they were not in the 2003 voter lists. What added to woes of the people was that the generally accepted Government ids like Aadhar, ration card etc. were not acceptable.

This meant mass deletions of voters, as most people in villages and marginalised communities did not have those documents. Now, with the Supreme Court weighing in and offering clear guidance on permissible documents for voter verification, the issue appears to be heading toward resolution, though the final verdict is yet to come. Seeking judicial intervention, petitions were filed in the Supreme Court challenging the EC's methodology.

The core contention was that the exclusion of key identity documents — such as Aadhaar cards, ration cards, and even existing voter IDs — from the verification process was arbitrary and in violation of citizens' democratic rights. The unilateral manner in which the EC was operating raised serious concerns of disenfranchising a huge chunk of population. However, in a recent hearing, the Supreme Court opined that the Election Commission include Aadhaar, voter ID cards, and ration cards as part of the enumeration and verification process. While the Court stopped short of issuing a formal directive, its suggestion carries weight and is expected to influence the EC's final approach.

The next hearing on the matter is scheduled for July 28, by which time the EC has to file its response. While the larger constitutional questions remain pending, the SC's interim suggestion already marks a significant course correction. It ensures that the electoral process in Bihar remains participatory, inclusive, and constitutionally sound.

The ball is now in the EC's court. It is expected that the poll panel will align its voter verification process with the Supreme Court's guidance. This is especially crucial in a state known for its caste complexities, migrant population, and economic vulnerabilities. While the controversy has not yet fully subsided, the SC's intervention has underscored the critical importance of transparent and inclusive electoral processes in safeguarding the democratic rights of marginalised people.

Surging crime in Bangladesh

Human rights reports and police data reveal a grim picture of a nation where criminal gangs flourish with impunity, law enforcement remains demoralised and overstretched, and the general public is left vulnerable and afraid

The precipitous decline in the law-and-order situation in Bangladesh under the interim Government headed by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus is causing widespread concern in the country. An editorial, published in *Dhaka Tribune* on February 23, 2025, under the heading, "When will we get back law and order?" stated, "Bangladesh has been suffering due to a severe void in law and order since the fall of the previous Government in August last year. With a noticeable uptick in the number of criminal activity, of varying size and scope, the country has been in the grips of a veritable crime wave, and the recent robbery of a moving bus along the Dhaka-Rajshahi route is only further proof that our law enforcement has been nothing if not inadequate for the past few months in carrying out their duties."

Expressions of alarm continued as the situation worsened. An editorial carried in *The Daily Star* on July 4, 2025, under the heading "We must send an undiluted message against mob violence," stated, "Even the interim Government, while repeatedly assuring us that no mob activities would be tolerated, has frequently fallen short of backing those assurances with swift and firm action."

The alarm is understandable given the seriousness of the situation. There has been a massive upsurge in crimes of every nature — murder, mob violence, lynchings, drug trafficking, mugging, armed robbery, rape, molestation and abuse of women, thefts, assaults, forcible occupation of property and business establishments. The situation started deteriorating almost immediately after the forcible ouster of Sheikh Hasina's Government on August 5, 2024. According to a report by Nuruzzaman Labu appearing in *Dhaka Tribune* of December 22, 2024, under the heading, "Mugging, murder rates climb nationwide despite increased efforts," there were 583, 399 and 337 murders respectively in the whole of Bangladesh in September, October and November, 2024. The corresponding figures for the same months in 2023 were 278, 258 and 227. On February 27, 2025, *Prothom Alo* English carried a report by Partha Shankar Saha under the heading "Mob beatings claim 121 lives in 6 months, what does the law say." It attributed to the human rights organisation Manabdhikar Sanskriti Songstha (henceforth Shongstha) the figure of 121 persons being killed in mob violence between August 2024 and January 2025. According to another human rights organisation, Ain o Salish Kendra, 146 people were killed in such incidents in 2024 against 51 in 2023. A report by a staff correspondent, as updated on March 31, 2025, and appearing under the heading "Number of rapes in March over double that



in February," in *Prothom Alo* English, attributed to the Shongstha the statement that there were 132 rapes in Bangladesh in March 2025, against 57 in February. The number of gang rapes in these two months were 17 and 25 respectively.

According to the same organisation, 52 cases of political violence in March affected 459 persons, of whom 12 were killed and 447 injured. An editorial titled "Tackling the rising tide of crime" in

Dhaka Tribune of January 11, 2025, stated that 1,361 murders were reported nationwide in Bangladesh from August 1 to November 30, 2024, against 1,158 from April 1 to July 31 of the same year. Criminal gangs have mushroomed. A report by Mehedi Khan, appearing under the heading "Over 50 criminal gangs active under various names in 4 thanas of Dhaka" on June 9, 2025, states, "Criminal gangs have sprouted up in four thanas of the capital's western zones — Adabor, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, and Hazaribagh. The criminal groups are active in these densely populated areas, involved in various offences including drug trafficking, mugging, robbery and extortion. These gangs openly brandish weapons and engage in various criminal activities. They have also become embroiled in deadly clashes over territorial control and dominance in the area." It is not that efforts have not been made to control the situation. As early as September 17, 2024, Bangladesh's interim Government issued an order giving commissioned officers

of Bangladesh's Army the magisterial powers vested in executive magistrates and put them under district magistrates or deputy commissioners. Among other things, this gave them the power to make arrests and disperse unlawful rallies. The order, which was to come into effect immediately, was for a period of 60 days. The order was renewed for the fourth time on May 8, 2025, and for the same duration, with effect from May 14, 2025.

A much-vaunted effort was the launching of what was termed as "Operation Devil Hunt." According to a report by Ali Asif Shawon published in *Dhaka Tribune* on February 9, 2025, under the heading "What is Operation Devil Hunt," Bangladesh's Home Affairs Adviser, Lt-Gen (Retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told reporters that the operation would focus on detaining individuals who threatened the nation's stability and would continue until all the devils were brought to justice. It would incorporate not only the police but also personnel from the Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), Ansar, and the Coast Guard, he added. The result was a damp squib despite the arrest of 11,882 persons until March 1, 2025.

A core committee, meeting at the Home Adviser's residence on March 2, 2025, decided that the operations by joint forces to control crime would continue but without the nomenclature of Operation Devil Hunt. Why did it fail? In an article under the heading "Gutsy women in Uttara and the Government's Operation Devil Hunt" in *Prothom Alo* English, the paper's Joint Editor and a poet, Sohrab Hasan, wrote, "From media reports it is apparent that 90 per cent of those being detained under Operation Devil Hunt are leaders and activists of the toppled Awami League. That means they have been caught for past crimes. It is certainly a

good initiative to bring to book those who misused state power in the past. But will those who are presently carrying out criminal activities be able to slip free?" The basic cause of the failure was the weakness of Bangladesh's police and its lack of confidence to act firmly. Its personnel had mostly gone into hiding in the face of fierce mob attacks following Sheikh Hasina's fall. There was no policeman in the streets from the evening of August 5 to August 8, 2024, when Yunus' interim Government assumed office. They slowly and fearfully trickled back to work thereafter, but some did not, and manpower remained short. There was lack of mobility. Five hundred police vehicles were burnt during mob attacks in Dhaka alone and there were no replacements. Massive purges of police personnel at all levels, accused of perpetrating atrocities during the uprising in July 2024 against Sheikh Hasina, played havoc with the force's cohesion and command structure.

This was made worse by the fact that those from outside Dhaka, who filled the places of the ousted personnel, knew very little about Dhaka and the demands of policing the complex city. Nor did they have any network of informants. And this at a time when much of the force's time was — and is — spent in tracking down and jailing Awami League leaders and activists in hiding. Criminals are flourishing and are filled with a feeling of impunity. Hundreds of them, who were incarcerated by Sheikh Hasina, were released on bail in the couple of days following her ouster. Many who had fled abroad have returned. Turf wars between their gangs followed and continue. And all of them prey on the common people.

(The writer is Consulting Editor with *The Pioneer*. Views are personal)

PICTALK



Young girls enjoy the refreshing showers at India Gate in New Delhi. Photo: Pankaj Kumar

Kolhapuri vs Prada: The GI Controversy

SECOND
Opinion

On June 25, during its Spring/Summer 2026 menswear show in Milan, Italian luxury fashion house Prada debuted shoes inspired by India's GI-tagged Kolhapuri chappals, which elicited outrage over cultural appropriation. The brand was accused of appropriating traditional Indian craftsmanship without due credit or acknowledgement of its cultural and geographic origins. A major ethical and legal controversy has arisen between the globally renowned luxury fashion house Prada and the traditional, handmade leather footwear known as Kolhapuri chappals, which have deep cultural roots in India.

Traditional Kolhapuri chappal manufacturers are preparing to file a lawsuit against Prada, asserting that the company's latest shoe series has borrowed the unique design elements of Kolhapuri chappals without authorisation or credit. This scandal has raised serious concerns about intellectual property rights, cultural appropriation, and, above all, the violation of protection ensured by India's Geographical Indication (GI) system. Famous for its craft artistry, which consists of fine hand-stitching and vegetable-dyed leather, Kolhapuri chappals are indigenous to three districts in Karnataka and Maharashtra: Kolhapur, Sangli, and Belgaum. The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999, a legisla-



SHUBHAM ARYA

tive mechanism that is used to protect goods with specific characteristics or reputations due to origin, granted this unique pair of shoes GI status in 2019. The GI tag provides legal protection from unauthorised commercial use as well as legally validating the regional and cultural uniqueness of such goods. Prada's launch of a new line of open-toe leather sandals that look like traditional Kolhapuri chappals in terms of soles, toe knots, and leather construction ignited the controversy.

Indian craftsmen and cooperatives argue that Prada could have infringed the GI protection for Kolhapuri chappals by not recognising the traditional origin of this style. They view this practice as commercial and cultural exploitation when the artistic work of poor craftspeople is utilised for global gain without equitable benefit-sharing, and not merely as an aesthetic imitation. Legally, this suit is soundly based in India's GI Act, specifically Section 21, which bars unauthorised persons from using a registered GI in any manner that may cause customers to be misled or that will constitute unfair competition. In addition, Section 22 enumerates other forms of GI infringement, including blatant abuse, false representations of origin, and actions that discredit or debase the GI's already acquired reputation. In addition, GI protection is expected to be enforceable worldwide under Articles 22 to 24 due to the fact that both India and Italy are signatories to the

Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) under the WTO, thus giving affected artisans

potential avenues for seeking legal remedies across borders.

By GI tagging, India has for long encouraged the conservation of its native cultural forms and traditional knowledge practices. There is a pressing requirement for robust international mechanisms able to effectively counter GI protections in cross-border cases. The issue raises the broader ethical debate of cultural appropriation versus appreciation, as well as its legality. While fashion often takes inspiration from across the globe, there is a deep imbalance in cross-cultural exchange seen in not acknowledging, appreciating, and compensating traditional cultures for their effort. Global brands perpetuate systems of exploitation and erasure when they commodify local work without contributing to the societies of origin.

Hence, ethical grounds necessitate that businesses like Prada be accountable, not only through legal compliance but also through promoting transparency, equitable trade, and true collaboration with communities of artisans. Finally, the legal action the Kolhapuri chappal manufacturers are contemplating is something greater than a conflict regarding ownership of the design; it is a declaration in favour of the preservation of traditional knowledge systems, the exercise of intellectual sovereignty, and the protection of cultural heritage. India can well set a precedent for safeguarding its cultural heritage due to the strict enforcement of the GI law and support from global legal systems such as TRIPS. It is important that history not only be preserved but also shared equitably and with morals as globalisation and tradition meet increasingly.

(The writer is a researcher at Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab, and a freelance journalist. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Namibian Honour for PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was recently conferred with Namibia's highest civilian honour, the Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis, by Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the country's first female president.

While the award adds to Modi's growing list of international accolades, its name carries profound significance. The Welwitschia plant, after which the award is named, is a botanical wonder found only in the Namib Desert. Known for its resilience, it survives on minimal moisture, has just two leaves that grow throughout its life, and can live for over a thousand years.

When Namibia instituted the award in 1995, the plant was chosen as a symbol of longevity, wisdom, and strength in adversity — reflecting both the country's spirit and what it seeks to honour in global leaders. Namibia itself is full of unique marvels. The Namib Desert is considered the oldest in the world. The country is also home to the largest population of free-roaming cheetahs — around 3,000 in number. In 2022, eight of these majestic animals were gifted to India, later released into Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The Welwitschia, in many ways, is more than a plant — it is a philosophy of endurance. In honouring Modi, Namibia also celebrates a bond rooted in resilience and mutual respect.

AVINASH GODBOLEY | DEWAS

Trump's Mixed signals on Ukraine

The Trump administration's recent moves on Ukraine send mixed signals. On one hand, it has resumed the supply of 155 mm artillery shells and Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMRLS) to Kyiv—clear military support.

On the other, it is reportedly engaging in secret peace talks, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio in contact with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. This contradictory approach raises a serious question: how can Russia — or the world — trust American intentions when its diplomatic overtures are undermined by parallel actions on the battlefield? Trust is the cornerstone of any peace process, and that trust is built on consistency. Trump's dual-track policy might offer short-term strategic leverage, but it erodes the very credibility required for meaningful negotiations. Peace cannot be achieved through blurred signals or fragmented strategies. If the United States genuinely wants to reclaim leadership in global diplomacy, coherence must replace contradiction. Congress must assert its role and push for alignment between America's words and deeds. A divided message only deepens divides. For peace to take root, diplomacy must speak with a single, honest voice. Only a unified and consistent strategy can pave the way for lasting peace in Ukraine.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

When a child kills a teacher

The murder of teacher Jasvir Patu in Hissar is not just a crime — it's a painful reflection of our collapsing moral and social fabric. When a student turns into a killer, it signals not just personal failure but a societal breakdown. Schools, once temples of learning, are turning into places of fear. Teachers, once revered, now live in anxiety. How did we reach a point where children, instead of expressing emotions, explode in violence? The answer lies in broken homes, absent parenting, and a hollow education system. While smart classrooms expand, value education shrinks.

Children live in digital bubbles, isolated from real human connection. At home and school, they are judged, not heard. Moral teachings — truth, empathy, forgiveness — remain confined to textbooks. Neither teachers have time nor parents have the patience.

As a result, unheard pain festers into rage. A neglected mind can choose suicide or violence. This tragedy demands more than outrage — it calls for urgent reform. We need trained counsellors in schools, regular parent-student dialogues, and emotional literacy alongside academics. Above all, we need to listen — truly listen — to our children. Because a child who is heard can heal. But a child who is ignored may one day shatter everything.

PRIYANKA SAURABH | HISSAR

POPULATION: WHY INDIA MUST RETHINK ITS DEVELOPMENT PATH

Population can be either a powerful asset or a heavy burden — depending entirely on how it is planned and utilised. While China views its vast population as a resource for economic growth, India often sees it as a strain — evident in policies like free rice distribution rather than investment in education, healthcare, or sustainable income generation. The issue is not the number of people, but the absence of a long-term, inclusive development strategy.

History shows how proper planning transforms potential into progress. The USSR, with a relatively smaller population, reached global heights through centralised planning. China continues to challenge the world through strategic, state-led development.

India, too, once relied on such planning — multipurpose dams, industrial hubs, and top-tier educational institutions emerged from its Five-Year Plans. These not only boosted food

production and power generation but also created world-class professionals across fields. However, the dismantling of the Planning Commission — dismissed as a relic of socialism — has signalled a shift away from inclusive growth.

Today, wealth is concentrated: 5 per cent of the population controls 75 per cent of the wealth, while the bottom 50 per cent survives on a mere 3 per cent. With rising unemployment, stagnant wages, and soaring living costs, the promise of demographic dividend is fast turning into demographic despair.

The future of India lies not in market forces alone, but in a renewed commitment to national planning, driven by moral courage, equity, and vision. Population is a boon — but only when guided by purposeful planning and inclusive policies. If left to the whims of market economy, it becomes a curse.

AG RAJMOHAN | JANANTAPUR

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com. In not more than 400 words. We appreciate your feedback.

From AI to apocalypse: Why the real crisis isn't in space, but on Earth

As inequalities deepen and ecosystems unravel, the call to build a sustainable, resilient future grows more urgent. India, among other nations, is waking up to this reality – but time is fast running out. The decisive decade is here and now

FIRST
Column

In an age marked by spectacular developments in Artificial Intelligence, space technologies, and quantum computing, humanity stands at a paradox. While we have gained tremendous success in exploring outer space with the resounding success of AXIOM4, our planet burns, floods, and suffocates under the weight of disasters, many of which are a result of our own making. The challenge of our time is not just to advance but to endure – to ensure our civilisation remains livable, equitable, and sustainable.

This is not an environmental concern alone. It is a civilisational crisis. And we have no other option but to act now. The recent incidents of floods, cloud bursts, receding glaciers, pollution levels, forest fires, and availability of toxic materials in water and food items, besides microplastics, continue to remain a challenge for India and other countries. There is always a dilemma between growth, economic development and protection of the environment for policymakers and Government agencies. As long as we continue to determine the societal development based on the parameters of GDP, per capita consumption, etc, the issue of climate resilience and sustainability will continue to be ignored and not accorded the due priority.

The Global Wake-Up Call

In his foreword to this year's Global Assessment Report (GAR), UN Secretary-General António Guterres put his opening remarks as "Disasters are a defining feature of the 21st century." He further observes that "Storms, fires, floods, heatwaves, and droughts have become fiercer and more frequent, exacting an ever-greater toll on communities and economies — from eroding sustainable development gains, to rendering entire regions uninsurable, and knocking chunks out of countries' GDP." The GAR report 2025 estimates a staggering \$2.3 trillion in annual disaster-related losses when cascading ecosystem impacts are considered. The signal is loud and clear: climate resilience and sustainability are not peripheral — they must be central to the global agenda of development and growth.

Disasters: Natural, Yes. But Mostly Human-Made

Disasters are no longer isolated incidents — they are a continuum. Take the wildfires in the U.S., which ravaged over 1,000 acres, or the record-breaking heat-wave in Europe (June 2025), claiming 2,300 lives, of which 1,500 were directly linked to fossil-fuel-induced warming. In Texas, four months' worth of rain fell in four hours just last week, from 4th to 7th July, flooding entire cities and killing over a hundred people, many of them children. In the Global South, the picture is even bleaker.



PRAHLAD
SINGH
ADHIKARI



India, Bangladesh, and Nigeria faced devastating floods in 2024, displacing over 19 million people. Across East and Southern Africa, drought threatens the survival of more than 90 million people, pushing many toward starvation. Water scarcity, projected to grow by 40 per cent by 2030, is already disrupting agriculture, energy, and urban life.

While these may seem like "natural" disasters, they are fueled by human choices: deforestation, unplanned urbanisation, pollution, and the relentless pursuit of extractive growth and greed.

The Invisible Crisis: Pollution, Hunger and Health

Climatic variations are natural phenomena which we often refer to as nature's fury, but in reality, more than natural incidents, human actions have been pushing ecosystems and human civilisation to the brink of disaster.

Despite reasonable health facilities at least in the Metro Cities, the following pointers to insidious silent killers:

- Air pollution leads to 6.7 to 8.1 million deaths annually — more than malaria, HIV, and war combined.
- Road accidents claim 1.18 million lives each year.
- Industrial pollution, food waste, plastic dumping, and groundwater depletion are accelerating ecological collapse.
- Meanwhile, 800 million people go hungry while one-third of food is wasted.

When disaster strikes, who suffers the most? The poorest, the youngest, the disabled and the most marginalised.

The Human Cost: Unequal, Unjust, Unbearable

Climate change acts as a force multiplier, worsening poverty, destabilising economies, and intensifying conflict.

- Public health is under siege, with spikes in vector-borne diseases, heat strokes, and respiratory illnesses.
- Mental health, especially among youth, is deteriorating — climate anxiety is now a recognised disorder.
- Women and Indigenous communities face disproportionate risks, with fewer resources to adapt or recover.
- Climate migration is turning borders into battlelines.

CLIMATIC VARIATIONS ARE NATURAL PHENOMENA WHICH WE OFTEN REFER TO AS NATURE'S FURY, BUT IN REALITY, MORE THAN NATURAL INCIDENTS, HUMAN ACTIONS HAVE BEEN PUSHING ECOSYSTEMS AND HUMAN CIVILISATION TO THE BRINK OF DISASTER

We are not all in the same boat—we are in the same storm, yes, but with vastly different vessels.

Wisdom from the Past

Ironically, the solutions we seek in futuristic technologies may lie in the traditional knowledge systems we have abandoned. For centuries, rural and Indigenous communities lived in harmony with nature through rainwater harvesting, seed-saving, agroforestry, and collective living. They practised what we now call circular economy and regenerative living, not as policy, but as culture.

In India, concepts like Mata Bhumi (Earth as Mother) and Aparigraha (non-hoarding) reflected ecological restraint and spiritual responsibility. These aren't nostalgic ideals — they are actionable frameworks for sustainability.

Modern education must not merely produce job-seekers but planet stewards. We must reintegrate ecological literacy with our learning models and treat local knowledge not as folklore but as strategic wisdom.

The Way Forward

To build a climate-resilient, sustainable future, we must anchor our actions around five core pillars:

- Clean Energy Transition: Move away from fossil fuels and accelerate solar, wind, and green hydrogen adoption.
- Circular Economy: Redesign systems to eliminate waste — from agriculture to packaging.
- Resilient Communities: Strengthen both urban and rural systems with green infrastructure and equitable resources.
- Climate Justice: Ensure adaptation funds and resources reach the vulnerable and are not monopolised by the rich.
- Education & Mindset Shift: Integrate climate consciousness, empathy, and intergenerational

The Promise and Challenge of Vertical Farming in India

Cultivating and growing crops or plants in vertically stacked layers and vertically inclined surfaces is known as vertical farming. The world is on the verge of a population explosion, and feeding everyone is the most pressing concern. Per capita land area has decreased due to population growth. In the past, agricultural scientists used their creative thinking to create hybrid or improved high-yielding varieties, better methods, better tools and implements, integrated practices in water, nutrient, insect, and pest management, greenhouse technology, and even genetically modified crops in an effort to feed the world's growing population.

These once — revolutionary initiatives now seem insufficient. The goal of vertical farming has entirely altered in the modern day, and it is now limited to using every available square inch of land and space — rural or urban — to produce as much food as possible for the world's hungry. All around the world, it has now become a new farming technology. Vertical farming is taking over in India as well. With significant net returns, vertical farming is attracting a lot of entrepreneurs. Buildings, warehouses, roofs, and balconies are all suitable locations for vertical farming.

Advantages of vertical farming

1. The primary benefit of vertical farming is its ability to produce incredibly high yields per unit of available land or area.
2. Producing food year-round without being vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, severe rains, irregular rainfall, hail, snowfall, drought, dry spells, very high temperatures, cold waves, pest and disease outbreaks, etc.
3. It lowers transportation costs for loads of food grains from rural to urban regions and lessens the likelihood of spoiling. The amount of fossil fuels used to transport agricultural products from rural areas to urban areas has also decreased.
4. The consumption of water in vertical farming is 70-95 per cent lower than in conventional farming.
5. Because vertical farming requires 90 per cent less soil or none at all, insect and disease infestations are avoided.
6. Since no pesticides are used, food that is pesticide-free or organic is produced.
7. Customers receive fresh products with all of their natural nutritional characteristics since the food supply chain is shortened.
8. High production per unit area, meaning that vertical farming produces over 80 per cent greater yield per unit of area.
9. Urban areas will become greener, and it will help lower increasing temperatures and, most importantly, air pollution in cities.

Disadvantages of vertical farming

1. The main issue is the initial, exorbitant expense of setting up the vertical farming system. It will



cover the cost of building the buildings as well as their automation, such as weather control, programmable LED lighting, automated racking and stacking, remote control and software, computerised and monitoring systems, etc.

2. High energy costs since artificial lighting is used only for plant growth.
3. If not managed, the extra nutrients employed in vertical farming might disrupt and damage the primary metropolitan water supply.
4. Even a tiny amount of heat from LED lighting systems can make it difficult to control temperatures, particularly during the summer, and can overload air conditioning systems, which will result in higher energy costs.
5. With vertical farming, a rounding the structures, which must be disposed of appropriately.
6. At first, a skilled workforce will be lacking and will require training.

Feasibility of vertical farming

India is among the top producers of fruits, vegetables, and a wide range of other agricultural products. Vertical farming has been adopted in India. Experts at ICAR are developing the idea of "vertical farming" under soilless settings, which would allow food crops to be grown without the need for soil or pesticides, even on multi-story buildings in cities like Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, and New Delhi. Researchers at Nadia's Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya have already made some progress on hydroponically vertical farming on a modest scale. Vertical farming has been used on a small scale in Punjab and Nadia,



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VERMA

West Bengal. In Nadia, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Vishwavidyalaya has had some success cultivating tomatoes and brinjal. Punjab has also been successful in using vertical gardening to produce potato tubers. An Indian design-in-tech firm called Idea Farms produces vertical farms, which are popular because their food is organic, of excellent quality, and their supply is reliable.

Greenopia, a firm located in Bangalore, sells packages that include the appropriate seeds, enhanced soil, and smart self-watering containers. The sensor-embedded pots alert you when you need to add more water from outside sources and replace soil moisture as needed. U-Farm Technologies, a start-up company located in Mumbai, is customising modular farms for supermarkets or individual residential complexes, utilising the hydroponic growing technology. India is seeing an increasing number of vertical farming start-ups.

Critical issues in Indian farming, such as an excess or shortage of agricultural products, excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides, degraded soils, and even unemployment, may undoubtedly be resolved by vertical farming.

However, there are obstacles, such as the Indian farming community's reluctance to embrace vertical farming. Indian farmers are dealing with a number of issues, such as water shortage, lack of electrical supply throughout the day, guaranteeing minimum support prices, and little control over market surplus.

A significant obstacle to the adoption of vertical farming in India is the initial, exorbitant cost of infrastructure for a large-scale farm. Other issues facing vertical farming in India include public awareness, the agricultural community's inclusivity, technical know-how, the expense of maintaining and administering the systems, and the industry's economic sustainability.

(The writer is Assistant Professor Agronomy, Surajmal University, Udham Singh Nagary. Views are personal)

The rising role of Anganwadi workers amidst challenges

She once sat in a shaded corner of the village, clothed in a sari, hunched over 11 paper registers, recording births, weighing babies, and distributing dry rations. Few noticed her. Fewer still imagined she was building the foundations of the Indian state. Today, she carries a smartphone. She scans QR codes, verifies biometrics, delivers nutrition kits, and teaches the alphabet.

The Anganwadi worker, quietly and without fanfare, has become the face of India's most local and human form of governance. What changed? Nearly everything.

In 2014, India's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) were still largely analogue. Feedback loops were slow. Growth monitoring data was patchy. Migration of pregnant and lactating women broke service continuity. And the frontline worker operated with little institutional support. The decade that followed brought a quiet technological and administrative revolution, anchored by the rollout of the POSHAN Tracker in 2021.

Today, the numbers tell a radically different story. Over 13.96 lakh Anganwadi Centres are digitally mapped, tracking more than 10 crore beneficiaries in near real-time. Ninety-nine per cent of these are Aadhaar-authenticated, making nutrition governance more targeted, accountable, and responsive than ever before. More than 12 lakh smartphones and nearly 13.85 lakh growth monitoring devices are in the hands of frontline staff, transforming paper-bound posts into smart service points.

A helpline (14408), launched in 2022, has registered a massive number of calls, largely from Anganwadi workers seeking tech support. That such a system now exists is itself a marker of transformation. Field workers, once isolated, are now part of a responsive and digitally networked public system.

But this is not just a story of apps and devices. It is one of the structural reimaginings. The Government's push to upgrade two lakh centres into Smart Anganwadi Centres equipped with LED screens, RO water filters, digital learning aids, and BaLA (Building as Learning Aid) murals signals a shift in what a service delivery point means. By March 2025, 1,70,337 such upgrades had already been sanctioned. If a new kind of state is emerging, it is being built at the doorstep.

The role of the Anganwadi worker has evolved in tandem. Under the "Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi" initiative launched in 2023, she is now a foundational educator, delivering early learning as envisioned by the National Education Policy. With flashcards and puzzles, blackboards and stories, she is shaping India's youngest minds, aged 3 to 6, in the most underserved corners of the country.

These are not token changes. They are backed by scale and intent. Over 4.2 lakh Anganwadi work-

ers have been trained in early childhood education methods. Through community drives, they led more than 30 crore activities in a single year. This signals a shift that places women, nutrition, education, and digital inclusion at the centre of state-building. And yet, even as expectations rise, so do the gaps. Community demand for quality services has grown. Home visits have increased, especially after the introduction of the Navchetna learning framework for children aged 0 to 3 years.

But basic physical infrastructure continues to be neglected. Many workers still conduct classes in rented buildings, often dilapidated and poorly maintained due to low rental allowances. Some operate under tin roofs. Others are under trees. Everything seems to revolve around the Anganwadi Centre and its beneficiaries, but the woman at the helm remains invisible to the system.

The Centre has become a hub of public delivery, but the woman who runs it is still waiting for recognition. There is pressure to deliver, to stay digitally literate, to ensure transparency, but no clarity on her status as a Government employee. Her workspace is expanding. Her accountability is growing. But the institutional gaze still looks past her.

What is emerging is a new frontline where the Anganwadi worker is not an informal adjunct but a full-fledged node in India's governance architecture. Policy is slowly catching up. The Ministry has standardised the retirement date to 30 April, raised the minimum educational qualification to Class 12, and introduced a promotion pathway from helper to worker and worker to supervisor. And yet, the paradox remains. Their work is public, but their status is not. Despite handling duties that mirror those of regular Government employees, they are still denied pensions, uniform pay, or formal civil service protections. The care economy, which is vital to India's human development story, continues to rest on informal shoulders. But the direction of reform is unmistakable. The Anganwadi worker is no longer a passive implementer. She is a decision node. She holds the pulse of the village, tracking health, schooling, nutrition, and migration. Her daily actions now generate national data. Her insights shape programme design. Her presence is not just valuable.

It is indispensable. India's state-building is no longer just a top-down project. It is being constructed from the grassroots, digitally empowered, locally driven, and deeply human. At the heart of this quiet revolution is a woman who carries the weight of the state in one hand and the future of her village in the other.

(The writer is public policy professional. Views are personal)



MALIKA
PANDEY

MONEY MATTERS



Adani Green Energy RE capacity jumps 45 pc

Adani Green Energy Ltd on Friday said its operational renewable energy generation capacity rose 45 per cent to 15,816 MW during June quarter as compared to the year-ago period. It had an operational RE capacity of 10,934 MW in April-June 2024, a regulatory filing said. The 15,816 MW RE capacity includes 11,156 MW solar, 1,986 MW wind and 2,674 MW hybrid renewables. The sale of renewable energy rose 42 per cent to 10,479 million units (MUs) in the quarter from 7,356 MUs in the same period a year ago. The company has already met the 31 per cent or 6,138 MUs of its total committed generation of 19,667 MW (annual commitment as per power purchase agreements) in June quarter only. It operationalised 3,763 MW of solar, 585 MW wind and 534 MW hybrid renewable capacity and added greenfield RE capacity of 1.6 GW in the quarter. The company is aiming 50 GW renewable portfolio by 2030.



Wockhardt to exit US generic biz; focus on antibiotics

Drug firm Wockhardt on Friday said it will exit loss-making US generic business while enhancing focus on new drug discovery in the field of antibiotics and biological drugs for diabetes. The company is undertaking a significant strategic realignment of its US business in line with its long-term vision to build a differentiated, innovation-driven pharmaceutical enterprise, the Mumbai-based drug firm said in a statement. As part of this transition, the company has decided to exit the US generic pharmaceutical segment, paving the way for a deeper focus and investment in its advanced product portfolio, it added. The drug firm said it will focus on new antibiotic drug discovery, where Wockhardt has established a leadership position globally, with a strong pipeline of differentiated assets. Besides, it would also look at its biological portfolio in Insulin, leveraging advanced technologies to address critical unmet needs in diabetes care. The company said its US generic business has been incurring losses over the past several years. In FY2025 alone, the generic business incurred a loss of nearly USD 8 million, it said.



DGGI uncovers 6 shell cos issuing fraudulent invoices

GST Intelligence wing DGGI has conducted searches on at least six premises in the city and uncovered fraudulent invoices worth Rs 266 crore and passing of fake ITC of Rs 48 crore from shell companies, the finance ministry said on Friday. Investigation in a case initiated in Bengaluru by the officers of Directorate General of GST Intelligence, Bengaluru Zonal Unit, said four companies, with no business activity, have shown receipt of hundreds of crores worth of goods and services. "The officers of Directorate General of GST Intelligence, Bengaluru Zonal Unit carried out searches in over six premises in Delhi, and uncovered fraudulent invoices worth over Rs 266 crore, involving availment and passing on of fraudulent Input Tax Credit (ITC) of Rs 48 crore from the shell companies," the statement said. The investigation indicated that initially, the key mastermind was one of the CA/statutory auditor, who managed the transactions of these companies.

INVESTORS CAUTIONED

Beware of dealing with unregistered OBPPs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE on Friday cautioned investors against dealing with unregistered Online Bond Platform Providers (OBPPs), amid the rising popularity of such platforms that offer easier access to various fixed-income instruments.

In a joint statement, the exchanges asked investors to consider various key factors before investing through any online bond platform. These include checking the bond's credit rating, the issuer's repayment track record, the instrument's liquidity, settlement timelines, and tax implications.

Moreover, investors must ensure the platform is registered with Sebi as an Online Bond Platform Provider.

The exchanges also advised investors to thoroughly read platform disclaimers, understand the terms and conditions, and ensure that transactions are conducted through regulated and secure systems.

Given the growing use of these platforms, the exchanges stressed the importance of



understanding the underlying features, risks, and associated costs to make informed investment decisions.

The bourses noted that the risk and return on corporate bond investments vary based on the instrument's credit rating. A rating-wise risk scale, similar to the mutual funds risk-o-meter, could be considered to help investors assess risk more effectively.

Further, the exchanges explained key concepts affecting bond yields. One such concept is Yield to Maturity (YTM), which indicates the total annualised return an investor can expect if the bond

is held until maturity. YTM factors in the bond's market price, periodic coupon payments, and the remaining time to maturity.

However, YTM is not a guaranteed return--it can fluctuate based on market interest rate movements, liquidity conditions, time to maturity, and the creditworthiness of the issuer. If a bond is sold before maturity, the actual return may differ from the indicated YTM.

Typically, when a bond trades below its face value, its YTM is higher than the coupon rate, and vice versa. The coupon rate refers to the

fixed annual interest paid by the issuer, calculated as a percentage of the bond's face value. This provides investors with regular income --usually semi-annual or annual. However, these payments are not without risk and depend on the issuer's financial health. Any delays or defaults in payment can negatively impact returns.

Another essential aspect is the inverse relationship between bond prices and yields. When market interest rates rise, bond prices fall, resulting in higher yields. On the other hand, when interest rates fall, bond prices rise, lowering the yield. Understanding this dynamic is key to assessing interest rate risk and anticipating price movements in the secondary market.

Lastly, the exchanges highlighted that brokerage reversal or zero brokerage can impact YTM by lowering the investment's overall cost, thereby slightly improving the effective return. Investors should always evaluate final returns after factoring in all costs, fees, and applicable taxes.

India Ratings upgrades Rlnfra's credit rating

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rating agency Ind-Ra on Friday upgraded Reliance Infrastructure's credit rating on its existing non-fund based working capital limits, reflecting its substantial deleveraging efforts, resulting in net zero debt with banks and financial institutions.

India Ratings and Research upgraded the credit rating from 'IND D' to 'IND B / Stable / IND A4'.

Additionally, the company said in a regulatory filing that Ind-Ra has withdrawn the ratings assigned to the earlier proposed fund-based and non-fund-based limits, which were not raised or availed by the company.

This upgrade represents a significant improvement of three notches in the company's credit profile, achieved after six years at the IND D rating level, it stated.

The upgrade also reflects the company's substantial deleveraging efforts, resulting in net zero debt with banks and financial institutions, it stated.

The improvement in rating also reflects Reliance Infra's timely servicing of standalone debt obligations for three consecutive months ended 30

June 2025.

Regarding the guaranteed debt, it stated that the company has executed one-time settlement agreements with the lenders of its subsidiaries, including the final payment to lender by JR Toll Road Private Limited on June 23, 2025.

These repayments were facilitated by a significant



long-term capital infusion through the issuance of warrants amounting to Rs 3,010 crore, of which Rs 750 crore was received in FY25 and Rs 225 crore in 1QFY26, which have eased liquidity pressures, boosting Reliance Infra's credit profile, it noted.

However, it stated that the ratings continue to be constrained by the company's weak financial risk profile and its exposure to risks arising from the ongoing arbitration proceedings, and large payables and contingent liabilities involving both standalone and financially stressed subsidiaries, which remain key monitorable.

Smartworks Coworking IPO fully subscribed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offering (IPO) of Smartworks Coworking Spaces Ltd got subscribed 1.15 times on day two of bidding on Friday.

The IPO received bids for 1,19,96,496 shares against 1,04,01,828 shares on offer, according to NSE data.

The portion for non-institutional investors received 1.79 times subscription while the quota for retail individual investors (RIIs) got subscribed 1.18 times. The category for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) received 63 per cent subscription.

Smartworks Coworking Spaces has raised Rs 173.64 crore from anchor investors. The IPO of Smartworks Coworking Spaces hit the capital market on Thursday to raise nearly Rs 600 crore as the company intends to expand its business and reduce debt.

The company has fixed a price band of Rs 387-407 per share for its IPO, which will close on July 14.

The size of the fresh issue has been reduced to Rs 445 crore from the earlier planned Rs 550 crore, while the offer for sale (OFS) by promoters has been cut to 33.79 lakh shares from 67.59 lakh shares.

At the upper end of the price band, the company's IPO size is now estimated at Rs 583 crore, with a market valuation of about Rs 4,645 crore.

Of the total proceeds from the fresh issue of shares, the company will use Rs 226 crore for capex-related expenditure related to the fit-outs in new centres and security deposits for these new centres.

It will utilise Rs 114 crore for payment of loans, and the remaining funds will be used for general corporate purposes. The OFS proceeds will go to promoters.

Gurgaon-based Smartworks, one of the leading managed flexible office space providers, has 48 operational co-working centres with over 1.9 lakh seating capacities.



Avenue Supermarts Q1 marginally down at Rs 772.81 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Avenue Supermarts Ltd on Friday reported a marginal decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 772.81 crore in the first quarter ended June 30, 2025, impacted by higher expenses.

The company, which runs supermarket chain under the brand DMart, had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 773.68 crore in the April-June quarter last fiscal, Avenue Supermarts Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated revenue from operations in the first quarter stood at Rs 16,359.7 crore against Rs 14,069.14 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

Total expenses in the first quarter was higher at Rs 15,321.66 crore compared to Rs 13,056.61 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal.

WNS to release fiscal 2026 financial and operating results

PNS ■ MUMBAI

WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS), a digital-led business transformation and services company, today announced it will release its fiscal 2026 first quarter financial and operating results on Thursday, July 24, 2025.

As announced on July 7, 2025, the company has entered into a definitive agreement to be acquired by Capgemini. In light of this announcement, WNS will not hold a fiscal 2026 first quarter conference call or provide updates to fiscal year 2026 guidance.

About WNS

WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS) is a digital-led business transformation and services company. WNS combines deep domain expertise with talent, technology, and AI to co-create innovative solutions for over 700 clients across various industries. WNS delivers an entire spectrum of solutions including industry-specific offerings, customer experience services, finance and accounting, human resources, procurement, and research and analytics to re-imagine the



digital future of businesses. As of March 31, 2025, WNS had 64,505 professionals across 64 delivery centers worldwide including facilities in Canada, China, Costa Rica, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For more information, visit www.wns.com.

Safe Harbor Provision

This document includes information which may constitute forward-looking statements made pursuant to the

safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, the accuracy of which are necessarily subject to risks, uncertainties, and assumptions as to future events. Factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied are discussed in our most recent Form 10-K and other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. WNS undertakes no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise.

Gold up Rs 700 to Rs 99,370/10 g; silver rallies Rs 1,500/kg

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed by Rs 700 to Rs 99,370 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday tracking safe-haven demand as heightened global trade tensions stoked investor worries.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 98,670 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped by Rs 600 to Rs 98,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had ended at Rs 98,200 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

In addition, silver prices

rallied by Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,05,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. The white metal had finished at Rs 1,04,000 per kg on Thursday.

"Gold climbed on Friday as rising trade worries offset a generally steady US dollar. Global risk sentiment fell in response to US President Donald Trump's recent tariff threats, which heightened fears of a global trade war," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

President Donald Trump has announced a 35 per cent tariff on Canadian imports starting from August 1 and



signalled plans for 15-20 per cent blanket tariffs on other trade partners.

Tariff-related uncertainty has returned to the forefront this week and is a major factor driving investment toward safe-haven precious metals, Gandhi said.

On the market outlook, he stated that further tariff-related development will influence the trajectory for the precious metal prices in the near-term.

In the international markets, spot gold appreciated by USD 24.63 or 0.74 per cent to USD 3,348.67 per ounce.

Gold prices also found support following the release of the US Federal Reserve's FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting minutes on Wednesday, which showed a divided Fed, keeping interest rate-cut expectations alive, Axis Securities said in a brokerage note.

SETS STAGE FOR OCT ROLLOUT

India-EFTA mega trade pact gets green signal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Switzerland has finally completed the ratification process for a landmark trade deal between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) that would reduce trade barriers and significantly open up the Indian market to Swiss exports. Swiss Ambassador to India Maya Tissafi described Switzerland's ratification of the trade pact as a "significant milestone" in her country's bilateral relationship with New Delhi.

The envoy said that the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is expected to come into force in October.

Under the mega trade pact, the EFTA States of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are looking at making an investment of USD 100 billion in India over the next 15 years.

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway have already ratified the trade deal.

In March, the four-nation European grouping signed the



TEPA with India following nearly 16 years of negotiations. "At midnight yesterday (Swiss time), the referendum

deadline for the EFTA-India TEPA officially expired. With no referendum, the Swiss people have expressed their tacit

approval of the agreement," Tissafi said in a social media post. Switzerland's ratification of the trade pact came more than seven months after the Swiss Council of States approved it.

"The TEPA paves the way for long-term cooperation between our countries. Apart from reduced tariffs, it will help streamline customs procedures, enhance intellectual property protections and establish a framework for sustainable trade practices," Tissafi said.

Most importantly, the EFTA states will invest USD 100 billion and create one million (10 lakh) jobs in India over 15 years, she said, adding that this will be a "win-win situation" for all countries involved. Currently, Switzerland is the 12th-largest investor in India.

Swiss investments in India have grown exponentially over the last 25 years, rising from CHF 551 million (approximately Rs 5,935 crore) in 2000 to CHF 10 billion (Rs 1,07,736 crore) in 2024, the envoy said.

Domestic air passenger traffic touches 1.38 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic air passenger traffic rose 5.1 per cent to over 1.38 crore in June on an annual basis but declined marginally compared to May, a report said on Friday.

Rating agency ICRA also said the country's aviation industry is projected to report a net loss of Rs 2,000 to 3,000 crore in FY2026, amid rising ATF prices and geopolitical risks.

While maintaining a stable outlook for the industry, ICRA said that supply chain disruptions, including Pratt & Whitney engine issues, continue to impact capacity and costs. "For June 2025, domestic air passenger traffic was estimated at 138.7 lakh, 5.1 per cent higher than 132.1 lakh in June 2024. However, it witnessed a marginal decline of 1.3 per cent on a sequential basis. The airlines' capacity deployment in June 2025 was 4.9 per cent higher than June 2024; however, it was 2.3 per cent lower compared to May 2025," it said.

In the first quarter of 2025-26, domestic air passenger traffic stood at over 4.22 crore. According to the report, the industry witnessed steady pricing power in FY2025, with sta-



ble yields and domestic air passenger traffic growth tapered to 7.6 per cent.

"...emerging geopolitical and operational headwinds -- in the form of rising crude oil prices (because of the Israel-Iran conflict), closure of the airspace over Iran and Pakistan (for Indian carriers), probable rise in insurance premia (after the recent aeroplane crash) and possible hesitation to travel -- warrant close monitoring for potential downside risks.

"The operating costs for the Indian aviation industry are likely to have increased in the past couple of months (due to flight cancellations and other operational challenges following the India-Pakistan conflict). Nevertheless, the overall passenger traffic and the pricing so far have remained steady," it said.

Ajay Devgn's Jassi promises 'Double Trouble' in hilarious Son of Sardaar 2 trailer

The much-awaited trailer for Son of Sardaar 2 dropped on Friday and it's safe to say — Ajay Devgn's iconic character Jassi is back and this time, things are wilder than ever. Packed with punchlines, Punjabi swag and scenic frames from Scotland, the film brings a fresh twist to the beloved original that hit screens in 2012.

Taking to Instagram, Ajay Devgn unveiled the trailer with a tongue-in-cheek caption:

"Action! Emotions! Confusion ka bhaandaar. JASSI is back, aur iss baar sab kuch double hai! Trailer Out Now: Link In Bio. Warning: Trailer may cause excessive laughter, confusion and Sardaar ke side effects!"

The quirky post has already got fans buzzing about the film's comedic



tone and over-the-top antics.

The trailer opens with a wave of nostalgia from the first Son of Sardaar, quickly transitioning into a whirlwind of comic chaos. Ajay Devgn reprises his role as the energetic and slightly eccentric Jassi, who now finds himself entangled in a wedding celebration filled with eccentric relatives, unexpected romances and plenty of cultural confusion.

One standout moment involves an elderly woman attempting a pole dance — only to dramatically collapse, prompting Jassi to deliver a darkly comic line: Bebe marr gayi. From there, it's clear that Son of Sardaar 2 leans fully into slapstick humour and outrageous scenarios.

Joining Devgn this time

is Mrunal Thakur as the film's leading lady and Jassi's love interest. The trailer also features hilarious glimpses of Ravi Kishan fumbling through English phrases and Ajay's humorous impression of Sunny Deol's iconic Border character — adding layers of parody and pop culture punch.

The film boasts an ensemble cast featuring Sanjay Mishra, Dolly Ahluwalia, Neeru Bajwa, Chunky Panday, Kubbra Sait, Deepak Dobriyal, Sharat Saxena, Sahil Mehta and Vindu Dara Singh — whose double appearance in the credits hints at another layer of comic confusion.

Son of Sardaar 2 also holds special emotional weight as it marks the final on-screen appearance of actor Mukul Dev, who passed away on May 23, 2025. The film stands as a heartfelt farewell to his memorable performances and contribution to cinema.

Directed by Vijay Kumar Arora and presented by Jio Studios and Devgn Films, Son of Sardaar 2 is a Devgn Films and SOS 2 Limited production. The film is produced by Ajay Devgn and Jyoti Deshpande, combining their creative vision to revive a cult favorite with a modern twist.

Set to release in theatres on 25th July 2025, Son of Sardaar 2 promises a rollercoaster of laughs, action and good ol' Punjabi flair. Whether you're a fan of the original or new to Jassi's world, this sequel looks set to deliver high-octane entertainment with a generous helping of heart.



Ahan Shetty wraps up Pune schedule for Border 2

Actor Ahan Shetty has wrapped up the Pune leg of filming for Border 2, the much-anticipated war drama directed by Anurag Singh. The film, which also stars Diljit Dosanjh, Varun Dhawan and Sunny Deol, is shaping up to be a powerful tribute to the unsung heroes of the Indian armed forces.

On Friday, Ahan took to Instagram to announce the schedule wrap, sharing a carousel of behind-the-scenes moments with his co-stars and director. Captioning the post with a heartfelt line, he wrote: "Aur kya hai yeh border? Bas ek tauji aur uske bhai hain. That's a wrap in Pune, onto the next one." The pictures showcased camaraderie, brotherhood and the intense energy on set.

Varun Dhawan, who also wrapped his shoot at the National Defence Academy in Pune, shared a humorous video the day before. The clip featured him sipping chai and munching on biscuits with Ahan Shetty. "#Border2 Chai aur bizkoot — it's a wrap for me at NDA aur humna celebrate kiya bizkoot ke saath," he captioned the light-hearted post, giving fans a glimpse of the warm vibes off-camera.

A few days prior, Ahan had shared a poignant tribute to his father Suniel Shetty — who

starred in the original Border (1997) — by posting a collage of their respective roles from both films. "Har beta kahin na kahin apne baap jaisa banna chahta hai," he wrote, striking an emotional chord with fans. The post celebrated not just a career milestone, but a generational connection to a cinematic legacy.

Meanwhile, co-star Diljit Dosanjh has also been actively sharing moments from the shoot, keeping spirits high with his signature style and humor. In one video that went viral, the singer-actor is seen dancing to Mere Mehboob Mere Sanam from Duplicate, grooving his way out of a hotel room before hopping into a car. The fun, unscripted moment added a dose of personality to the intense film set.

Directed by Kesari and Punjab 1984 fame Anurag Singh, Border 2 is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, J.P. Dutta and Nidhi Dutta. The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series in association with J.P. Films. The makers aim to honor untold stories of courage, sacrifice and patriotism from the armed forces—continuing the legacy of J.P. Dutta's iconic 1997 original.

With its star-studded cast and emotionally charged narrative, Border 2 is scheduled for release on January 23, 2026, just ahead of Republic Day — positioning itself as a cinematic salute to India's bravehearts.

Kapil Sharma's Canadian café targeted in shooting, team says, 'We are not giving up'

Comedian and actor Kapil Sharma's newly launched Kap's Cafe in Surrey, British Columbia, was the target of a shocking shooting incident earlier this week. While no injuries were reported, authorities revealed that at least nine shots were fired at the café premises. The attack has reportedly been claimed by Khalistani terrorist Harjit Singh Laddi. In the aftermath, the café's official Instagram page released a moving note titled "A Message from the Heart," expressing both sorrow and determination in the wake of the incident. "We opened Kap's Cafe with hopes of bringing warmth, community and joy through delicious coffee and friendly conversation. To have violence intersect with that dream is heartbreaking," the statement read. "We are processing this shock but we are not giving up."

efforts in ensuring everyone's safety during this difficult time." Kap's Cafe, which is co-managed by Kapil's wife Ginni Chatrath, had opened to warm reception from fans and the South Asian community in Canada. Sharma has been sharing behind-the-scenes peeks of the café on social media, showcasing its pastel pink-and-white aesthetic, decked with floral installations, crystal chandeliers and baby pink seating. The menu at Kap's Cafe has also garnered attention, featuring an assortment of coffee blends and sweet treats like lemon pistachio cake, fudgy brownies and buttery croissants. Though shaken by the incident, the message from the team ends on a note of hope: "From all of us at Kap's Cafe, thank you and see you soon, under better skies. — With hope and gratitude. #SupportKapsCafeCanada." The police investigation is currently underway and security has been beefed up around the area. Fans and members of the Indian diaspora have rallied around the café, sending in messages of solidarity and encouragement.



Raja Kumari's LA India couture line redefines desi power and global glamour

Singer-songwriter Raja Kumari has embarked on a groundbreaking creative journey, fusing fashion and music into a powerful celebration of culture, identity and individuality. Her latest venture — a couture collaboration with luxury fashion house Kalki — is anchored by the reimagined version of her electrifying anthem LA India, creating a visceral experience where style meets sonic storytelling.

Described by the artist as a tribute to "identity, power and heritage," the collection and accompanying music video are a dazzling ode to her Indian roots and global resonance. The couture line draws from centuries of Indian craftsmanship while embracing the bold, expressive energy of modern runways — all set to the rhythm of Raja Kumari's dynamic voice.

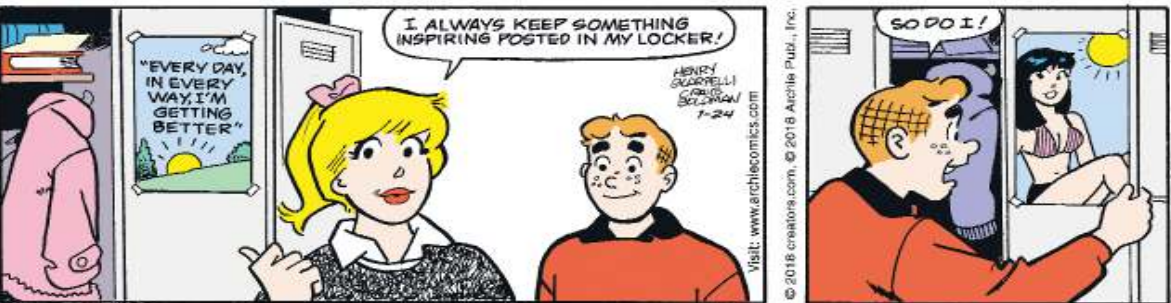
"This collection is a celebration of identity, power and heritage," shared Raja Kumari. "We've created something for the main characters, the rule-breakers, the glam goddesses. This is Desi luxury on a global frequency. I hope every woman who wears these pieces feels seen, celebrated and unstoppable." The music video — visually opulent and unapologetically fierce — uses fashion as both a narrative and a weapon of expression. As Raja Kumari's lyrics resound with themes of confidence and cultural pride, the garments echo her message through daring silhouettes, rich embroidery and powerful styling. Each frame radiates a message of empowerment, visibility and inclusivity. In her role as co-creator, Raja Kumari injects her

signature global desi aesthetic into every thread and lyric, pushing boundaries and dismantling outdated perceptions of Indian fashion. From rebellious lehengas to dramatic corseted gowns, each piece is an artistic statement — tailored not just for beauty, but for bold self-expression. This collaboration marks a new chapter in Indian couture — one that proudly represents Indian women in all their diversity, strength and glamour. It challenges the notion of who gets to wear luxury and how. By marrying traditional craftsmanship with contemporary flair, Raja Kumari and Kalki have created something far greater than a fashion drop — they've ignited a cultural movement.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



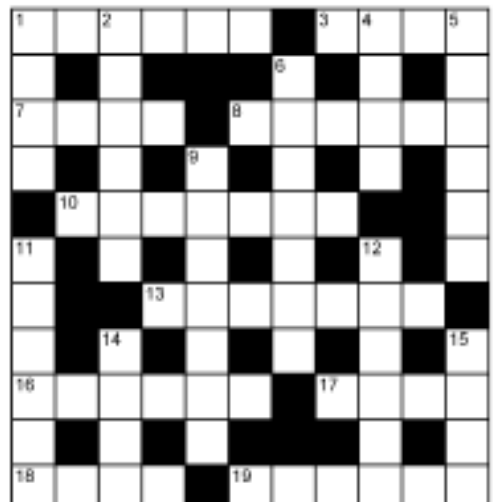
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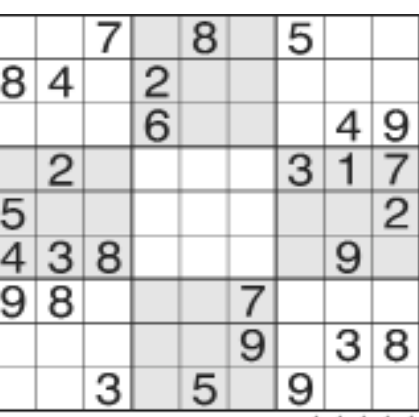
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- The least dangerous
- Become larger
- A great river in Egypt
- A black symbol on playing cards
- Albers
- A bright red colour
- An archer fires at this
- Do a sketch
- The capital city of Italy
- Every twelve months

DOWN

- and daughters
- Extremely dirty
- Very impolite
- Cleaned with soap and water
- Comes into sight
- Bumped
- Quicker
- Extreme fear
- A percussion instrument
- Absent



I have identified a problem area and am working on it: Neeraj Chopra



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Gurugram

India's star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Friday said he has identified a problem in his game and is looking to address it at the earliest, as he seeks to win a second world championship gold medal later this year.

Chopra, who is the strongest Indian medal hope in the

September 13-21 showpiece in Tokyo, will be training in Prague and Nymburk in the Czech Republic for 57 days.

He will be heading out with his physio Ishan Marwah tonight and be based in the European country till September five at a total cost of ₹19 lakh.

"I have already identified the areas I need to work on. While throwing the spear I tend to fall

Needless to say, his next big target is to finish on top of the podium at the World Athletics Championships

too much on my left side. We need to work on that. In training I don't do that, but in competition, it happens because of

the extra effort I put in," Chopra said.

The double Olympic medalist said he also needs to work on his consistency to hit the 90-mark more often.

"I have achieved 90m this year. But I need to be more consistent to achieve it more often. I am continuously around 88-89m and my coach said he is happy, but I need to be more consistent," Chopra

said during the launch of Under Armour store here.

Needless to say, his next big target is to finish on top of the podium at the World Athletics Championships.

"My next target is the world championships and I want to win there. Before the world championships, I will plan with my coach and see which event I can compete to best prepare for it," Chopra said.



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

Gautam Gambhir backs BCCI's family rule for overseas tours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has backed the BCCI's directive to limit the presence of cricketers' families during long overseas tours, saying players must realise they are not on vacation but on national duty.

The BCCI introduced a revised travel policy after the Indian team's 1-3 defeat in Australia at the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, capping family members' stay to two weeks maximum for tours longer than 45 days. For shorter tours, the duration was restricted to seven days.

"Families' roles are important, but you've got to understand one thing. You are here for a purpose. It's not a holiday. You're here for a huge purpose.

You've got very few people in that dressing room or in this tour that gets this opportunity to make the country proud. "So yes, I'm not against not having families with us," said Gambhir during a conversation with Cheteshwar Pujara on Sony Sports Network.

Star batter Virat Kohli had earlier spoken in favour of having families accompany players, saying personal support helps during high-pressure situations.

Gambhir, however, stressed the importance of putting country before everything else. "It is important to have families, but if your focus is towards making our country proud and you have a much bigger role than any other thing, and you're committed to that goal, you're committed to that cause, I think everything else is fine.

But for me, I think that cause and that goal is far more important than any other thing." On the sidelines of the third Test against England at Lord's, Gambhir also admitted he finds it difficult to disconnect from the game, revealing he was thinking about team combinations minutes after India's comeback win over England in the second Test at Birmingham.

"That's a tough question. I still haven't understood how do I switch off because I never switch off and sometimes it's very funny and it's very weird," he said when asked how he unwinds. "Honestly, when we won the last test match, the moment we won the last test match, the first thing that came in my mind was that what is going to be the combination for the next Test?"

AIFF charts roadmap for Women's AFC Cup 2026

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Kalyan Chaubey on Friday held discussions with his colleagues to chart a roadmap for the national women's team's preparation plans for next year's AFC Asian Cup in Australia.

It was decided to organise the 2025-26 Indian Women's League season, featuring eight teams playing 14 matches each, from September 2025 to January 2026.

The Indian U20 women's team will also participate in the IWL. The AIFF said the earlier than usual scheduling would allow for ample preparation time in the lead-up to the Women's Asian Cup, scheduled from March 1 to 21.

In addition, the Blue Tigresses will undergo 83 days of preparatory camps, conducted in three phases.

This will include 10-12 international friendlies and five to seven matches with domestic teams.

To effectively manage this calendar, the AIFF said it will engage with all IWL club owners to seek their support and cooperation in releasing players for the camps as and

when required for the national interest.

With this plan, the AIFF said each player is projected to play at least 30 matches between August and February, combining both club and international commitments..

To facilitate uninterrupted national team preparation in the lead-up to the Asian Cup, it was also suggested that the senior women's national football championship for the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy 2025-26 be scheduled after the conclusion of the continental tournament.

The win helped India top Group B of the Qualifiers with a perfect record four wins from four matches

India secured a memorable qualification in the continental tournament finals with a thrilling 2-1 victory over hosts Thailand last Friday.

The win helped India top Group B of the Qualifiers with a perfect record — four wins from four matches.

For the first time the Blue Tigresses have booked a ticket to the continental championship through the qualification route.

Pakistan to review security situation ahead of India visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Karachi

Pakistan is set to review the security situation in India before taking a call on sending its national hockey team to the neighbouring country for the upcoming Asia Cup and Junior World Cup later this year.

A top Government official has said that the national team will not be sent to India if there are security threats to them.

Rana Mashood, who is the chairman of Prime Minister's Youth Development and Sports Program, said that Pakistan

would travel to India for the tournaments if the Government was totally satisfied with the security situation.

"The Government will review the security situation in India for Pakistani nationals and if it is not satisfied it will not put any of our players at risk by sending them to play in India," Mashood, a former minister said. He pointed out that after India's Operation Sindoor, the situation is not safe for Pakistani nationals to travel to India. The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has sought advice and permission from concerned ministries to



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

send national teams for the two major hockey events scheduled in India with next month's Asia Cup also serving as a qualifier for the next World Cup in 2026. Rana Mujahid, the secretary-general of PHF, admitted that in the past Pakistan had taken part in some international events in India.

"But as of now the situation is different, relations are strained so we can only move forward when the Government gives us clearance," he said. He pointed out that the PHF was keeping a watch on threats being issued to the hockey team players on social media.

AAI signs MoU with Amity University to support archer education

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Archery Association of India (AAI) on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Amity University to offer certificate programmes and scholarships to archers, enabling them to pursue higher education without compromising their sporting careers.

The initiative aims to provide flexibility to senior, junior, and para archers, allowing them to balance academics with their rigorous training schedules.

Under the agreement, Amity University will offer tailored under-

graduate and postgraduate programmes designed to accommodate the demanding routines of athletes.

The university will also provide sports scholarships under the banner of 'CHAMPS', offering three tiers of financial support.

International-level players will be eligible for a 100 per cent scholarship, covering the full programme fee. National-level athletes will receive a 50 per cent scholarship, while state and district-level archers can avail of a 30 per cent fee waiver.

"Our archers are doing well in both recurve and compound categories. Along with sports, education is also crucial. This collaboration will ensure

Legendary Korean archery coach Kisik Lee, who has guided multiple countries, is set to take over as India's recurve head coach ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Games

that even archers from remote areas at the state, district, and national level can pursue online education," said AAI president Arjun Munda told reporters.

"Athletes often struggle to complete their education due to the demands of sport. Sometimes, a lack of education can affect their confidence. I am

thankful to Amity University for extending this support through the MoU."

The online learning model offers flexibility with recorded lectures, allowing students to study at their convenience and take exams without interrupting their training or competitions.

Additionally, Amity University Online will offer a free certification programme in Sports Psychology to enhance athletes' mental strength and performance.

A dedicated academic counsellor will also be assigned to support archers with academic guidance, assignments, examinations, and technical queries related to the learning platform. Kisik Lee yet to sign contract: AAI secretary general

Legendary Korean archery coach Kisik Lee, who has guided multiple countries to Olympic glory, is set to take over as India's recurve head coach ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

While Lee is expected to join the Indian setup in August, Archery Association of India (AAI) secretary general Virendra Sachdeva on Thursday said the contract is yet to be formalised. "He hasn't yet signed the contract. We are waiting for some approvals. It will be done soon," Sachdeva said.

Amanda Anisimova, Iga Swiatek to be Wimbledon's eighth consecutive first-time women's winners

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Either Amanda Anisimova or Iga Swiatek will leave the All England Club's grass courts as Wimbledon's eighth consecutive first-time women's champion.

Why has there been such a revolving door? Chris Evert has some thoughts about various elements that, as she put it ahead of Saturday's final, "make it difficult to feel completely secure and confident on this elusive surface." For one, there's the amount of talent in the game "deeper now than ever," said Evert, a Hall of Famer who won three of her 18 Grand Slam titles at Wimbledon in the 1970s and 1980s and was the runner-up six times during an era when Martina Navratilova won a record nine singles championships there.

Plus, Evert noted, there's a short turnaround after the red clay of the French Open, leaving only two to three weeks to

Wimbledon - Ladies' Singles Final			
IGA SWIATEK		AMANDA ANISIMOVA	
Rank: 4	Country: Poland	Rank: 12	Country: USA
Age: 24	Height: 5 ft. 9 in.	Age: 23	Height: 5 ft. 11 in.
Plays: Right Handed		Plays: Right Handed	
Wimbledon Appearances: 5		Wimbledon Appearances: 3	
Quarter-finals (2023)	Best Singles (2022)	Quarter-finals (2022)	
295	Career Matches Won	134	
72	Career Matches Lost	86	
1	High Rank for Singles	12	
\$36,473,498	Career Prize Money	\$6,545,206	

practice and prepare for what she called a "polar opposite" surface. Another contributing factor are the uneven bounces and other adjustments required on grass. And with no completely dominant figure since

Serena Williams retired after the 2022 US Open, there is more room for new faces such as the 13th-seeded Anisimova, a 23-year-old American who will be participating in her first major final against Swiatek.

Aformer No. 1 who won four trophies at pleased to be "able to prove that you can get back to the top if you prioritise yourself." Since Williams won her seventh and last Wimbledon championship in 2016 - a repeat performance from a year prior - every woman to hold the trophy was doing so for the first time.

There was Garbine Muguruza in 2017, Angelique Kerber in 2018, Simona Halep in 2019 and Ash Barty in 2021 - all of whom are now retired - followed by Elena Rybakina in 2022, Marketa Vondrousova in 2023 and Barbora Krejickova in 2024 (the tournament was canceled in 2020 because of COVID-19).

Contrast that sort of variety to the much smaller circle of men to win Wimbledon lately: Since 2003, just five have done it - Roger Federer with eight, Novak Djokovic with seven, and Rafael Nadal, Andy Murray and Carlos Alcaraz with a pair apiece.



BCCI Secretary Devajit Lon Saikia on a visit to Lords

MS Dhoni helped me stay calm: Deepti Sharma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Birmingham

Seasoned India Women all-rounder Deepti Sharma says she has learned to stay unruffled in the most difficult of circumstances by religiously watching video clips of MS Dhoni, one of the best in the business when it came to handling pressure. The 27-year-old Deepti recently joined the legendary Jhulan Goswami in the coveted 300-wicket club in international cricket, and while she has sizzled with her off-spin bowling and lower-order batting, what sets her apart is her ability to deliver under pressure. "I have learnt to handle pressure from MS Dhoni sir. I used to be glued to the TV whenever there was a match featuring him and watch them," Deepti told BCCI TV on Friday.

"It never seemed like he (Dhoni) was under pressure at any moment, he would calmly handle the situation and finish the game at last. That is exactly what I have also developed in my game," she added. Deepti has been one of the team's most consistent performers over the past few years and is often called upon to get a breakthrough with the ball or bail the team out of a tricky situation with the bat. "I keep things simple, for example in every match when I get the chance to bowl, be it in the power-play or slog overs, I handle that task very calmly.

Oh Bhama Ayyo Rama: Ayyo, even rama can't save this film!

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Actor Suhas, who began his career in supporting roles before transitioning to lead roles, has been known for picking diverse scripts. With *Oh Bhama Ayyo Rama*, he teams up with debutant director Ram Godhala. The film also marks the Telugu debut of Malayalam actress Malavika Manoj as the female lead. Music is composed by Radhan. Here's a look at the story and how it unfolds.

STORY

Ram (Suhas) saves a girl named Satyabhama (Malavika Manoj) after she meets with an accident. Impressed by him, she starts liking him and eventually falls in love. Satyabhama aspires to become a film director and keeps narrating her stories to Ram and his friends.

Ram, on the other hand, lost his mother (Anita Hassanandani) during his childhood. His father (Ravindra Vijay) is a film director. Though Ram was initially fond of films, a troubled childhood made him lose interest. Now staying with his uncle (Ali) and two friends, Ram seems disinterested in life.

Why has Ram distanced himself from cinema? What trauma is he carrying? Who exactly is Satyabhama and how does she influence Ram's transformation? These are the questions the film attempts to answer.

ANALYSIS

When a debut director gets a chance to helm a film, the least expectation is a coherent and engaging story. Having worked as an assistant with various directors, Ram Godhala makes his directorial debut with *Oh Bhama Ayyo Rama* — and unfortunately, it falls flat



REVIEW

Malavika Manoj, despite being a newcomer to Telugu cinema, is the only positive takeaway. She looks fresh, is pleasant onscreen and tries her best — but unfortunately, she's trapped in a lackluster script that gives her little to work with.

Sathvik Anand and Moin Mohammad play Suhas' friends but their comedy track is more irritating than funny. Anita Hassanandani appears only in the second half and in a limited role, while Ravindra Vijay's role as Suhas' father is a wasted opportunity.

Babloo (Pridhvi) appears in only a couple of scenes and Ali, usually known for his comic timing, plays a serious role that doesn't leave any impression. Directors Harish Shankar and Maruthi make cameos — perhaps out of goodwill — but it's hard to understand why they agreed to appear in this film.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The cinematography by S. Manikandan is strictly average. Music by Radhan is a big letdown — neither the songs nor the background score elevate the film in any way. The dialogues lack punch, and art direction by Brahma Kadali fails to provide any memorable sets or visual appeal.

VERDICT

Oh Bhama Ayyo Rama is a complete misfire. Ram Godhala's debut is a masterclass in how not to direct a film. With a confused narrative, weak characters, outdated plotlines and sluggish pacing, the film tries the audience's patience throughout.

If you're still curious, wait for it to drop on OTT — but even then, proceed with caution.

Cast:
Suhas, Malavika Manoj, Ali, Ravindra Vijay, Pridhvi (Babloo), Anita Hassanandani, Sathvik Anand, Moin Mohammad and others
Music Director: Radhan
Cinematographer: S. Manikandan
Producer: Harish Nalla
Director: Ram Godhala
Release Date: July 11, 2025
Rating: 1/5

PERFORMANCES

Suhas, a proven performer, looks pale in this film. His character is underwritten and his performance matches the dullness of the script. One wonders why he agreed to this film in the first place, given his past choices that raised expectations for his future work.



Massive theatre set built for Ram Pothineni's upcoming film

Ram Pothineni is currently shooting for his upcoming film *Andhra King Taluka*, directed by Mahesh Babu P, known for *Miss Shetty Mr Polishetty*. The film is being produced by Mythri Movie Makers.

The makers have planned a month-long schedule in Hyderabad, which commenced a few days ago. This schedule is expected to wrap up the entire shoot of the film, according to insider sources.

Interestingly, a massive cinema theatre set has been erected near Muchintal, on the outskirts of Hyderabad, specifically for this schedule. Presently, scenes involving the lead pair and other key artistes are being filmed at this location during night shoots, which are set to continue for ten days.

Bhagyashree Borse plays the female lead in the film. A source revealed that the team initially planned to erect the theatre set near Rajahmundry, but due to rain-fall, the production shifted to Hyderabad. After the ten-day night shoot wraps up, the crew will continue with day shoots for approximately 20 more days.

Renowned Kannada actor Upendra will be seen in a pivotal role, playing a superstar in the film. Siddhartha Nuni handles the cinematography, while music is composed by the talented duo Vivek-Merwin. Acclaimed production designer Avinash Kolla is crafting the visual aesthetic for the film.

If all goes according to schedule and the shoot wraps up by August, the makers are aiming for a Dasara festival release.

KD The Devil will captivate everyone, says Dhruva Sarja

Bollywood actors Sanjay Dutt and Shilpa Shetty are in Hyderabad to promote their upcoming Kannada film *KD The Devil*. The high-budget film stars Kannada actor Dhruva Sarja in the lead and is produced by Venkat K Narayana under the KVN Productions banner. Prem is directing the film, with Reeshma Nanaiah as the female lead. Sanjay Dutt, Shilpa Shetty and Nora Fatehi play prominent roles.

The teaser of the film was launched on Thursday in a grand event in Hyderabad.

"I share a special bond with Hyderabad. I've worked with many people here and I absolutely love the food in this city. I'm currently working on a film with Prabhas and I'm trying to learn Telugu there," said Sanjay Dutt, adding that he's a huge fan of Chiranjeevi. "Producer Venky and Suprih are extremely passionate about cinema, which is why they were able to bring such a grand film to life," he said. He also praised director Prem as "a wonderful and humble person" and appreciated Reeshma Nanaiah's performance.

"Dhruva is like a younger brother to me. I wish him great success. It's always full of energy working with Shilpa Shetty," he added.

Dhruva Sarja, in turn, expressed his admiration for Sanjay Dutt and Shilpa Shetty. "I admire Sanjay Dutt sir a lot and it was a joy working with him. It's always a pleasure

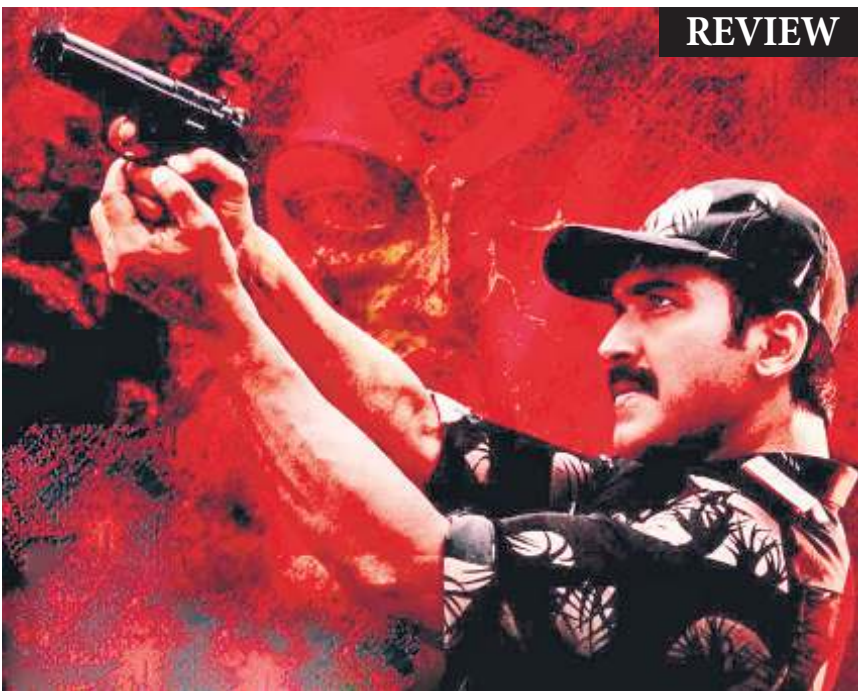
working with talented actors like Shilpa Shetty, who even helps correct our performances on set," he said, also calling Reeshma "a very good actress."

Shilpa Shetty fondly recalled her debut. "My debut film wasn't in Hindi—it was in Telugu. I did *Sahasaveerudu Sagara Kanya*. Ever since then, the Telugu audience has always showered me with love," she said. "Every film I've done with Sanjay Dutt has been a hit. I hope this trend continues. This film has all the commercial elements and Prem has directed it with a lot of heart," she added.



I share a special bond with Hyderabad. I've worked with many people here and I absolutely love the food in this city. I'm currently working on a film with Prabhas and I'm trying to learn Telugu there

— Sanjay Dutt



REVIEW

Titled The 100, but misses the mark

RK Sagar, known for his iconic role as RK Naidu in the TV serial *Mogali Rekulu*, has made several attempts to establish himself on the big screen with films like *Siddhartha*, *Man of the Match* and *Shaadi Mubarak*, though none of them brought him notable success. He's back with *The 100*, released this Friday. Directed by Raghav Omkar Sashidhar, the film features Misha Narang as the female lead, with music composed by Harshavardhan Rameshwar.

STORY

Vikranth (RK Sagar) is a sincere and hard-working police officer. During duty at a function, he notices a young dancer, Aarthi (Misha Narang) and develops feelings for her. Meanwhile, a mysterious gang of masked dacoits has been robbing rich households, stealing only gold while leaving behind money and other valuables.

During his investigation, Vikranth observes a pattern—the robberies all occur on *Amavasya* (new moon) nights. He discovers that Aarthi's house was also targeted, but to his surprise, her family never filed a police complaint. Upon digging deeper, Vikranth learns that Aarthi was raped during the robbery.

Determined to solve the case, he captures the dacoit gang, only to be shocked when they claim they never harmed any women and only stole gold. So, who raped Aarthi and what was the motive? Four young men surrender to the police claiming they committed the crime—but are they really the culprits? Why did Vishnu Priya commit suicide? What's the connection between all these incidents? The crux of the film lies in uncovering the truth behind these events.

ANALYSIS

Director Raghav Omkar Sashidhar comes up with an interesting story, which starts strongly with Vishnu Priya's suicide and the gold heists. These elements spark curiosity and provide a solid setup. However, the film gradually slips into mediocrity due to the director's lack of experience. Instead of turning into a gripping thriller with twists and turns, *The 100* becomes a regular, formulaic outing.

As is often the case in Telugu cinema, the inclusion of a couple of songs hinders the momentum of the

serious narrative. *The 100* belongs to the investigative thriller genre, much like the *HIT* series, which demands a tighter screenplay and less cinematic liberty. Vikranth hiring an ethical hacker who can access any mobile phone or camera within seconds is highly unrealistic and purely cinematic. Most of the investigation takes place in the police station with Vikranth monitoring surveillance footage. While not inherently wrong, it lacks the excitement of on-field investigation, evidence gathering and high-stakes confrontations that make thrillers engaging.

Scenes featuring NHRC officers grilling Vikranth feel excessive and unrealistic. The SI Giridhar character also becomes irritating due to his over-the-top portrayal. The film introduces action scenes and glorifies the protagonist in a way that feels disconnected from the tone of the core story. With a bit more attention to detail and tighter execution, this could have been a taut thriller—but as it stands, it falls short.

PERFORMANCES
RK Sagar fits well into the role of a cop. His body language and dialogue delivery reflect his effort. While playing a police officer isn't new for him, he brings a more serious tone to the role this time.

Cast: RK Sagar, Misha Narang, Dhanya Balakrishnan, Vishnu Priya, Tarak Ponnappa, Kalyani Natarajan, VV Giridhar and others

Music Director: Harshavardhan Rameshwar

Cinematographer: Shyam K Naidu

Producers: Ramesh Karutoori, Venky Pushadapu, J Tarak Ram

Director: Raghav Omkar Sashidhar

Rating: 2/5

Misha Narang looks beautiful and delivers a neat performance. She gets a substantial role and makes good use of the opportunity. Dhanya Balakrishnan plays a key part and fits her role perfectly. Vishnu Priya's character is crucial to the storyline and she does justice to her part.

Kalyani Natarajan, as Sagar's mother, performs gracefully. Tarak Ponnappa appears in a negative role and has a strong screen presence. VV Giridhar, as the SI, occasionally goes overboard with loud dialogues that feel forced.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS
Shyam K Naidu's cinematography is good and supports the film's tone. Harshavardhan Rameshwar's music is average and doesn't leave a strong impact. The dialogues are passable but not particularly memorable.

VERDICT

The 100 had the potential to be a gripping investigative thriller, thanks to its interesting premise. However, due to weak execution, forced songs and unnecessary cinematic liberties, it ends up as a formulaic film. Director Raghav Omkar Sashidhar should have focused more on the story and its narration to turn it into a truly intense and engaging thriller.

First look of Vintara Saradaga promises a quirky, youthful ride

The first look of *VISA: Vintara Saradaga* is out now, offering a peek into a youthful, refreshing narrative filled with fun, love, drama and heartfelt emotions. Set against the backdrop of the USA, the film explores the lives of Indian students abroad—highlighting their dreams, dilemmas, friendships and emotional journeys in a quirky and relatable manner.

Starring Ashok Galla, Sri Gouri Priya, Rahul Vijay and Shivathmika Rajasekhar, the film is helmed by debutant director Udbhav Raghu, who brings a fresh storytelling approach and contemporary vibe to the narrative.

VISA reflects the highs and lows of student life overseas—from academic hustle and cultural clashes to unexpected romance and emotional challenges—making it a complete entertainer for today's generation.

Produced by Naga Vamsi S and Sai Soujanya, *VISA* blends youthful energy with heartfelt storytelling. The teaser of the film will be released on July 12, promising a deeper glimpse into this vibrant and relatable world.