

Andhra pradesh serp wins prestigious pmfme award



Amaravati, August 19: State minister for msme, rural poverty eradication and non-resident andhra society relations kondapalli srinivas on wednesday expressed happiness over andhra pradesh state rural poverty eradication society (serp) being selected for the prestigious pmfme award. In a statement, the minister said it is

welcoming that the central ministry of food processing industries has invited ap serp officials to receive the award during the pmfme conclave to be held at india habitat centre in new delhi on august 24 and 25. The minister said based on approved performance parameters under the seed capital component **See 2nd page**

Savitha hails ‘historic’ BC quota restoration in local bodies

Amaravati: BC, EWS welfare, handlooms and textiles minister S Savitha on Tuesday hailed the state government’s decision to provide 34 per cent reservation for Backward Classes (BCs) in rural local bodies and 33.33 per cent in urban local bodies. Speaking during the discussion on the Bill providing 34 per cent reservation for BCs in local body elections in the Assembly, Savitha said the decision would be remembered as a historic day for the BC community. She thanked Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu,



Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and minister Nara Lokesh for fulfilling another election promise. Savitha said the previous YSRCP government had reduced BC reservations in local bodies from 34 per cent to 24 per cent, depriving BCs of more than 16,800 elected positions. She said Lokesh had highlighted the issue during his padayatra and promised to restore the quota after coming to power. The minister said the Cabinet had already approved the proposal and the government was now seeking the Assembly’s approval. She recalled that former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao had founded the TDP with the welfare of BCs as one of its priorities and that Chandrababu Naidu **See 2nd page**

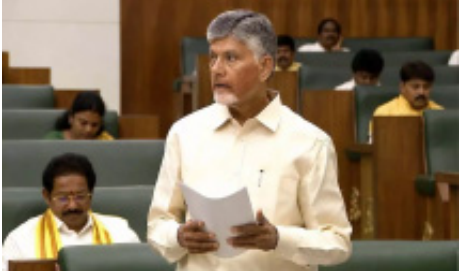
Ensure sand is accessible to everyone without shortage: Collector O Anand



Anantapur: District Collector O Anand directed officials to ensure adequate sand availability across Anantapur district without shortages during the District Level Sand Committee (DLSC) meeting at the Collectorate on Monday. The committee approved two proposals seeking state clearances for de-casting operations on patta lands. It also authorized measures to obtain ECCF permissions for the Noothimadugu open sand reach in Kambadur Mandal. Furthermore, tenders will soon be invited for the Kartalaparthi open sand reach as all necessary permissions have been secured. Joint Collector C Vishnu Charan, AD Mines Adinarayana, and other committee members attended the review meeting.

AP CM Chandrababu alleged irregularities in 2021 Group 1 recruitment

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu said that there were massive irregularities in Group-1 exams conducted during YCP government. Addressing the AP legislative assembly amidst discussion on the issue, Naidu said that recruitment to Group 1 services was not on merit and there has been massive irregularities of processes and rules and there was deliberate attempt to vitiate the atmosphere in the State. "Rules governing every aspect of Group-1 exam paper valuation were violated and false affidavits filed before the Court," he added. Further speaking, Chandrababu stated that the APPSC was formed under Ar-



governing every aspect of Group-1 exam paper valuation were violated and false affidavits filed before the Court," he added. Further speaking, Chandrababu stated that the APPSC was formed under Ar-

ticle 315 of the Constitution. He stated that government service cadres are being filled by Group-1 exams and they attain the posts with great difficulty. He alleged that there were massive irregularities in the recruitment process. **See 2nd page**

Andhra govt allays fears over data centres affecting water supply to Vizag

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh IT Minister, Nara Lokesh, on Wednesday defended the state government’s decision to establish data centres in Visakhapatnam, claiming that misinformation was being spread over their environmental and water requirements. Speaking in the State Legislative Assembly, Minister Lokesh said Google’s decision to invest in Visakhapatnam had triggered wider interest from other IT companies in the city. He **See 2nd page**



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Government to provide support to Konaseema coconut farmers



Amaravati: The state government is taking comprehensive measures to provide a permanent solution to the problems faced by coconut farmers in Konaseema, agriculture minister K Atchannaidu said in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday. Replying to questions raised by MLAs Giddi Satyanarayana and Bandaru Satyanandarao during Question Hour, the minister said the government’s objective was to plant a new coconut sapling in place of every damaged tree while addressing the root cause **See 2nd page**

Orvakal drone city to emerge as major national drone manufacturing hub



Kurnool: The Orvakal Drone City will be developed into one of India’s premier centers for drone manufacturing, technological research, testing, certification, and pilot training, Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu announced on Tuesday. Addressing the media following a high-level consultation with nearly 150 CEOs, CXOs, and industry representatives at Orvakal, the Minister stated that the Union and State governments are working in close **See 2nd page**

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Congress to launch grassroots campaign on paper leaks, ‘chanda chori’

New Delhi: The Congress on Wednesday decided to launch countrywide campaigns to take the paper leak and ‘chanda chori’ issues to the grassroots level and resolved that only **See 3rd page**





Cockroaches in robes: Legal education and the rot the BCI has built

When India’s Chief Justice warns from the Bench that “thousands of fraudulent people, wearing black robes” with doubtful degrees have infiltrated the legal profession and that the CBI needs to act, it is not a casual courtroom aside. It is a confession — on behalf of an entire system — of a catastrophic, decades-long failure. On May 15, Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant, during a Supreme Court hearing, observed with evident exasperation that there were people “like cockroaches” in the profession, who had entered law through fake or bogus degrees, describing them as “parasites attacking the system.” He subsequently clarified that his remarks were directed specifically at fraudulent degree holders and not at India’s youth, whom he held ‘in great esteem’. His clarification was accepted at face value. But the underlying concern — that the legal profession is riddled with unqualified entrants — is not a new discovery. It is a chronic, documented, structural rot that has been growing for decades under the watch of the very regulatory body entrusted with preventing it: the Bar Council of India (BCI). Tours Tracking Executive Branch Policy Changes Shopping For Authentic South Asian Apparel And that is where the honest conversation must begin. The BCI: Regulator or racketeer? India has approximately 2,000 law colleges producing around 80,000 to one lakh graduates every year, making it one of the largest producers of law graduates in the world. A significant proportion of these institutions exist not to educate but to extract — from students, from universities seeking affiliation, and from the regulatory machinery that is supposed to scrutinise them. The BCI, which, under the Advocates Act, 1961, is mandated to promote and lay down standards of legal education, has for decades functioned less as a diligent regulator and more as a gatekeeper that monetises access. The charge that the BCI has operated as an “extortion racket” — a phrase that is harsh but even senior lawyers, academics, and the judiciary have gestured towards without quite using — is rooted in documented reality. Inspection of law colleges, grant of No Objection Certificates (NOCs), and renewal of affiliations have long been processes where institutional compliance was secondary to institutional payment. During an open court hearing, a Supreme Court Bench, led by the Chief Justice of India, made an observation on May 15 that should have shaken the legal establishment to its foundations. The CJI remarked, in words reported verbatim by multiple accredited legal news platforms, that “BCI will not do anything... thousands of them are fraudulent people who are wearing black robes... BCI will never do, because they are hands in glove, they are absolutely in collusion.” BCI Chairman Manan Kumar Mishra subsequently acknowledged that almost 35-40 per cent of advocates may possess fake degrees. On August 11, the apex court issued notice to the Centre, BCI, and CBI on a PIL seeking a formal probe. Yet, for all the courtroom alarm and the flurry of petitions, no structural mechanism to verify degrees, reform enrolment processes, or overhaul regulatory oversight has been put in place. The alarm has been sounded. The house continues to burn.

Andhra pradesh serp wins prestigious pmfme award

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of pmfme scheme, the performance of srlms was evaluated and andhra pradesh serp was selected as the winner based on overall performance.He said this award is not just an honor for serp. It is a recognition of the hard work, determination and entrepreneurial spirit of thousands of self-help group women in the state. The minister said through pmfme scheme, opportunities for women self-help groups in rural areas will further expand in setting up food processing units, business development and employment generation.He said the government's goal is to shape women not just as beneficiaries but as entrepreneurs. He said serp is working in line with chief minister chandrababu naidu's vision that every woman should emerge as a successful entrepreneur.The minister specially congratulated serp officials, staff, district federations, mandal federations, village organizations and self-help group women for being selected for the central award. He said this award has increased responsibility on the serp department. The minister added that the government will work to establish andhra pradesh as a model state in the country for women-based food processing entrepreneurship in future.

AP CM Chandrababu alleged irregularities in 2021 Group 1 recruitment

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malpractices in such exams conducted by the past government. He said the general public and job seekers must know about these issues. He said that the Assembly is the place to answer such questions, and they should be clarified for the people. Chandrababu said that they would take all necessary steps to ensure such irregularities do not occur in the future. He reiterated his statements regarding the state’s disaster between 2019 and 2024 and said the past government’s actions had disheartened the common people from approaching government services. Further, Chandrababu claimed that the previous government had damaged the integrity of all departments. Chandrababu stated that when the notification for Group-1 service exams was issued in 2018, 1.14 lakh candidates had applied for jobs, and 325 candidates had been shortlisted. Chandrababu stated that the Andhra Pradesh High Court had directed that the Group-1 exam answer sheets be manually evaluated and alleged that the previous government didn't do so.He added that appointments were made based on personal interviews even though the court had directed otherwise. The chief minister alleged the decision to ignore the guidelines of the Public Service Commission and appoint private agencies to evaluate the exams.

Andhra govt allays fears over data centres affecting water supply to Vizag

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was responding to a question raised by Jana Sena MLA, Lokam Naga Madhavi. Minister Lokesh said data centres are critical to the AI-driven digital economy and India’s data sovereignty, particularly amid emerging geopolitical challenges.He explained that once the proposed data-centre ecosystem reaches the targeted 6.5 GW capacity, it is estimated to require around 3 TMC of water annually based on current technology, while stressing that newer cooling technologies are expected to reduce water consumption further.He said water for data centres would come from the industrial allocation of water from Polavaram project, without diverting water meant for the city’s residents.Minister Lokesh said the government is committed to supplying Visakhapatnam’s urban water requirements through Polavaram, with gravity-based supply expected within 18 months.Dedicated pipelines would be provided for data centres, he added. Comparing water consumption, Lokesh said a 1 GW thermal power plant consumes nearly 10 times more water annually than a data centre, questioning why protests over water usage were focussed only on data centres.Minister Lokesh also said Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had set a clear ceiling of 6.5 GW for data-centre allocations, and declared that the target has now been fully achieved. He said the government would prioritise companies that demonstrate strong environmental responsibility.Data centres are coming up at Adavivaram-Mudasarlova, Tarluvada, and Rambilli areas in Visakhapatnam. Citizens’ groups in Visakhapatnam have opposed the data centre hub, highlighting concerns over the strain on resources such as water and power, as well as its environmental impact.They cited the Super El Niño-like weather pattern that has put considerable strain on water resources across the State to oppose the project. The CPI and CPI(M) have been opposing data centre projects in and around Visakhapatnam, alleging that the projects would adversely affect the environment, drinking water sources and public health.

Savitha hails ‘historic’ BC quota restoration in local bodies

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had introduced 34 per cent BC reservations in 1994. Savitha said the TDP had encouraged several prominent BC leaders, including K Yerrannaidu, T Devender Goud, K E Krishnamurthy and Yanamala Ramakrishnudu. She also spoke of various welfare measures implemented by the coalition government. She said BC allocations had increased from Rs 39,000 crore in the first budget to Rs 47,000 crore in the second and Rs 51,000 crore in the third budget. The government had also provided 34 per cent reservation in nominated posts and introduced several benefits for weavers, fishermen, toddy tappers and Vadderas, she said. Savitha added that the government had supported 15.67 lakh BC beneficiaries through NTR Bharosa pensions between 2024 and 2026, spending Rs 15,588.64 crore.

Orvakal drone city to emerge as major national drone manufacturing hub

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coordination to establish a comprehensive drone ecosystem. Spanning 600 acres, the mega project is projected to attract investments up to Rs 5,000 crore, generating 5,000 direct jobs and nearly 25,000 indirect employment opportunities. Minister Naidu disclosed that eight out of 12 plots in Phase-I, covering 55 acres, have already been allotted to manufacturing firms from Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and other tech hubs. Full-scale manufacturing operations across the cluster are slated to commence within two to three years. To streamline industry demands for sandbox testing and airspace approvals, a special committee comprising Ministry officials, DGCA, and Quality Council of India representatives will resolve clearance protocols within three months. Highlighting national potential, Naidu noted that domestic drone demand could surpass six lakh units, supported by the Central Government’s Rs 120-crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. Specialized skill-development programs will train local youth in drone mechanics, maintenance, and piloting. Additionally, efforts are underway to introduce commercial flight services connecting Kurnool with Bengaluru, alongside establishing two Flying Training Organizations—Melstar and Orient—at Kurnool Airport.

Government to provide support to Konaseema coconut farmers

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of the problem through desilting of canals and drains. The state has coconut cultivation over 1.18 lakh hectares, of which around 36,000 hectares are in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district. About 10,000 hectares of coconut plantations in the district are cultivated by tenant farmers, he said. Atchannaidu said inadequate desilting of canals over the past five years had allowed seawater to flow backwards into agricultural areas, increasing soil salinity. As a result, even apparently healthy coconut trees were suddenly weakening and dying. He said he had personally inspected the affected areas, while Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan had also visited the region and brought the issue to the government’s attention. The minister said proposals had been prepared to provide Rs.1,000 financial assistance for every new coconut sapling planted in place of a damaged tree. However, merely replacing trees would not solve the problem, he stressed. Unless canals and drains were properly desilted, farmers would continue to face losses despite new plantations and investments.The government has already sanctioned funds for works on the Sankaraguptham canal, for which Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan had laid the foundation stone. Once completed, the project is expected to address the saline-water problem in two to three Assembly constituencies. The remaining canals will also be taken up for cleaning as part of an integrated project, he said.The minister said coconut farmers were receiving assistance under various Central and State government schemes. With the support of the Coconut Development Board (CDB), 5,250 hectares in Konaseema district were brought under development schemes between 2017-18 and 2024-25. A subsidy of Rs 56,000 per hectare is being provided for expansion of new coconut plantations in two equal installments of Rs.28,000 each over two years. Under the horticulture plantation expansion programme, farmers can also receive financial assistance of up to Rs.2,47,950 per hectare over three years for activities including pit digging, planting and cultivation equipment. Atchannaidu said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had written to the Centre in 2024 seeking establishment of a regional Coconut Board office in Konaseema to provide better services to coconut farmers. Efforts were continuing with the support of the Coconut Development Board to promote new plantations. The government would also encourage intercropping in coconut plantations to increase farmers’ incomes. Crops such as cocoa, banana and vegetables could be cultivated between coconut trees, providing farmers with an additional source of income, he said. “Our objective is to plant a new sapling in place of every damaged coconut tree in Konaseema. We will work within a specific timeframe and, along with replacing the damaged trees, address the canal and drainage problems responsible for saline-water intrusion to provide permanent support to coconut farmers,” Atchannaidu said.

Congress to launch grassroots campaign on paper leaks, ‘chanda chori’

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first two stanzas of Vande Mataram will be sung at all party events in future. The decisions were taken at a four-hour-long meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party’s highest decision-making body, where the leadership urged its four chief ministers to prepare a report on reforms required in the education and examination system in their respective states. The chief ministers have been asked to submit the same to party chief Mallikarjun Kharge within a month. The CWC passed a resolution at its meeting in which issues of paper leak, ‘chanda chori’ at Ram temple and a Supreme Court-monitored probe into it, ‘failure’ of foreign policy and Chinese ‘incursions’ in Arunachal Pradesh, freezing Lok Sabha seats at 543 for the next 25 years and implementing 33 per cent women reservation on its present strength, besides concerns over E20 implementation were raised. Besides the Congress president, senior party leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and several top leaders and special invitees besides all four chief minister of Congress-ruled states attended the marathon meeting held in the aftermath of the students agitation on paper leaks and the Ram temple donations row.

The party also termed the just-concluded Parliament session as a “success” for the opposition, as they jointly raised the issues vociferously that caused frequent disruptions. Reiterating that the party stood with the youth and issues concerning them, the Congress announced that its ‘Chhatron ki Goonj’ programme, to address students and raise their issues, will be held in nearly 800 cities across the country, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi will participate in some of them. The programme has already been held in Kota, Dehradun and Prayagraj and will be held in Pune on Saturday, which will be addressed by Gandhi.

The opposition party also alleged that the government was following a “surrender policy” with “Chinese incursions” taking place in Arunachal Pradesh. “The Congress Party demands an independent investigation into the matter under the supervision of the Supreme Court, along with a comprehensive audit of all the Trust’s accounts and assets ‘? including cash and valuables,” the CWC resolution said. “The CWC is deeply distressed by the plight of our youth... The CWC strongly condemns the arbitrary and brutal repression unleashed by the Modi government against student movements ‘? including attacks on young women and children, the use of electric shock batons, tear gas, pellet guns and AK-47s, and the blatant censorship of voices of dissent.

“The refusal of the Prime Minister and Home Minister to face Parliament and answer for these serious failures demonstrates not only their cowardice in India’s democratic history, but also their complete indifference and disregard for the future of the country,” it also said. Booking Historical Guided Tours In his opening remarks, Kharge accused the Modi government of “destroying” the future of students and asserted that the

time has come for the Congress to formulate a comprehensive ‘Education-to-Employment Roadmap’ for the youth. Sources said Rahul Gandhi told the meeting that the government was on the backfoot and the PM was “under pressure” and the time had come for the Congress to take to grassroots and step up its attack on the government. After the CWC, party general secretary K C Venugopal said the CWC has decided to abide by the 1937 resolution of its highest decision-making body on Vande Mataram and said only two stanzas of the National Song would be sung at all party events henceforth. “There is no confusion on that... Our stand is very clear that the 1937 resolution decided in which Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose and Sardar Patel – the top-most leadership of the party at that point of time were present. “Whatever the decision they took, we have decided that. We are very clear that our Congress party workers will do that only. This is our decision,” he told reporters. Asked whether only two stanzas of Vande Mataram will be sung at party events, he said, “Yes, first two stanzas.” Venugopal said singing of Vande Mataram and the National Anthem is an emotional issue for the Congress, but for the BJP, it is a political matter. “We are focused on three-four issues. Number one is paper leaks. The agitation done by the people of the country and the way the government dealt with that agitation was discussed. The CWC noted that the Monsoon Session of Parliament was successful for the Opposition and the government was on the back foot,” he said.

“‘Chanda Chori’ is a serious area of concern among people of this country. It is an issue associated with the sentiments of people. Those who used Ram Mandir for polarising people now stand exposed,” he said. “We will take this issue to the grassroots level. We directed PCCs to take it up at the village and panchayat level,” he said. Venugopal said the “Chinese incursion” in Arunachal was also discussed, he said. It was reiterated that the Congress demands that women’s reservation be implemented on the current strength of 543 seats of the Lok Sabha, Venugopal said. “The CWC further reiterates its commitment to the immediate implementation of women’s reservation. The CWC reinforces its demand that the constitutional freeze on the current strength of the Lok Sabha and its present allocation among the states be extended for the next 25 years, while one-third reservation for women be implemented from the 2029 Lok Sabha elections itself,” the resolution said. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, who was at the press conference, demanded an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the country over the “shudhikaran” in Uttarakhand after Kharge’s programme there. Kharge also questioned the “silence” of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the alleged theft of Ram temple donations and demanded that the PM apologise for it and answer to the people.

Polytechnic students oppose merger of polytechnic education with Skill University

Sangareddy: The Congress government’s decision to merge polytechnic education with the Young India Skill University (YISU) under the Skill, Human Capital and Knowledge Training Initiatives (Shakti), formerly known as Labour department, drew strong opposition from students of polytechnic colleges across the erstwhile Medak district on Tuesday. Students of a polytechnic college staged

a massive protest in Narsapur town, opposing the government’s move. Similarly, students of the government polytechnic college located at Honnapur near Sangareddy also staged a protest.



Asifabad Congress faces internal rift over DCC chief Athram Suguna

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Internal bickering among leaders in the district has reached a crescendo, causing a headache for the Congress. Despite strong opposition from three senior leaders of the party, Athram Suguna was recently appointed as District Congress Committee (DCC) president considering her contributions to the growth of the party. The leaders, including A Shyam Naik, K Vishwaprasad and former Asifabad MLA Athram Sakku, are reportedly leaving no stone unturned to dethrone Suguna. Significantly, Shyam and Vishwaprasad, who operated separate factions and were at loggerheads in the past, joined hands and openly opposed Suguna’s candidature for the post considering their future plans. Shyam, in-

charge of the Asifabad Congress segment, and Sakku eyed the post, expecting that they could be fielded from the Asifabad constituency and Adilabad Parliament segment in forthcoming elections. However, the party appointed Suguna as the DCC president, shattering the hopes of Shyam and Sakku. The leaders are reportedly now making moves to remove Suguna from the post. They are alleged to have been hatching conspiracies against the DCC chief by bringing her errors to the notice of the top leadership of the party. Similarly, Varaprasad, who was unhappy with Suguna for not giving priority to his followers, lodged a complaint against Suguna at Gandhi Bhavan recently.

Farmers pushed to their limits in for irrigation water in Khammam

Khammam: Ambiguity over the supply of water for standing crops has been pushing farmers to their limits in Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao’s Khammam district. The sad state of farmers in the district was amply revealed during a protest by BRS, CPM and CPI (ML) Massline at Wyra on Monday, demanding the release of irrigation water from Wyra reservoir to crops in the command area. During the protest, an aged farmer, Bodepudi Madhava Rao, fell at the feet of an SI, pleading for the release of water to save the crops, as irrigation officials said they did not have instructions from higher authorities to release water for crops. The farmers complained that even as there is 17 feet of water in the reservoir, water is not being released to feed the crops. It might be noted that Minister Nageswara Rao maintains that he told officials to ensure water supply to standing crops, while officials are refusing to release water for irrigation needs. The Minister stated that he had instructed the district Collector and irrigation department officials to work in coordination to ensure timely supply of irrigation water to crops under the Sagar Ayacut in Khammam district. The issue was brought to the attention of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy last week, he said. However, Collector Divakara TS stated that meeting drinking water requirements is the primary objective at present; farmers should consider water availability and opt for crops that require less water for cultivation. The current water level in Palair reservoir stands at 17.3 feet, sufficient to meet the drinking water needs



of Khammam, Suryapet and Mahabubabad districts for nearly 60 days, while the water level in Wyra reservoir is 16.8 feet, enough to provide drinking water for Wyra and Madhira constituencies for about 135 days. A decision regarding the release of irrigation water would be taken based on future rainfall and the inflow of floodwaters into the projects, he noted.

Particularly, the farmers in Wyra reservoir ayacut are a worried lot as officials who released water earlier have stopped releasing water. A farmer, A Purnachander Reddy of Narapunenipalli, said he has taken up paddy cultivation on 15 acres and stopping water release all of a sudden is not right. According to the district agriculture officer, D Pullaiah, of the total cultivable land of 5.80 lakh acres in the district, paddy usually occupies 3.05 lakh acres. So far, paddy has been sown in 1.5 lakh acres and its cultivation has to be managed with water from local tanks or bore wells, but not with water from reservoirs in the district. Green gram has been taken up in around 30,000 acres, chilli in 30,000 acres and cotton in 2.30 lakh acres, while about 50,000 to 60,000 acres of land remained vacant without any crops being taken up, he noted.

Farmers stages protest over unscheduled power cuts in Jogipet



Sangareddy: Farmers staged a protest at Anna Sagar sub-station on the outskirts of Jogipet town, highlighting the government’s failure to provide 24-hour power supply to the farming sector. Traffic came to a standstill on the busy Jogi pet-Sangareddy road. Farmers from Jogi pet, Masanpally and other neighbouring villages gathered at the 11-kV sub-station as there were frequent disruptions in power supply to agricultural connections in these

villages. As the Transco officials failed to respond even after the farmers raised the issue multiple times, the farmers took to the streets.

They arrived at the sub-station carrying placards. As traffic went haywire on the busy road, the police intervened and convinced the farmers to withdraw the protest. The police also called the Transco officials and requested them to resolve the issue.

NEET: SC directs NTA to inform on steps taken to implement recommendations of Radhakrishnan panel



New Delhi: Observing that there is a need to institutionalise the reforms in NEET exams, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the National Testing Agency to inform it about the steps taken to implement recommendations of the Radhakrishnan panel and the Nandan Nilekani committee. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to file a fresh affidavit in the matter. “The Radhakrishnan Committee has correctly said it is a systemic problem which needs institutionalisation, which is the most important part of it. This process on paper everything is good. But then one exam happens and by the time the second exam happens it is a new picture all together,” the bench said. At the outset, Mehta told the court the process adopted with safeguards right from printing the NEET question paper till the students get it. The law officer asserted that the system in place

for the NEET exams is foolproof and difficult to breach. He said several moderators are asked to prepare question bank and they are not aware which will be part of the question paper. Mehta said vehicles carrying NEET question papers have GPS and even small movement is recorded. It was hearing a batch of petitions, including one filed by advocated Tanvi Dubey on behalf of the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA). The seven-member Radhakrishnan Committee was set up by the Ministry of Education in the wake of the NEET-UG paper leak to make recommendations on reforms in the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and the structure and functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA). The government had also set up a high powered task force led by Infosys co-founder Nilekani for structural reforms in NEET exams.

Detergent added instead of salt in Mid-Day Meal in Bihar Sharif; Over two dozen children fall ill



Patna: More than two dozen children fell ill on Tuesday after consuming the Mid-Day Meal at Parasi Middle School in the Noorsarai police station area. Panic ensued at the school after the children complained of vomiting and dizziness after eating the food in which detergent powder had been added by the cook by mistake. All the children were taken to Bihar Sharif Sadar Hospital for treatment. Civil Surgeon Dr. Jayaprakash Singh visited the hospital to check on the children and stated that they were all out of danger. According to the school’s principal, Shailendra Kumar Singh, the Mid-Day Meal served on Tuesday consisted of rice and a soybean dish. After a complaint that the food lacked salt, the cook mistakenly added detergent powder Surf instead of salt. It was reported that the salt and detergent were kept in the same location in the kitchen. Shortly after eating the food, the children began to vomit and feel dizzy. Attempts were made to provide first aid at the school, but when their condition did not improve, they were sent to Sadar Hospital. Following the arrival of a large number of children at the

hospital, their family members also gathered there. The families alleged that there were inadequate arrangements at the hospital, noting that two or three girls were being treated on a single bed. This led to a brief commotion. The situation calmed down later after the Civil Surgeon assured them of better treatment. This incident has also raised questions regarding the Health Department’s emergency preparedness. Family members alleged that despite being informed about the children falling ill, neither an ambulance was sent from Noorsarai Hospital nor did a medical team reach the school. Due to the unavailability of ambulances, the families had to transport the children to Sadar Hospital using e-rickshaws and tempos. The families stated that had an ambulance and a medical team arrived on time from the local hospital, the children could have received immediate medical assistance. Serious questions are now being raised regarding both the monitoring of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and the emergency response of the local healthcare system in Bihar.

Pakistan extends airspace ban for Indian aircraft till Sep 24

Islamabad: Pakistan on Wednesday extended the closure of its airspace to Indian aircraft until September 24, according to the country’s airports authority. Pakistan and India imposed matching airspace restrictions on each other’s airlines after the Pahalgam terrorist attack in April 2025. “Pakistan airspace not available for Indian-registered aircraft and aircraft operated or leased by Indian airlines/operators, including military flights,” said a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) issued by the Pakistan Airports Authority. The decision comes ahead of the expiry of the previous restriction on August 23. According to the NOTAM, the extension will take effect from 10:15 am on August 23 and will remain in force until 4:59 am on September 24. As per a Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) document from 2022, the country’s airspace is divided into two flight information regions (FIRs) — Karachi and Lahore.

The NOTAM applies to both the Karachi and Lahore FIRs. The ban has been extended monthly since



last year, causing financial problems for airlines and extended travel time for passengers. India has also maintained a reciprocal airspace ban on all Pakistani-registered aircraft, airlines, and military flights as part of measures taken against Pakistan in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people last year. Both countries closed their respective airspace to each other’s airlines after the attack.

New US green card rule may hit Indians



Washington: Thousands of Indians seeking US green cards could face wider scrutiny of their finances and use of public benefits under new immigration guidance taking effect on September 18. US Citizenship and Immigration Services said officers may consider housing assistance, food stamps, college financial aid and other means-tested benefits when deciding whether an applicant is likely to become a public charge. The guidance follows the Department of Homeland Security’s decision to rescind the 2022 Biden-era public charge regulations. The final rule was announced on July 16 and published in the Federal Register on July 20. It will apply to Forms I-485 seeking permanent residence or adjustment of status that are postmarked or electronically submitted on or after September 18. Applications submitted from December 23, 2022, through September 17, 2026, will continue to be decided under the 2022 regulations and related guidance. The change could affect Indians seeking permanent residence through family and employment categories. It does not apply to people who already hold green cards or US citizenship. Most family-sponsored applicants will be subject to the public charge assessment. They include spouses, children and parents of US citizens, as well as spouses and children of lawful permanent residents. Adult children and siblings of US citizens, fiancé(e)s of citizens, and widows or widowers of citizens are also covered. Employment-based categories subject to the assessment include priority workers, professionals holding advanced degrees, people of exceptional ability, skilled workers, investors and religious workers. Foreign medical school graduates, international broadcasters and certain current or former US government employees abroad are also listed among those subject to the provision. Congress has exempted several humanitarian and special immigration categories. These include refugees, asylees, applicants for Temporary Protected Status, victims of human trafficking and qualifying criminal activity, and certain

self-petitioners under the Violence Against Women Act. Special immigrant juveniles, certain Afghan and Iraqi nationals who worked for the US government, Cuban Adjustment Act applicants and some surviving relatives of military personnel are among the other exempt groups. USCIS officers must consider five statutory factors: the applicant’s age, health, family status, assets and financial position, and education and skills. They may also consider Form I-864, an affidavit through which a sponsor agrees to use personal financial resources to support the immigrant. For benefits received before September 18, USCIS will consider only public cash assistance for income maintenance and government-funded long-term institutional care. For means-tested benefits received on or after that date, officers may consider any such benefits, including housing and food assistance. The agency said officers must examine all relevant evidence and decide applications individually under the totality of the circumstances. Receiving a covered benefit will not by itself lead to rejection. No single factor, apart from the absence of a sufficient affidavit of support when one is required, can alone establish that an applicant is likely to become a public charge. An applicant found inadmissible solely on public charge grounds may be invited to post a cash or surety bond. The amount will be based on the government assistance the person could potentially receive over the next five years. Applicants may submit Form I-945 for a public charge bond only after USCIS issues a Notice of Intent to Deny containing an invitation to post one. The agency will not accept unsolicited bonds. About 66,800 India-born immigrants obtained US green cards in fiscal 2024, accounting for 4.9 per cent of the 1.36 million people granted lawful permanent residence that year, according to Department of Homeland Security data. About 61 per cent of the Indian recipients secured permanent residence through adjustment of status while already living in the United States.

Atlee calls Christopher Nolan’s ‘The Odyssey’ “an experience beyond cinema!”

Chennai: One of India’s top directors Atlee, best known for having directed the Bollywood superhit film ‘Jawan’, has now showered praise on director Christopher Nolan’s critically acclaimed blockbuster film ‘The Odyssey’, calling it “an experience beyond cinema!”. Taking to his social media timelines to share a post on the film, he wrote, “There are films you watch. There are films you admire. And then, very rarely, there are films that completely take you somewhere else. The Odyssey did that to me.”Calling Christopher Nolan’s narrative as astonishing, the Indian director wrote, “The imagery speaks its own language, the camera feels like another character telling the story. and Ludwig’s music doesn’t just accompany the film-it enters your pulse.” He further went on to say, “There is an adrenaline and an immersive force to the experience that I have rarely felt inside a theatre. But what stayed with me most was something very personal – while the audience in you completely surrenders to it. that is a true EPIC. That’s exactly what THE ODYSSEY was for me.Experience it in IMAX. Let the film surround you. Let the film take over. Let it take you somewhere else.” He concluded the post saying, “Some cinema is meant to be watched. Some cinema is meant to be lived.”On the work front, Atlee is now working on his next film ‘Raaka’, featuring Allu Arjun and Deepika Padukone in the lead. On Allu Arjun’s 44th birthday recently, the makers had revealed the first look of the actor in the film. The first look featured an intense close-up of a bald Allu Arjun’s rugged face. His face was partially hidden by what appeared to be a wolf’s claw. The entire picture added a primal, warrior-like aesthetic.Sun Pictures, which is producing the film, had, while formally announcing this project last year, made it clear that the project would have world class experts



working on it. The production house, while making the announcement shared a video clip that had a number of world-class technicians who are to work on the film, sharing their thoughts about the script.Well known VFX supervisor James Madigan, who is known for having worked in films like ‘Iron Man 2’ and ‘Transformers: Rise of the Beasts’, was seen saying, “I just got done reading the script and I got to say, my head is still spinning.” The clip also had Allu Arjun talking to Mike Elizalde, the president of Spectral Motion and asking him what he thought of the script. Mike Elizalde replied, “The script is seriously unlike anything I’ve ever read. It is the best of the best of what I would ever want to create.”Academy award winner and Fractured FX artistic director and CEO Justin Raleigh had said,”Reading through it (the script), very excited about all the creature potential.All the different character potential.”William Write Anderson, who is the co-owner of Lola VFX, said, “I cannot wait to be a part of this. I can’t wait to see what his vision does. The story is unbelievable.” The makers are claiming the film to be a film that will have universal appeal.

Kiara Advani on ‘Toxic’: This one taught me to be comfortable with the unfamiliar

Mumbai: Actress Kiara Advani has spoken about her experience of working on ‘Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups ’ starring Yash and said the film pushed her out of her comfort zone and taught her to embrace the unfamiliar and discover new skills along the way. Kiara shared an intriguing picture of herself from the making of the film.In the image, the actress is seen resting inside a large, transparent, bowl-shaped tank filled to the brim with water. For the caption, she wrote: “Films have a beautiful way of making us step into worlds we’ve never known, sometimes quite literally. Every new character, every new set, every crazy challenge teaches you something you didn’t know you were capable of.”Kiara added: “This one taught me to be comfortable with the unfamiliar, to stay curious, to keep learning and to find joy in the adventure of it all. Because growth, for me, has always been about saying yes to the things that scare you a little... and loving the journey that follows.” “Here’s to new skills, new adventures, and the kind of passion that keeps you willing to dive in again and again!”Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups is a gangster film. It stars Yash in a dual role, alongside Kiara, Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria and Rukmini Vasanth. Toxic is reportedly budgeted at Rs. 500-1,000 crore, making it one of the most expensive Indian films ever made. Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups explores the life of Raya, a violent gangster and playboy who rose to power in the underworld crime before his even-



tual downfall. Years later, he has to face his biological son Rumi / Ticket, who prepared his revenge on Raya, after the latter abandoned him and his wife.Kiara’s last big screen outing was in 2025 with Ayan Mukerji’s War 2. The film is the sixth installment in the YRF Spy Universe and a circumquel to the 2019 film War. The film stars Hrithik Roshan and NTR Jr, Ashutosh Rana and Anil Kapoor in pivotal roles. It follows Kabir Dhaliwal, a former RAW agent, who, after going rogue, becomes a major threat to national security, and a special units officer, Vikram Chelapathi, is assigned to neutralise him.

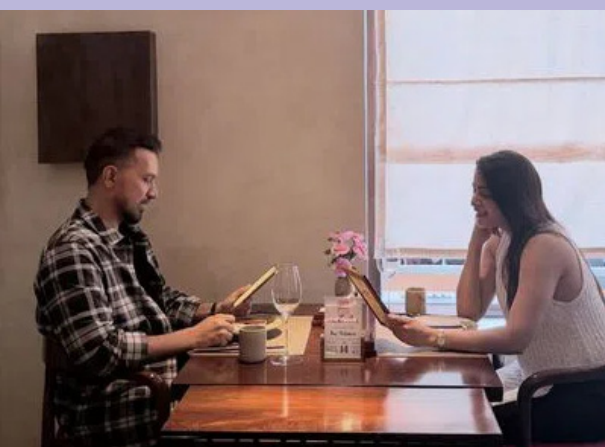
Sunita Ahuja arrives at Bandra Court amidst ugly spat with Govinda

Mumbai: Amid the ongoing public spat between Bollywood superstar Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja, the latter was spotted arriving at the Bandra Family Court on Wednesday with their son Yashvardhan Ahuja. Sunita was seen stepping out with Yashvardhan, who appeared visibly displeased as paparazzi followed the mother-son duo.At one point, he appeared to lose his cool at the photographers while accompanying his mother and asked photographers to make way for his mother and not hound her. When asked what happened inside the court, Yashvardhan loudly said, “Nothing”, while Sunita sarcastically said, “Birthday manane aaye the (Had come to celebrate Birthday)” Sunita opted for a casual look, wearing a light pink shirt and black trousers. Yashvardhan, meanwhile, was dressed in a white shirt with grey trousers and blue sneakers. The latest sighting comes amid public tension between Sunita and Govinda, with their personal equation and ugly spat becoming public. The controversy escalated after Govinda was spotted at an airport with his ‘Roopa’ co-star Komal Rani Swarnkar.Sunita had reacted strongly to it and questioned Govinda’s association with the much-younger actress. She had referred to Govi nda as a “sugar daddy” and said he was “going around with a girl who is the same age as his daughter”, while also telling Ko mal to “dress properly”. Sunita’s remarks came amid speculation surrounding Govinda and Komal, though there has been no confirmation of an affair between the two.For the uninitiated, Komal is associated with Govinda’s upcoming film ‘Roo pa’, and the actor has maintained that his association with younger actresses is extremely professional. Govinda finally responded to Sunita through a video message, saying that she should not interfere with his work or make statements that could damage his reputation and busi-



ness.Addressing the age-gap criticism, he pointed out that it is not the first time an actor has been paired opposite to an actress much younger than the hero. He said how earlier as well Bollywood superstars have worked with younger actresses and said that such professional collaborations should not automatically be viewed as relationships. He also asked Sunita to be mindful of the language she uses in public.In another part of his response, Govinda objected to what he described as her repeated use of abusive expressions involving mothers and sisters, saying that youngsters could be influenced by what public figures say and do. The actor further urged Sunita to refrain from using excessive swear words.Sunita, meanwhile, has previously spoken candidly about the difficulties in her marriage and Govinda’s alleged affairs. Reports about trouble in their marriage have also resurfaced repeatedly. Sunita had reportedly filed a divorce petition in the Bandra Family Court in December 2024, with reports citing cruelty, adultery and desertion as the grounds.But in a few months, during ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, Govinda and Sunita made a public appearance in front of the media and said that nobody could ever break their bond.For the uninitiated, Govinda and Sunita married in 1987 and have two children, daughter Tina Ahuja and son Yashvardhan Ahuja. Yashvardhan is preparing to make his acting debut, while Tina also known as Narmada made her Bollywood debut with ‘Second Hand Husband’ in 2015.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu shares holiday moments with husband Raj Nidimoru



Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently shared a glimpse of her happy moment with husband Raj Nidimoru, radiating a pregnancy glow and a blossoming baby bump in a slew of holiday pictures.Samantha shared a string of images from their holiday on Instagram. In the images, the couple was seen gorging at sumptuous meals, shopping for luxurious ensembles, sipping on coffees, and even enjoying a game of pickleball. Samantha wrote: “Just us” along with the clock, evil eye, and baby emoji.The actress’ best friend Kresha Bajaj, wrote “countdown begins” hinting at the arrival of her firstborn.It was in July that news about the actress welcoming her first baby with Raj Nidimoru.During a thank-you event for her recent film ‘Maa Inti Bangaaram’ in Hyderabad in July, Samantha officially confirmed her pregnancy and shared that she would be stepping away from work for a short period to begin her maternity break.She was quoted



as saying, “Sorry guys, one more small gap and then I will be back. I know I have to take maternity leave now. But I am very happy.” Samantha and Raj got married in 2025, marking the second marriage for both. Samantha was earlier married to actor Naga Chaitanya from 2017 to 2021, while Raj Nidimoru was previously married to Shhyamali De.Talking about Samantha, she made her acting debut in the Telugu romance film Ye Maaya Ches ave in 2010. She was then seen in Neeth aane En Ponvasantham and Eega, respectively. Over the next few years, she played the leading lady in top-grossing andro centric films such as Dookudu, Seetha mma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu, Attarintiki Daredi, Kaththi, Theri, 24, Mersal, and Rangasthalam.Samantha gained further praise for her performances in Mahanati, Oh! Baby, Super Deluxe and Majili. She made her debut as a producer with the horror comedy Subham, leading to Maa Inti Bangaaram, her highest solo grosser.

Manav Suthar's 6-55 helps India seal 165-run win over Sri Lanka in Galle Test



Galle: Riding on a scintillating spell of 6-55 from young left-arm spinner Manav Suthar, India wrapped up a dominant 165-run victory over Sri Lanka in the first Test at the Galle International Stadium on Wednesday. Playing in just his second Test, Suthar claimed six scalps in the second innings on day five to finish with a match haul of 10-101, as Sri Lanka were bowled out for 206 in 77.4 overs in Galle's 50th Test match. The resounding result has also helped India take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series and secure 12 crucial World Test Championship points in what was also their milestone 600th Test match. Resuming after lunch on day five, Sri Lanka looked to build on the stubborn resistance shown by Sonal Dinusha and Keshara Nuwantha. Dinusha, who batted flawlessly after scoring a century in the first innings, advanced to 84 and appeared on course for getting his second hundred of the game. But a crafty and effective Suthar turned the match decisively in India's favour with a devastating triple-wicket maiden in the 76th over. Suthar broke the partnership when he got an extra bit of bounce off a flighted ball outside leg-stump and forced Dinusha to glove to Dhruv Jurel at leg gully. On the very next delivery, Suthar castled Prabath Jayasuriya for a golden duck with a in-drifter

that gripped off the pitch to clip the top of the off stump. Lahiru Kumara safely negotiated the hat-trick ball, but Suthar switched to round the wicket two balls later to find his outside edge that was caught behind by Rishabh Pant, as he completed his second five-wicket haul in as many Tests. Ravindra Jadeja and India's slip cordon maintained high pressure from the other end, though Sri Lanka's last pair of Nuwantha and Asitha Fernando briefly delayed the inevitable. Nuwantha showed defiance by paddle-sweeping Suthar for a boundary to take Sri Lanka past the 200-run mark.

But Suthar finished off the game in the 78th over when his quicker arm ball skidded off the pitch and breached Nuwantha's defence to castle him for 20 and spark jubilant scenes in the Indian dressing room. India's victory was also anchored by Devdutt Padikkal's magnificent first-innings knock of 167, which gave India a massive 178-run cushion. Rishabh Pant's calculative knock of 66 in the second innings further allowed Suthar and the Indian bowling attack to exploit the turning surface and seal a comprehensive triumph. Brief scores: India 462 and 193 beat Sri Lanka 284 and 206 in 77.4 overs (Sonal Dinusha 84, Dhananjaya de Silva 59; Manav Suthar 6-55, Prasidh Krishna 2-16) by 165 runs

PV Sindhu reveals Virat Kohli advice that changed her perspective during tough phase

New Delhi: PV Sindhu has revealed how Virat Kohli's simple advice during one of the toughest phases of her career helped change her perspective, with the Indian badminton star saying the Indian cricketer reminded her of the importance of simply turning up and trusting her preparation. Sindhu, who is currently competing at the BWF World Championships in New Delhi, recalled her conversation with Kohli while speaking on the RCB podcast. The two-time Olympic medallist said she had approached Kohli at a time when she felt that 'nothing is happening', but his response was straightforward. "He is like my brother, I must say, because I remember when I was at my lowest. I think I met him and I said, you know, nothing is happening. He just said, Just show up, it is okay, just go out there and just show up," Sindhu said. The advice struck a chord with Sindhu, who said Kohli encouraged her to focus on competing, rather than being consumed by the results.

"He asked me to show up, anywhere and for anything, and just play my game. What would happen? You are not going to lose anything; you know what you are, how you have trained, and show the world who you are. So I think it hit me, and I think that conversation completely changed my perspective," she added. The 31-year-old also revealed that



she remains in touch with Kohli and shares her achievements with him. "Whenever I win, I just share my happiness, saying that you know I have won this or that, and recently I met him, so it is always so good to meet, you know, a person who has achieved so much and to get a few of those inputs from him," Sindhu said. Reflecting on Kohli's approach to sport, Sindhu said she continues to admire the way he carries himself and performs under pressure. "The way he thinks whenever he goes out there, looking at him how he shows up and how he plays and what he is, I think hats off to him for whatever he has done," she added. Sindhu made a confident start to her 2026 BWF World Championships campaign at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. The former world champion defeated Ireland's Sophia Noble 21-7, 21-11 in just 29 minutes in her opening women's singles match to progress to the Round of 32.

Hanshi Shaswat Kumar sets 8th world record with 100-kg one-hand dumbbell hold

Hyderabad: Famous Indian martial artist Grandmaster Hanshi Shaswat Kumar, who is also known in the world martial arts community as a "Pioneer of Modern Combat Karate," has achieved his 8th world record by holding a 100-kg dumbbell with one hand continuously for one minute. The record attempt was performed live and witnessed by two eyewitnesses. According to the certificate issued by the Asian Book of World Records, the achievement was recognised as a world record. The certificate was issued on 18 August 2026, under the category "100 KG Dumbbell One-Hand Hold for 1 Minute – World Record." The Asian Book of World Records Certificate No. is ABWR24260220. A significant aspect of the achievement is that the 100-kg one-hand dumbbell hold for one minute is being presented as a first-of-its-kind world-record achievement in this category. According to information provided by Kumar, no martial artist had previously achieved an official world



record for holding a 100-kg dumbbell with one hand continuously for one minute. On this basis, Hanshi Shaswat Kumar is being described as the first martial artist in the world to accomplish this feat. The achievement becomes even more notable because Kumar has also completed the highly demanding 100-Man Kumite, completing a total of 108 full-contact bouts on 9 February 2025.

India close in on victory after reducing Sri Lanka to 175/6 in Galle Test

Galle: Ravindra Jadeja and Prasidh Krishna took a scalp each as India inched closer to achieving a resounding victory in the first Test after reducing Sri Lanka to 175/6 in 67 overs at lunch on day five's play at the Galle International Stadium on Wednesday. In the morning, Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva and Sonal Dinusha, the centurion in the first innings, exhibited huge patience and resisted the Indian bowlers well by putting on a stand of 95 runs off 202 deliveries for the fifth wicket. But once de Silva and Niroshan Dickwella fell, the outcome is now slowly moving in India's favour in what is also their 600th Test match, as they conceded just 91 runs in 33 overs. Resuming on a pitch offering variable bounce, de Silva and Dinusha fought valiantly through the opening 90 minutes. After bringing up the fifty of their partnership, de Silva got his fifty by cutting Ravindra Jadeja through point for four, while Dinusha launched Kuldeep Yadav over deep midwicket for a maximum to reach his half-century in style. However, India broke the frustrating 95-run stand through Jadeja, who extracted sharp turn and bounce on a fuller ball angled at stumps to catch de Silva's top edge on an attempted sweep and gave a comfortable catch to Manav Suthar at



short fine leg to fall for 59. One brought two scalps for India as Krishna, operating with sustained heat, removed wicketkeeper-batter Dickwella for 10. Dickwella never looked comfortable at the crease and even had a quirky exchange with Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was stationed at square leg. On the last ball of the 60th over, Dickwella shuffled across his stumps to a back-of-a-length delivery outside the leg stump, but could only give a feather edge off Krishna behind to Rishabh Pant. Keshara Nuwantha then joined a resolute Dinusha to safely navigate the remaining overs before the lunch break arrived. With the new ball just 13 overs away, India will aim to finish the game in the second session. Brief scores: India 462 & 193 lead Sri Lanka 284 & 175/6 in 67 overs (Sonal Dinusha 65 not out, Dhananjaya de Silva 59; Prasidh Krishna 2-16, Manav Suthar 2-46) by 197 runs

2026 Cincinnati Open: Sabalenka, Andreieva and Gauff advance to fourth round

Cincinnati: Aryna Sabalenka needed just 54 minutes to see off Wang Xinyu 6-1, 6-3 to ease into the fourth round of the Cincinnati Open. With a win, Sabalenka has now reached the Round of 16 or better at 45 WTA 1000 events in her career. Her effort in Cincinnati pulls her ahead of Karolina Pliskova for most among active players. She now owns 50 career wins at WTA 1000 events as World No. 1. Sabalenka is one of three players to do that since the format's introduction in 2009, along with Serena Williams (104) and Iga Swiatek (58). Meanwhile, No. 5 seed Mirra Andreiev advanced to the fourth round of the Cincinnati Open in two contrasting sets, converting her fourth match point to quell a stern challenge from No. 32 seed Janice Tjen 6-1, 7-6(5) in 1 hour and 42 minutes. Andreieva, a quarterfinalist in Cincinnati in her only previous appearance at the tournament in 2024, has now won consecutive matches for the first time since capturing her first Grand Slam title at Roland Garros in June. She'll next face No. 10 seed Marta Kostyuk for the fourth time this year. Kostyuk leads their head-



to-head 2-1, though Andreieva won their most recent meeting in the Roland Garros semifinals. Elsewhere, No. 4 seed and 2023 champion Coco Gauff also secured her spot in the fourth round of the 2026 Cincinnati Open, courtesy of a 6-1, 7-6 (3) win over fellow American Ann Li. Gauff is now into her 36th career WTA 1000 fourth round, including six this season. Only Aryna Sabalenka (44), Karolina Pliskova (44), Elina Svitolina (43), Iga Swiatek (38) and Jessica Pegula (38) have more among active players competing in Cincinnati singles.



One photograph.. meaning of thousand words



Vijayawada, August 19: District collector Dr. G. Lakshmisha said a photograph is the reflection of meaning of thousand words and photography is a wonderful art that captures a moment permanently and conveys the emotion, event and history of that moment to future generations. A special programme was organized by the district administration at collectorate sri pingali venkayya meeting hall on wednesday on the occasion of world photography day. The collector along with vijayawada rdo vennela srinu, i and pr department zone - 2 rjd p. Thimmappa, jury members of district level photography competition ts reddy (frps),

rector p. Thimmappa said if journalists are soldiers of letters, photographers are soldiers of visuals. He said photography is a wonderful art that preserves an incident as a permanent memory. He said photos taken by photo journalists with impartial view become symbols of social responsibility and contribute to great change and development. Cash prizes to 27 winners: "Competitions were held in categories of andhra pradesh culture, heritage, tourism, youth, p4, economic development, welfare, best news pictures. A total of 221 photo entries were received and jury members selected 27 best photographs. The collector along with guests



ch vijayabhaskar rao (arps), k. Ravikumar and others paid floral tributes to the portrait of father of photography louis daguerre. Speaking on the occasion, the collector conveyed world photography day greetings to everyone. She said photography is a powerful medium that turns moments into pictures, preserves memories and tells stories that words cannot express. She said a good photograph properly documents an event and reflects the emotions, culture, development and aspirations of people in society. She said

presented cash prizes, certificates and mementos to the winners. Category 1 - andhra pradesh culture, heritage, tourism: "First prize - yvv satyanarayana, second - n. Kishore, third - m. Prashanth. Consolation prizes to u. Durga rao, p. Prasad, yv anand, rv apparao, k. Tirupathaiah, kb naveen. Category 2 - youth, p4, economic development, welfare: "First prize - gn rao, second - ch narayana rao, third - ss vijay babu.

Consolation prizes to ch mastan, manikantha, ch narayana rao, b. Satish



the role of photo journalists is very crucial in conveying important events happening in society to the public. She said district level photography competitions are being organized every year to encourage, recognize and honor the talent of photo journalists. She added that video journalists and amateur photographers will also be included in these competitions in future. The collector congratulated the winners of the competition. Rdo vennela srinu said along with development and welfare programmes, importance is also being given to culture, arts and heritage under the leadership of district collector. As part of it, world photography day celebrations are being organized grandly to encourage photographers. I and pr regional joint di-

kumar, rajesh, b. Maridaiah. Category 3 - best news picture: "First prize - kvs giri, second - a. Rajendra prasad, third - durga prasad. Consolation prizes to a. Rama chandra rao, k. Chakrapani, g. Mahesh, b. Maridaiah, m. Sampath kumar, s. Laks hnipavan. An exhibition of award winning photographs and a special exhibition of rare and various types of cameras collected by senior photographer potluri prasad over decades were the main attractions. Diprvo kv ramanarao, dprvo n. Nage swara rao, divisional prvo k. Ravi, competition coordinator vv prasad, vmc prvo dr. Razia shabina, assistant information engineer k. Dhanunjayaraju, avs b. Balaji, photo journalists, studio photographers and amateur photographers participated.



Does absence of Opposition make Assembly sessions ‘bland’?

Visakhapatnam: Does the absence of Opposition make Assembly sessions bland? Yes, confirmed P Vishnu Kumar Raju, Visakhapatnam North constituency MLA. Assuring that the Assembly Speaker is not going to disconnect his mic as ‘dreamt’ by YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Vishnu Kumar Raju promised that, unlike the YSRCP leaders, the NDA leaders will not insult the former when the party’s elected representatives attend Assembly sessions. Questioning the government during Assembly sessions paves the way for meaningful discussions and critical debates. “There are several issues to be tabled during the sessions such as how Andhra Pradesh is plagued by the 22A land issue. If the elected representatives fail to turn up to the Assembly, people’s votes go down the drain,” asserted Vishnu Kumar Raju on the sidelines of a meeting. Instead of making a big hue and cry over the DSC recruitment irregularities, staging protests and making statements within the four walls of the Tadepalli palace, the Visakhapatnam North constituency MLA suggested the YSRCP cadre advise the party chief and MLAs to attend the Assembly sessions as it is an effective platform to question the government and raise public issues. Vishnu



Kumar Raju appealed to Jagan Mohan Reddy to come out of ‘self-induced illusions’ such as the mic being disconnected while speaking at the Assembly session or the party MLAs being insulted by the ruling party MLAs, step out of the ‘Tadepalli palace,’ and value people’s votes. “If the trend of ‘no show’ continues, people will certainly refrain from voting for the YSRCP in the ensuing local body polls. Because there is absolutely no point in exercising the franchise as public issues will not be raised in the Assembly,” the MLA opined, stressing that someone is misguiding Jagan by painting a wrong picture. Even as the YSRCP MLCs are participating in the council sessions, Vishnu Kumar Raju wondered what is stopping the YSRCP MLAs from attending the Assembly. “The Assembly is deprived of a dash of ‘spice’ as the YSRCP elected representatives stay away from it,” the MLA emphasised.

CISF DG Praveer Ranjan visits Visakhapatnam Port

Visakhapatnam: Director General, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Praveer Ranjan visited key strategic installations in Visakhapatnam. During his recent two-day visit to Visakhapatnam Port, the DG CISF inspected key security installations and reviewed security arrangements, training aspects and operational preparedness. Also, he held discussions with Jasmeet Singh Bindra, chairperson of Visakhapatnam Port Authority and Roshni Aparanji Korati, deputy chairperson of the VPA, on port security and strengthening coordination between CISF and the port authority. Later, visiting Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Praveer Ranjan reviewed security and operational preparedness and held discussions with CMD of RINL MNVS Prabhakar, senior management officials and CISF personnel on matters concerning the security and protection of the vital installation. Addressing the Combined Sainik Sammelan of all CISF units based in Visakhapatnam, the DG emphasised futuristic security strategies, technological upgradation, operational preparedness, discipline and the physical and mental well-being of personnel. He highlighted the pivotal role and growing contribution of women personnel in the



Force, particularly appreciating the achievements of the first batch of CISF women commandos trained at CISF 10th Reserve Battalion. Praveer Ranjan also lauded the commendable performance of the CISF women contingent in the recently concluded Commonwealth Games and Police Games. The DG’s visit underlines CISF’s unwavering commitment to professional excellence to strengthen the security and protection of the nation’s vital assets and critical infrastructure. Photo caption: Director General, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Praveer Ranjan with chairperson of Visakhapatnam Port Authority Jasmeet Singh Bindra in Visakhapatnam

City gears up for BRICS Sports Ministers’ Meeting-2026

Visakhapatnam: Visakhapatnam is gearing up to host the BRICS Sports Ministers’ Meeting-2026, scheduled to be held on August 22 and 23. District collector M Abhishikth Kishore inspected several locations on Tuesday and directed officials to make comprehensive arrangements for the ministers and delegates attending the meeting. The collector inspected Rushikonda Beach, where a high tea programme is proposed for the visiting ministers and delegates. He discussed the arrangements with officials and directed them to ensure that the surround-

ings are thoroughly cleaned and that facilities are provided matching international standards. He directed the officials to maintain the beach surroundings in line with Blue Flag beach standards. The collector also inspected the Thotlakonda Buddhist heritage site and instructed officials to install a welcome gate and banners. He suggested that the uniqueness and historical significance of the site be explained to the delegates in advance with the assistance of a local guide. As part of the arrangements, visitors will not be permitted at Thotlakonda on August 22. Of-

Tirupati to host Amaravati Championship-2026 from Aug 24

Tirupati: Tirupati is set to host the state-level competitions of the Amaravati Championship-2026 from August 24 to 27, with 12,428 young athletes from across the state qualifying for the four-day sporting event. The championship, organised as part of the National Sports Day celebrations, is aimed at identifying sporting talent at the grassroots and providing young players with opportunities to progress from constituency-level competitions to the district and state stages. The selection process began with competitions held in all 175 Assembly constituencies between July 15 and 30. As many as 2,07,498 players participated, including 1,42,306 boys and 65,192 girls. The selections were conducted with the support of physical education teachers and physical directors, with Zilla Parishad High Schools used as venues. District-level competitions were subsequently held from August 6 to 15. Around 83,650 players took part, and the best performers have qualified for the state-level contests in Tirupati. The state championship will have equal participation from boys and girls, with 6,214 players in each category. The participants comprise 3,107 boys and 3,107 girls in the Under-17 category and an equal number in the Under-23 category. Competitions will be held in 12 disciplines, archery, athletics, badminton, boxing, basketball, chess, hockey, kabaddi, kho-kho, weightlifting, volleyball and yoga. The events include both individual and team competitions. Athletics will cover sprint, middle-distance, jumping and throwing events, while badminton will



feature singles and doubles. Team competitions will be conducted in basketball, hockey, kabaddi, kho-kho and volleyball. Chess, boxing, weightlifting, archery and yoga will also have events across the prescribed categories. The Amaravati Championship was first organised in 2025 with the objective of creating a systematic platform for young sporting talent. The 2026 edition has been expanded to the Under-17 and Under-23 age groups for both boys and girls. Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh chairman A Ravi Naidu said the championship was being conducted to mark the birth anniversary of Major Dhyan Chand and strengthen the sports ecosystem in the State. He said the government was focusing on creating opportunities for young athletes and ensuring that talent identified at the constituency level gets a pathway to district and state competitions. He added that the large participation at the initial stage reflected the growing interest among youngsters in sports. The championship carries a total prize money of Rs 91.90 lakh. Winners of the state-level competitions will be honoured during the National Sports Day celebrations on August 29.

Tirupati’s ‘City of Tanks’ project to strengthen water resources

Tirupati: Tirupati is set to take up a major water resource and urban development project aimed at making the city more attractive, climate-resilient and better prepared to manage floods and water-related challenges. District Collector Dr S Venkateswar said the ‘City of Tanks’ project has been launched with the objective of developing Tirupati into a major city while making better use of its existing lakes and water bodies. Addressing a press conference along with TUDA Chairman C Divakar Reddy, TUDA Vice Chairman and Joint Collector R Govind Rao and Tirupati Municipal Corporation Commissioner M Jayakrishna on Tuesday, the Collector said a detailed study had been under way for the past six to eight months. The study is being carried out by TUDA in coordination with the Municipal Corporation, Irrigation Department and other agencies. The project proposes to link around 34 tanks in the Greater Tirupati region through a chain



system and develop them as cascade tanks. The tank bunds will be strengthened, while recreational and commercial spaces will be planned at suitable locations without affecting the water bodies. The Collector said preliminary discussions were being held with Germany’s KfW bank for a loan assistance of around Rs 750-800 crore. The first phase, estimated at Rs 550 crore, will focus on linking tanks in the western part of the city, wastewater management, stormwater management and flood mitigation. The first phase is planned for completion in about four years.



officials were directed to install an advance information board at the site. The collector later visited Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary and reviewed the places of interest and facilities available for visitors. He instructed officials to explore the possibility of including the Visakhapatnam Museum, Aircraft Museum and other

prominent attractions in the delegates’ itinerary. Bheemunipatnam Revenue Divisional Officer Sangeet Madhur, SETVIS CEO Ramya, district sports development officer R. June Gallyot, District Tourism Officer J. Madhavi, and representatives of VMRDA, GVMC and APTDC participated in the inspection.