

As per the Congress' manifesto, the Telangana government has released the second phase of farm loan waiver. The 'Prajala Congress government' is providing relief to 6.4 lakh farmer families of the state by waiving their loans up to Rs.1.5 lakh. While on the one hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party has kept the farmers of the country in debt trap, denying their demand and need for legal guarantee of MSP; on the other hand, the Congress is working to provide help to agricultural families at every possible place

- Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

FM says Budget balanced, takes care of all segments

BHAGYASHREE
 LIMAYE RECALLS SHOOTING AT THE BREATHTAKING KONKAN LOCALES FOR MUNIYA

If Shivam Bhaje performs well, we'll consider Tamil REMAKE

Cong-BRS brawl rocks House

ROW IN ASSEMBLY OVER CM REVANTH'S SWIPE AT SABITA

- First woman home minister of AP insulted in TG
- Revanth dubs YSR's lucky charm as 'untrustworthy'
- KTR says the Chief Minister insulted all women of TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi legislator Sabita Indra Reddy was the first woman home minister of Andhra Pradesh and considered as lucky charm for late Dr Y S Rajashekar Reddy who used to even start all his programmes from Chevella. Fifteen years later, Congress CM Revanth Reddy in Telangana accused her of deceit and said; "If you trust her, you would end up in front of the



Jubilee Bus Stand." Immediately, the Telangana Assembly was rocked by protests, with BRS legislators taking exception to some of the 'insensitive and crude' remarks made by the Chief Minister.

Continued on Page 2



Emotional Sabitha recalls YSR's respect for women

Bharat Rashtra Samithi legislator Sabitha Indra Reddy teared up and spoke emotionally in the legislative Assembly while responding to the remarks made by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Deputy CM Bhatti. She said their remarks reflected the disrespect shown towards her and other women.

KTR will end up at the Jubilee Bus Stand if he trusts the sisters behind him. I joined the Congress because of Sabithakka. After assuring to stand by me for Malkajgiri MP contest on behalf of the Congress, she joined BRS

- CM Revanth Reddy

Congress delegation met her and requested her not to shift to the BRS party as it would deprive the party and a Dalit leader like him of the status of Leader of Opposition in the Assembly; still, she went to BRS for Minister post. With what face are you now talking about CM?

- Dy CM Bhatti



Jishnu sworn in as TG Guv

- Pleased with crop loan waiver
- Hails Revanth as 'young & dynamic'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Jishnu Dev Varma, former deputy chief minister of Tripura, took oath as the new Governor of Telangana on Wednesday.

Chief Justice of Telangana High Court, Justice Alok Aradhe administered the oath of office to the Governor at a ceremony held at the Raj Bhavan.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, ministers and top officials attended the programme. The Governor, in his message to the people of Telangana, said, "I extend my warmest congratulations to the Government of Telangana, led by young and dynamic Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and his capable Cabinet. Together, let us embark on a journey of

transformation, guided by democracy, justice, compassion and values of our great Constitution."

The Governor expressed his happiness over the state government's initiative to waive crop loans up to Rs 2 lakh for all farmer families, "providing much-needed relief to our hardworking farmers and ensuring that they can continue to contribute to our state's growth and prosperity".

"Hailing from Tripura, I bring with me the rich cultural heritage and spirit of resilience of my homeland. It is my privilege to now serve the people of Telangana, a state renowned for its diverse cultures, rich heritage, and unparalleled beauty. Telangana, nestled in the heart of India, is a land of vibrant life and promise. Our state is blessed with abundant natural resources, fertile agricultural lands, and a strategic location that makes it a hub for trade and commerce.

Continued on Page 2

DON'T MISS...

A nightmare in broad daylight...

The Road Over Bridge (RoB) at RK Puram is in a dilapidated condition with girder portions giving way and potholes all over, making it a horrible experience to the road-users every day. Restoration works of the RK Puram RoB proposed by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) have not seen the light of the day. Frequent rains in Hyderabad uncovered the poor quality of the bridge with potholes and cracks. Commuters urged the Telangana government to immediately renovate the bridge...

-PAGE: 3

'It's failure for all of us, could've...

MCD Additional Commissioner Tariq Thomas on Wednesday accepted the civic body's failure in the Rajinder Nagar coaching centre deaths and said there are serious structural issues, which need to be addressed. Interacting with the protesting students at UPSC coaching hub Rajinder Nagar here, the senior civic body official said there can be no excuses to the incident and the agency should have done its duty better. "We have structural issues like you said and they need to be addressed in a systematic way..."

-PAGE: 5

Space regulator offers private...

India's space regulator on Wednesday offered an orbital slot to private sector companies to build and operate a communications satellite to provide services in diverse sectors such as telephone, television, radio and internet. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) released an Announcement of Opportunity for making available Indian Orbital Resources to the Non-Government Entities (NGEs). INSPACe Chairman Pawan Goenka said the initiative...

-PAGE: 8

Gambhir praises India's tenacity...

Head coach Gautam Gambhir praised India for pulling off a tenacious Super Over win in the low-scoring third T20I against Sri Lanka for a series whitewash, but called for consistent improvement on pitches assisting sharp turn. In a contest delayed by an hour due to rain here on Tuesday, India struggled against both spin and pace on a fresh pitch to make a mere 137/9. But the Suryakumar Yadav-led side showed doggedness in the second half despite Sri Lanka's domination to force the contest...

-SPORTS

Stop mudslinging, focus on progress

Cong tarnishing TG by downplaying growth under BRS: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president and legislator KT Rama Rao has accused the Revanth Reddy-led Congress government of tarnishing the image of Telangana purely for political reasons by not acknowledging the state's growth under the erstwhile Bharat Rashtra Samithi regime.

He was speaking during a discussion on the Budget Appropriation Bill in the Telangana Legislative Assembly on Wednesday. In a marathon address lasting around two hours, KTR critiqued the recently presented budget, saying it



failed to promise anything substantial for the people of Telangana. While offering BRS' support to constructive policies brought by the present government, KTR urged

the ruling party to avoid propaganda and focus on genuine developmental efforts.

Highlighting the growth of Telangana over the last decade under the leadership of former chief minister K Chandrasekar Rao, KTR maintained that the Congress party was tarnishing the image of Telangana by not acknowledging its growth solely to score political brownie points.

Citing figures from the Telangana Socio Economic Outlook tabled in the House by the Congress government, KTR emphasized that Telangana had emerged as a beacon of progress.

TG govt puts a ban on transfers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government ordered a ban on all transfers from August 1 on all heads of departments in the State. Principal Secretary to Government Sandeep Kumar

Sultana released a Government Order in this regard on Wednesday. Posting orders to the employees on account of promotion shall be issued to clear existing vacancies without shifting any other employees is expected from the ban order.

Along with the posting orders to the employees due to disbandment of posts, reversions, repatriations, deputations (on Foreign Service only), disciplinary proceedings shall

be issued in clearing the existing vacancies without shifting other employees. Posting orders to the employees on return from long leave of more than six months shall be issued in clear existing vacancies without shifting other employees.

The GO mentioned, "It is further ordered that no relaxation proposals shall be entertained by any department for a period of six months commencing from August 1, 2024.

Thereafter, for any relaxation of ban, the Administrative department in circulation to the Chief Minister through the Secretary Finance, Chief Secretary, Minister concerned and the Finance Minister."



UPSC cancels candidature of Khedkar from IAS

Debars her from all future selections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The UPSC on Wednesday said it has cancelled the provisional candidature of probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar and debarred her from all future examinations or selections.

"The UPSC has examined the available records carefully and found her guilty of acting in contravention of the provisions of the CSE-2022 Rules," the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) said in a statement.

It said the provisional candidature of the 2023 batch probationary IAS officer for the CSE-2022

2

BJP will fight for the sake of farmers: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that the Loan Waiver Scheme for farmers is not taking place completely, Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy stated the BJP will collect the details of the farmers who did not get loan waiver, and learn the problems of the farmers at Rachabanda programmes in villages and subse-

quently the BJP will stand by the farmers.



Kishan Reddy said that the BJP created helpline number 8886 100 097 under the aegis of BJP Kisan Morcha to stand by the farmers and asked the farmers to call the number for the help. Kishan Reddy appealed to the farmers, who did not get loan waiver and Rythu Bharosa, to address the letters to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy.

Continued on Page 2

TG stands out in helping farmers

Rahul lauds loan waiver, accuses BJP of pushing ryots into debt trap

- INDIA bloc will provide 'weapon' of MSP legal guarantee to farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday asserted that the INDIA bloc would pull farmers out of the debt trap by providing them with the 'weapon' of legal guarantee for MSP.

He made the remarks while congratulating farmers from Telangana on the launch of the second phase



of the state government's crop loan waiver scheme with an outlay of

more than Rs 6,198 crore, which will benefit about 6.4 lakh farmer families. "Congratulations once again to the farmer brothers and sisters of Telangana. As per its manifesto promise, the Telangana government has released the second tranche of farm loan waiver," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

The "Prajala Congress government" is providing relief to 6.4 lakh farmer families of the state by waiving their loans up to Rs 1.5 lakh, Gandhi said.

2

HOT NEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Heat wave days nearly doubled in TG in 10 years

NAVEENA GHANATE
 ■ HYDERABAD

The rising number of heat wave days across India, especially in Telangana, highlights the severe impact of climate change. According to the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, the number of heat wave days in Telangana has shown a worrying increase over the past decade. In 2015, Telangana experienced eight heat wave days, which escalated to 14 in 2019 and 12 in 2024.

Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema regions have also not been spared, with coastal Andhra Pradesh recording 22 heat wave days in 2023, 11 in 2024, while the figure was eight in 2015. Rayalaseema saw a sharp rise from zero days in 2015 to 16 in 2024.

As per the data tabled in the Lok Sabha, this trend is consistent with the broader national pattern of increasing heat waves, with states like Odisha, Bihar, and West Bengal also experiencing significant rises.

Dr Jitendra Sing, Minister of State, in response

to question said that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had been proactive in enhancing monitoring and early warning systems to mitigate the adverse effects. These measures include seasonal and monthly forecasts, district-wise heat wave vulnerability assessments, and real-time information dissemination through various digital platforms. Despite these efforts, the human cost remains significant. Telangana alone reported 62 deaths due to heat waves in 2022, reflecting the urgency for more robust measures. The government has implemented Heat Action Plans (HAPs) in 23 states, including Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, to improve preparedness and response.

As temperatures continue to soar, the need for comprehensive strategies to combat heat waves is more critical than ever. Authorities have been urged to prioritize climate resilience and public health to safeguard vulnerable sections of population from the escalating climate crisis.

As per the data tabled in the Lok Sabha, this trend is consistent with the broader national pattern of increasing heat waves, with states like Odisha, Bihar, and West Bengal also experiencing significant rises

5-YEAR-OLD GIRL'S RAPE-MURDER CASE

TG HC upholds man's death sentence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday upheld the death sentence awarded by a city court to a man for raping and murdering a five-year-old girl in December 2017.

A Metropolitan Sessions Judge (MSJ) Court in Rangareddy in February 2021 sentenced Dinesh Kumar Dharne (23), a labourer, with capital punishment after he was found guilty under relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act), IPC section

302 (murder) and other provisions.

Dinesh Kumar Dharne from Madhya Pradesh, had subsequently filed an appeal in the Telangana High Court challenging the MSJ court judgment.

The High Court today dismissed the petition filed by the convict and confirmed the death sentence, Narsingi Police said.

According to prosecution, on December 12, 2017 Dinesh Kumar Dharne on the pretext of providing chocolates took the girl into nearby bushes where he raped and murdered her by hitting her head with a boulder.

CM meets BRS MLAs who joined Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, former speaker and BRS MLA who joined the Congress party, hosted a dinner to the defected MLAs and MLCs except Gadwal MLA Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy. Srinivas Reddy invited Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and AICC incharge general secretary Deepa Das Munshi and Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukhender Reddy.

Reddy's reverse defection and in view of news spread that some more defected MLAs may defect in reverse. They also discussed about the disqualification petition in the High Court against Danam Nagender, Kadiam Srihari and Tellam Venkatrai. The MLAs who attended the dinner are - Arikepudi Gandhi, T Prakash Goud, Gudem Mahipal Reddy, Kadiam Srihari, Kale Yadaiah, Sanjay Kumar, Tellam Venkat Rao and Danam Nagender. Some MLCs also attended.

MP Nathwani presents his book to PM Modi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rajya Sabha MP Parimal Nathwani, on Wednesday, presented the first copy of his new book Call of the Gir to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the PM's residence. The Prime Minister not only graciously received the book, but also met Nathwani's family and exchanged pleasantries. Incidentally, Nathwani has dedicated this book to the Prime Minister 'for being the visionary behind Project Lion and Lion@2047: Vision for Amrit Kaal'. The book also contains a message from Modi.

During informal conversation with Nathwani subsequent to the presentation of the book, the Prime Minister enquired about the status of tourism in Gir and emphasised the need to increase the infrastructure so as to attract foreign tourists in Gir. He also said that forestation around the periphery of Gir sanctuary was the need of the hour. PM also commended Nathwani for his dedicated effort in coming out with the book and said that he has answered the Call of the Gir while also balancing the demands on time placed by professional and public service responsibilities.

Cong gives a shock to Oppn at Media Point by non-stop pressers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Grand Old Congress party gave a shock to not only the main Opposition BRS party but also the BJP at the Assembly Media Point on Wednesday after the adjournment of the Assembly. The BRS, while continuing its agitation, came to the Assembly Media Point in a rally while raising slogans against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy objecting to his

comments in the Assembly. However, half a dozen Congress MLAs already started speaking to the media at the Media Point by the time all the BRS MLAs reached there. On the other hand, the BJP MLAs also reached the Assembly Media Point. Reaching the Assembly Media Point and addressing the media one after the other is regular practice. However, Congress MLAs continued addressing the media one after

the other by not giving a chance to the BJP and BRS MLAs. Interestingly, the Congress brought another half-a-dozen MLAs to the Media Point and continued their marathon speaking one after the other. Government Whips Beerla Ilaiah, Ramachandru Naik and MLAs - G Madhusudhan Reddy, Balu Naik, Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and Vemula Veeresham spoke one after the other. In the meantime, another half-a-

dozen MLAs came and they were-Government Whip Adi Srinivas, MLAs--Vijayaramana Rao, Matta Ragamayi, Parnika Reddy, Yashaswini Reddy and Mandula Samuel. Vexed with the attitude of the Congress MLAs, first the BJP MLAs left the Media Point and later, BRS MLAs followed suit. However, BRS MLAs spoke to the media one after the other at the Media Point spot but not at the mike point.

Mumbai, Chennai may face risk of inundation

POSSIBILITY OF LOSING OVER 10 PC LAND BY 2040 DUE TO RISING SEA LEVELS: STUDY

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 10 per cent of the land in Mumbai and up to 10 per cent in Panaji and Chennai is at risk of inundation by 2040 due to climate change-induced sea-level rise, according to a new study. The study by Bengaluru-based think tank Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) said rising sea levels could submerge up to 5 per cent of land in Kochi, Mangalore, Visakhapatnam, Udupi and Puri.

The report titled "Sea level rise scenarios and inundation maps for selected Indian coastal cities" examined sea-level change under historical and future climate scenarios in 15 Indian coastal cities and towns -- Chennai, Mumbai, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Mangalore, Visakhapatnam, Kozhikode, and Haldia, Kanyakumari, Panaji, Puri, Udupi, Paradip, Thoothukudi and Yanam.

Mumbai has experienced the maximum rise in sea levels (4.440 cm), followed by Haldia (2.726 cm), Visakhapatnam (2.381 cm), Kochi (2.213 cm), Paradip (0.717 cm), and Chennai



Mumbai has experienced the maximum rise in sea levels (4.440 cm), followed by Haldia (2.726 cm), Visakhapatnam (2.381 cm), Kochi (2.213 cm), Paradip (0.717 cm), and Chennai (0.679 cm) from 1987 to 2021, the study revealed

(0.679 cm) from 1987 to 2021, the study revealed. "Further, the rise in sea levels will continue until the end of the century under all IPCC shared socioeconomic pathway scenarios in all 15 cities and towns, with the highest rise predicted for Mumbai," it said. Shared socioeconomic pathways are climate change scenarios of projected socioeco-

nomical global changes up to 2100. By 2100, sea levels would rise by 76.2 cm in Mumbai, 75.5 cm in Panaji, 75.3 cm in Udupi, 75.2 cm in Mangalore, 75.1 cm in Kozhikode, 74.9 cm in Kochi, 74.7 cm in Thiruvananthapuram, and 74.7 cm in Kanyakumari even under the medium-emission scenario. CSTEP said that more than

10 per cent of the land in Mumbai, Yanam, and Thoothukudi; 5-10 per cent in Panaji and Chennai; and 1-5 per cent in Kochi, Mangalore, Visakhapatnam, Haldia, Udupi, Paradip and Puri would be submerged due to rise in sea levels by 2040. Land submergence would be higher in 2100 in Mangalore, Haldia, Paradip, Thoothukudi and Yanam than in Mumbai

and Chennai under the high-emission scenario. Key sectors that will be impacted include water, agriculture, forest and biodiversity, and health. The beaches, backwaters and mangrove forests are particularly at risk, impacting biodiversity and tourism. Udupi, Panaji and Yanam -- having significant agricultural areas, wetlands, and waterbodies -- will face inundation due to rising sea levels.

Stop mudslinging, focus..

Continued on Page 1

He said that the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) soared from Rs. 4 lakh crore in 2014 to Rs. 14.5 lakh crore, and the per capita income reached Rs. 3,47,000 -- the highest in the country. Telangana's contribution to the national Gross Domestic Product rose from 4.1% in 2014 to 5% in 2023. KTR pointed out that, despite mudslinging by the Congress on 'financial management' under the erstwhile regime, Telangana's development expenditure stood at 74% -- the highest in the nation. The state's committed expenditure, including salaries, pensions, and interest payments, was 47 paise per rupee, compared to the national average of 56 paise. Refuting claims of a 'debt-ridden Telangana', he clarified

that the state's debt-to-GSDP ratio of 27.9% was better than that of many other states. He emphasized that the increased borrowing was strategically used towards developmental projects. "Using debts for investments in productive sectors is not a debt but an investment for the future," KTR asserted. The Congress government was suffering from 'KCR phobia'; yet KCR's mark on Telangana's growth could never be erased. Questioning the Congress party on its 'impractical' 100-day timeline for implementing the Six guarantees, KTR sought to know when the government would fulfill the party's '420 electoral promises'. Lambasting the state government for taking credit for government jobs filled during the BRS rule, the BRS working president pointed out that the BRS government.

TG stands..

Continued on Page 1

"While on one hand, the BJP has kept the farmers of the country in the debt trap, denying their demand and need for legal guarantee of MSP (Minimum Support Price), the Congress, on the other hand, is working to provide help to the agricultural families at every possible place," the former Congress chief said. The INDIA bloc will take the farmers of India out of this debt trap by providing them the weapon of legal guarantee for MSP, he said. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday launched the second phase of his government's crop loan waiver scheme with an outlay of more than Rs 6,198 crore. The chief minister and his Cabinet colleagues started the second phase.

UPSC cancels candidature..

Continued on Page 1

(Civil Services Examination-2022) has been "cancelled" and she has also been "debarred permanently" from all future examinations or selections conducted by the UPSC. The commission said it was the "lone case" of Khedkar in the last 15 years where it could not detect that a candidate has exceeded the number of attempts permitted to a candidate for writing the CSE exam "primarily due to the fact that she changed not only her name but also her parents' name". It said the UPSC was in the process of "further strengthening the SOP to ensure that such a case does not recur in the future." The commission said a show-cause notice was issued to Puja Manorama Dilip

Khedkar on July 18 for "fraudulently" availing attempts beyond the permissible limit in the examination by "faking" her identity. She was asked to submit her response to the notice by July 25 but she requested time till August 4 to gather the necessary documents for her response, it said. The UPSC granted her a "final opportunity" to submit her response by 3:30 pm on July 30 but she "failed to submit her explanation within the prescribed time", the commission said. The commission said in the backdrop of the case of Khedkar, it "thoroughly examined" the data of more than 15,000 "finally recommended candidates" from the civil services exams for the last 15 years (2009-2023) with respect to the number of attempts availed by them.



UAE Ambassador visits Bapu Museum

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador to India, HE Abdulnasser Jamal Alshaali, visited Bapu Museum and Pingali Venkaiah gallery on Wednesday. Dr G Vani Mohan, Commissioner, Archaeology & Museums Department, received him and explained the importance of the museum. He watched a laser show in the gallery named after Pingali Venkaiah.

Emotional Sabitha recalls..

Continued on Page 1

Sabitha said, "When KTR was speaking the truth about the Budget in the Assembly, they made derogatory remarks about us to divert attention. They insulted us by referring to us as 'the women sitting behind you'. This shows how much respect the Chief Minister has for women. That day, they insulted many women, including Sonia Gandhi." Sabitha said, "Today, when a few women join, they insult them too. If women are humiliated in the state Assembly itself, the public should think about it. To retain respect in the CM's chair, you must apologize to all women in Telangana. Bhatti's comment hurt me deeply. He should apologize immediately for his words." She said, "They intentionally made comments to humil-

iate women. Revanth Reddy claims that I had betrayed him. Was inviting him to join the Congress my mistake? They say that trusting us means ending up at the Jubilee Bus Stand. This is not just an insult to us but to all women in Telangana. The Chief Minister spoke as if trusting sisters means a ruined life. I have seen many Chief Ministers in my 24 years, but you are the only one who has spoken in a way that disgraces the CM's chair". Sabitha said, "The statement 'trusting us means a bus stand life' hurts me deeply. We wish well as sisters. Therefore, he must apologize unconditionally. When the CM speaks, he mentions Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. Is this the respect you have for women? Bhatti also said that it was because of me that the Leader of Opposition position was lost.

BJP will fight for the sake of..

Continued on Page 1

Kishan Reddy demanded the State government to release a white paper on the loan waiver scheme and made it clear that the BJP will fight for the sake of farmers. Speaking to the media at State BJP office on Wednesday, Kishan Reddy alleged that the Ministers have been spending crores of rupees for the sake of advertisements while the farmers, who did not get loan waiver, are in pain. Kishan Reddy demanded that the government reveal on what basis it is waiving the loans to the farmers. He said that the farmers are in an agitating mood in villagers thinking that they may become defaulters if their loans are not waived.

Jishnu sworn in..

Continued on Page 1

The spirit of enterprise and innovation thrives in our people, known for their resilience, hard work, and determination," the Governor stated. The Governor said, "Our vision for Telangana is one of sustainable development, where economic growth goes hand in hand with social equity and environmental protection. Education and empowerment of our youth will be a primary focus, as they are our greatest asset. By providing quality education and opportunities, we can pave the way for a brighter future." He added, "Healthcare is another critical area. We must ensure every citizen has access to quality healthcare services, including preventive measures and public health initiatives. Our agricultural sector,

the backbone of our economy, also requires continued support and innovation." "I am deeply committed to promoting inclusivity and social justice. Our society can only thrive when every individual, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed. We must work together to eliminate disparities and create an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered." The Governor said, "I call upon all citizens of Telangana to join hands in building a future that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. Let us create a society where every individual can thrive and prosper. By fostering unity and cooperation, we can overcome any challenges and achieve our collective goals". Pledging to uphold the principles of fairness, integrity, and impartiality, he said.

TODAY
ALMANAC
 Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
 Tithi: Dwadashi: Jul 31 03:55 PM to Aug 01 03:29 PM
 Trayodashi: Aug 01 03:29 PM to Aug 02 03:27 PM
 Nakshatram: Mrigashirsha: Jul 31 10:12 AM to Aug 01 10:24 AM
 Mrigashirsha: Jul 31 10:12 AM to Aug 02 10:59 AM
 Rahukalam: 1:58 PM to 3:33 PM
 Yamagandam: 5:49 AM to 7:35 AM
 Varjyam: 07:00 PM to 08:38 PM
 Gulika: 9:10 AM to 10:46 AM
 Amritakalam: 07:02 AM to 08:37 AM, 12:44 AM to 02:22 AM
 Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 AM to 12:47 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
 Forecast: Scattered Showers
 Temp: 29°
 Humidity: 76%
 Sunrise: 5:55 AM
 Sunset: 6:49 PM
 Updated: July 31, 2024 5:00 PM

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

ACB nabs officer while taking Rs 2 lakh bribe

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday red-handedly apprehended a deputy commercial tax officer at the Commercial Taxes department named Sridhar Reddy for taking Rs 2,00,000 from a businessman.

On Wednesday the ACB released mentioned that the accused demanded a bribe from a businessman named Srikanth to finalise the audit of the complainant's firm for the year 2019 to 2020 and to close the notice issued to him.

The bribe amount was recovered from the accused officer at his instance and the contact portion i.e. surface of his office table yielded positive in a chemical test.

The accused was arrested and produced before the ACB court at Nampally. The case is under investigation.

ACB requesting the people to call toll free number 1064, if any public servant demands a bribe for taking action against them.

Cyber Crime police nab Mumbai man for fraud

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyber Crime unit of Hyderabad Police on July 30 arrested a man accused of cyber fraud worth Rs 3,71,000.

The Hyderabad-based victim filed a complaint stating that he received a call from a fraudster posing as Fedex Courier. The accused claimed that there was a parcel containing fake passports and drugs addressed to the victim. The fraudsters contacted the accused via skype posing as Mumbai Crime Branch officers and asked for the victim's bank account details for verification.

City Pioneer



HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | AUGUST 1, 2024

03

RK PURAM BRIDGE IN A STATE OF NEGLECT

A nightmare in broad daylight!

Whenever it rains, it turns into a deathtrap

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY ■ HYDERABAD

The Road Over Bridge (RoB) at RK Puram is in a dilapidated condition with girder portions giving way and potholes all over, making it a horrible experience to the road-users every day.

Restoration works of the RK Puram RoB proposed by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) have not seen the light of the day.

Frequent rains in Hyderabad uncovered the poor quality of the bridge with potholes and cracks. Commuters urged the Telangana government to immediately renovate the bridge and extend it along with the construction of another bridge.

As per the sources, the renovation works of RK Puram bridge were estimated to cost Rs 6 crore that was sanctioned in 2022 and the GHMC had appointed a private agency as a consultant to conduct a detailed investigation. The report was submitted in the recent GHMC meeting. Despite the body passing the resolution, things has not progressed further.

Residents and commuters raised their concerns by stating that it is quite difficult for them to ply on the bridge. The main reason is that it is very narrow and rains have worsened the situation, as the stretch has been ridden with potholes and many portions have developed cracks. People who commute from Sainikpuri to Neredmet and ECIL have consistently seen a huge expansion in the rush hour gridlock conditions. B T Srinivasan, General Secretary, United Federation of Resident Welfare Associations, said, "The RK Puram flyover has turned into a nightmare for people travelling in the stretch. We are vexed of complaining to the officials concerned, as this bridge is unable to take so much traffic.

Frequent rains in Hyderabad uncovered the poor quality of the bridge with potholes and cracks



Though the concerned authorities fill the potholes, frequent rains wash away the filling and deteriorates the condition to a greater extent."

"This is a long-pending issue, as the bridge is very narrow and the lanes are full of potholes. There is a long-pending demand for constructing another flyover with the extension of an existing bridge, but it fell on deaf ears. If it is not immediately restored, there is a possibility of the bridge collapsing anytime. Only repairing the bridge will not work. A parallel ROB is required," Robin Zaccheus, activist said. "Renovation works do not suffice or aid in solving traffic congestion. We need another bridge (parallel RoB) which tackles the issue and gives relief to the commuters," he added.



Restoration works proposed by the GHMC at an estimated cost of Rs 6 crore have not so far not been implemented



PHONE-TAPPING CASE

Court asks cops to give all documents to the accused

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nampally court on Wednesday asked the Public Prosecutor for the State to give every detail to the accused. However, the prosecutor for the accused got documents along with the chargesheet, but some of the documents were missing. Praneeth Rao, Bhujanga Rao and Radhakishan Rao filed a petition under 207 CrPC before the court for compliance report.

"Both the counsels of the accused and special public prosecutor were hereby directed to verify the file and report to the court, about documents that are yet to be supplied," the court said.

Police produced Praneeth Rao (A2), Bhujanga Rao (A3) and Thirupathanna (A4) in the court. The Special Public Prosecutor filed a report against Prabhakar Rao (A1) and Sravan Rao (A6) stating that they are processing a red corner notice with the help of the Central government agencies, which is under process.

"The Non-Bailable Warrants (NBW) of Prabhakar Rao and Sravan Rao are still pending. The police were directed to execute and file the report on August 14," the court said.

ED attaches assets of accused in bank cheating case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Hyderabad Zonal Office on Wednesday attached properties worth Rs 71.61 crore of those who were involved in cheating the IDBI Bank.

The accused who were identified as Nerella Venkata Rama Mohan Rao and others have been booked under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. They cheated the IDBI Bank by taking fraudulent Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and fish tank loans.

The attached properties are in the names of aggregators, their family members and benamis and include immovable properties in the form of agricultural lands, commercial sites and plots in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana having market value of Rs 71.61 crore, and bank account balance of Rs 15.55 lakh.

The ED launched an investigation based on a case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) under various Sections of the IPC and Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against Nerella Venkata Rama Mohan Rao and 10 others for fraudulently availing KCC Fish Tank loans in the names of 350 borrowers from IDBI Bank, Rajahmundry branch to the tune of Rs 311.05 crore.

The investigation revealed that Rao, Badigantla Srinivasa Rao, Bandi Narayana Rao, Gidugu Satya Nagendra Srinivasa Rao, Karri Gandhi, Dr Manepalli Surya Manikyam, Manepalli Suryanarayana Gupta, R V Chandramouli Prasad, Goluguri Rama Krishna Reddy, Vanapalli Narayana Rao and Vanapalli Pallaiah acted as 'aggregators' for KCC fish tank loans sanctioned to 350 borrowers and were the ultimate beneficiaries.

The accused worked hand in glove with IDBI Bank officials and availed KCC fish tank loans worth Rs 311.05 crore under the backing of fabricated documents, primarily in the names of their own employees, relatives, benamis and farmers, who were ineligible for such loans.

The sanctioned KCC loan amounts were diverted from the borrowers' accounts to the aggregators' through cash withdrawals and also via bank transfers to the accounts of aggregators and other persons, on the directions of the aggregators.



DCA records 50 cases of price violation in Hyd: RTI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Right to Information Petition (RTI) filed by city-based activist Kareem Ansari has revealed that the Drug Control Administration, Hyderabad has recorded 50 cases of price violation from January - June 2024.

In its response to the RTI, the DCA said, "The Drug Inspectors are verifying the prices of essential medicines for which ceiling prices are fixed by the Central government which includes various categories of products including diabetic medicines from January 2024 to June 2024." More than 50 price violations have been found by Drugs Control Administration officers. Notification regarding the Medical Devices indicated (Pulse Oximeter BP Monitoring machine, etc.), are not in force as on date."

The DCA further said, "Manufacturers are required to submit price list in Form-V to NPPA and to

the Drugs Controller. This is a mandatory requirement as per DPCO,2013 and manufacturers submit Form-V to the Directorate adhering to the provisions of DPCO. Inspections of the manufacturers are carried out to verify adherence to the various provisions of DPCO."

The Drug Inspectors are verifying the prices of essential medicines for which ceiling prices are fixed by the Central government which includes various categories of products

"Protein powders do not fall under the purview of DPCO,2013. They are not included under the National list of essential Medicines. Hence, the ceiling prices of protein powders are not fixed by the Central government under DPCO, 2013," it added.

Speaking of other major issues that the DCA could address, Ansari said, "Medical equipment including pulse oximeter and BP monitoring machine should also be brought under the DCA's ambit. Most diabetes specialists prescribe protein powder, which is also not under the ambit of the DCA since these aren't included under the list of essential medicines.

The Pole Vault

Ravi Prabhu, a YouTuber, travelled across 195 countries

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

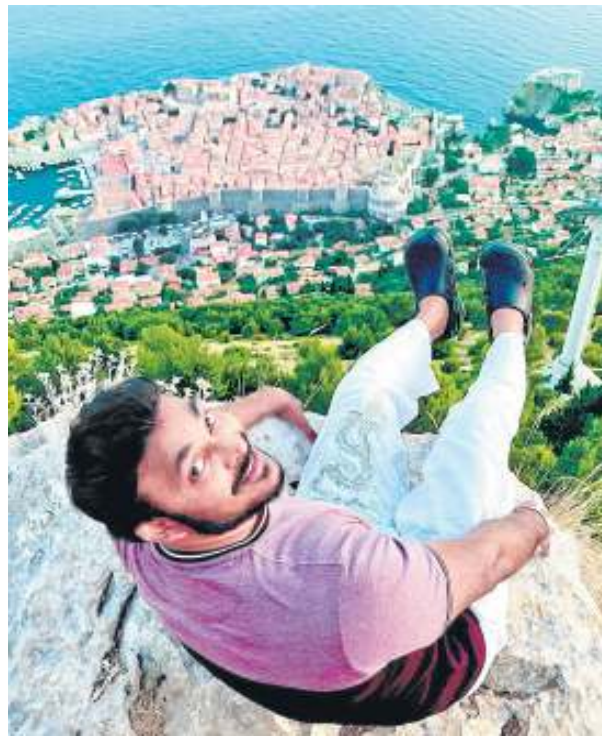
Unlike other travellers, Ravi Prabhu who is juggling with a full-time job, takes the credit of travelling across 196 countries. Currently, he aspires to work with the Tourism department for promoting tourism of the two Telugu states.

He is one of the elite members of 280 people from all over the world who have travelled to 195 countries in the world. The YouTuber is also certified as one of the less than 300 people who has achieved this gargantuan feat.

Ravi hails from Visakhapatnam and pursued Masters in Political Science at the University of Hyderabad. Coming from a middle-class background, Ravi Prabhu, a YouTuber and traveller, said, "From my childhood, I had a dream to travel the entire world. During my childhood, I used to look at the map and dream when I would get an opportunity to explore the world. In 1996, when I went to USA for my higher studies and after completing the double Masters in Business Management, I got my first job in the USA. During that time, I wondered why I couldn't start fulfilling my dream, with the target of visiting 10 countries. Slowly, I started upgrading and finally I could keep my foot in 195 countries. First country I visited was the Netherlands." Sharing his experiences, he said, "Travel is the best knowledge that you can gain. You balance your risk and you will definitely

Having lived through extreme hot and cold temperatures while being on opposite ends of the world and walking with lions; I felt no reward is without a risk

Describing his future plans, the traveller added, "As I have travelled so many countries till date, I hardly came across any promotion of our two Telugu states. Now I want to promote our states."



get a reward." Countries are like siblings, they will not see eye-to-eye. As I had an excellent experience in Palestine and Pakistan, especially in Balochistan, I visited Hinglaj Mata temple, as many are not allowed to go there, he added.

Elaborating about his YouTube channel named 'Ravi Telugu Traveller' which has over 7.86 lakh subscribers, he said the channel features his travel experiences and insights into his journeys.

Archakas outline plan of action to get demands solved

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Inamdar Archaka Samakhya has on Wednesday organised a meeting for archakas from major temples in which the hereditary system of priesthood is present. Hundreds of hereditary archakas from different regions of Telangana assembled to chalk out a plan of action to solve their long-pending demands like implementing the amended legislation 30 of 87.

Atreya Babu, President of AP Archaka Samakhya, briefed the gathering as to how the Amended Act was implemented through GO Ms 439 of 2019. The speak-



Archakas holding a meeting on their long-pending demands in Hyderabad

ers appreciated the efforts of Dr MV Soundararajan who single-handedly led the movement to amend the Draconian Endowments Legislation of 30/87. CS Rangarajan briefed the efforts taken to meet Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and the assurances of implementation of the same.

A draft GO with requirements for Telangana has been prepared and will be submitted to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. The ad hoc committee will work towards getting the demands of inamdar archakas like restoring their names in the pattadar pass-books and making them eligible for Rythu Bandhu Scheme.

UP Mayors visit GHMC to learn flood management

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The mayors of Uttar Pradesh State on Wednesday visited the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) for studying the best practices, regularisation methods of urban flood management and measures taken for disaster management.

Kanpur Mayor Pramila Pandey, Gorakhpur Mayor Manglesh Kumar Srivastava, Lucknow Mayor Shushma Kharakwal and Ayodhya Mayor Girish Pati Tripathi came to the city for a two-day study on technical methods used to streamline urban flood management. They met Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi

and Deputy Mayor Mothe Sriilatha Shobhan Reddy at the GHMC headquarters. Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi explained to them the implementation of various schemes on the best practices of the GHMC. She said that a standing committee meeting is held every Wednesday under the chairmanship of the Mayor, in which members of the standing committee, GHMC Commissioner, officers of the respective departments and zonal officers participate.

She said that during the monsoon time, all the 150 divisions under GHMC are being monitored from the Integrated Command Control Centre (ICCC).

Central panel submits advice on working conditions for nurses

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of improving the working conditions of nurses, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has enrolled 12.06 lakh nurses under the Nurses Registration and Tracking System (NRTS).

The nurses are also being provided financial assistance of Rs 2,28,500 per course for a duration of 7 days for 30 participants under the Central Sector Scheme of "Development of Nursing services."

Answering queries raised by Rajya Sabha MP, S Niranjan Reddy pertaining to

guidelines to improve the working conditions for nurses across India, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel said, "The government ensures adequate working conditions for all health care personnel including nurses in various health-care establishments and makes efforts to improve them. These working conditions are governed by various Acts and government orders, which are framed to provide a conducive working environment to health professionals in order to enhance patient care and contribute substantially to the overall healthcare outcomes."

She further said, "As per the directions of the Supreme Court, a Committee of Experts was constituted under the Chairpersonship of Director General of Health Services to look into the working conditions and pay of nurses working in private hospitals and nursing homes.

After examining information from States and other stakeholders, the Committee submitted its recommendations which were shared with states and UTs for making guidelines."

Steps should be taken by all states and Union Territories for formulating guidelines.



Collector directs officials to speed up construction of ATC

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Collector C Narayana Reddy said that hard work in any field would lead to success. On Wednesday, he inspected the under-construction Skill Development Centre and Advanced Technology Centre (ATC) at the District Industrial Training Institute campus in Nalgonda district headquarters. He also visited Government Boys and Girls Industrial Training Institutes and inspected the classrooms. He interacted with students. The computer operator, programme assistant, electrician workshop and others. As part of the upgradation of existing ITIs, the Telangana government is setting up 65 advanced technology centres across the state. He said that each Centre has been constructed at a cost of Rs 6.70 crore and construction is also going at fast pace in Nalgonda district. He said that through the Advanced Technology Centres, short and long-term training will be given with new machine tools, through which the trained people can easily go and settle in the market.



The prime accused relating to a rape in a moving bus on Tuesday night was arrested on Wednesday. A 26-year-old woman passenger on a private bus between Nirmal and Prakasam district complained to the police that the second driver of the bus sexually assaulted her. The incident happened in the Yacharam Police Station limits in a moving bus belonging to Hari Krishan Travels

Deputy Commissioner of Police East Zone, Bala Swamy announcing the arrest of a driver accused of raping a woman in a moving bus, in Hyderabad on Wednesday

Driver accused of raping woman in moving bus arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The prime accused, identified as Irla Krishna Babu (31), is a native of Seetharamapuram of Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh, escaped after committing the crime on the night of July 29. The woman was travelling on the bus along with her daughter. The accused persuaded the woman to take one more berth for her daughter. Krishna Babu around midnight, when the woman in a

deep sleep, raped her, the police said. The passengers in the bus tried in vain to apprehend the accused when the woman raised the alarm. The driver slowed the bus to enable the accused to escape, the police said and added that that was why the driver was also arrested on Tuesday itself. The police arrested the bus driver and the second accused Siddaiah (32), who helped Krishna Babu escape, and seized the bus.

Deputy Commissioner of Police East Zone, Bala Swamy, at a press conference, gave details of the incident. The DCP stated that the 26-year-old passenger was travelling with a nine-year-old child when she was sexually assaulted. The accused Ramagiri Siddaiah and Krishna Babu befriended her when the bus stopped to let passengers have dinner at a roadside hotel. The accused, the police said, had gagged her mouth with a

blanket when she was deep in sleep and sexually assaulted her. The women managed to dial 100 police control room. The police immediately swung into action and intercepted the buses at Mettuguda in Hyderabad and took the driver into custody. The police arrested the second driver, the accused, on Wednesday. The driver, who was driving the bus when the incident occurred, was also arrested for assisting the accused in escaping.



BJP workers staging a protest on Rajiv Rahadari in Peddapalli on Wednesday

LAND FOR ESI HOSPITAL

BJP activists stage protest

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

The BJP activists on Wednesday staged protest on Rajiv Rahadari obstructing movement of vehicular traffic demanding that the State government allot land for establishing ESI hospital in Ramagundam. Hundreds of BJP activists, led by party constituency in-charge Kandula Sandhya Rani, took part in the demonstration to register their protest against government not allotting the land. Sandhya Rani, addressing the protestors, noted that Union government sanctioned Rs 100 crore for construction of an ESI Hospital at Ramagundam. However, the State government failed to allot land for the hospital. The present Congress regime is also following in the footsteps of the previous government, Sandhya Rani said. Thousands of workers employed

in NTPC, SCCL, RFCL, Kesoram cements and so on subscribe to the ESI facility, but they have no option except to go to ESI hospital in Hyderabad if they happened to get injured in industrial accidents or in the event of they become sick, she said expressing her agony. In emergency cases, many patients have been dying en route to Hyderabad, she said. She appealed to the local MLA to give up his negligent attitude before the hospital is transferred to elsewhere and see to it that the government allotted suitable land for the hospital. Merugu Hanmantu Goud, JakkulaNarahari, Kondaparthi Sanjeev, Pidugu Krishna, Thota Kumara Swamy and others took part in the protest programme. Later, they submitted a memorandum to Tahsildar here highlighting their demands.

Accused in rape case held before fleeing to Australia

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 29-year-old man from Telangana, who is accused of raping a 27-year-old woman from Chhattisgarh, was arrested on Monday night at the international airport here when he was about to escape to Australia by a flight via Sri Lanka, police said on Tuesday. The victim had accused the man, who hails from Jangaon district in Telangana, of raping her at a hotel here in the first week of July after promising to marry her, police said, based on a complaint that she filed with Vidhansabha Police Station in Raipur. The woman said that the accused subsequently avoided taking her calls, following which she lodged a complaint. Based on the complaint, a Zero FIR (filed under any station, regardless of jurisdiction) was registered at Vidhansabha Police Station in Raipur, police said. After receiving the case file of the Zero FIR from Raipur police, the Mahankali Police here re-registered a case under Section 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on July 28, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North Zone) S Rashmi Perumal

and credible information that the accused had reached RGI Airport in Shamsabad here and was about to escape to Australia, the police in coordination with the Foreigners' Regional Registration Office (FRRO), RGI Airport police, and Immigration and CISF officials took swift action and were successful in apprehending the accused who was waiting to board the flight, police said. Another police official said the victim and the man had met online on a social media platform about four months ago and developed a friendship. The accused went to Australia eight months ago and worked in a poultry farm in Melbourne, the official said, adding that he came to India last month and called the woman to Hyderabad from Raipur on the promise of marriage and in the guise of getting her to meet his parents. They stayed in a hotel, which falls under Mahankali Police Station limits here, from July 3 to July 5, where the accused allegedly raped her, police said based on the woman's complaint.



CP underlines need for green cover

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

Ramagundam City Police Commissioner M Srinivas has underlined the importance of plants in maintaining the ecological balance and survival of various species. He was addressing the gathering after planting saplings on the premises of the police commissionerate here on Wednesday. Planting of saplings will ensure the health of posterity, induce rains and checks pollution. Moreover, it improves the green cover, reduce pollution and safeguard environment, he said. The reduction of green cover triggers pollution and will pose health hazard for all, he explained. For the sustenance of human kind planting of saplings is essential, he said exhorting the people to plant their bit of saplings to safeguard the environment. Further, he wanted people to make others to undertake plantation drive. Additional DCP (Admin) C Raju, ACPS Ramesh, G Krishna,



Ramagundam Police Commission M Srinivas planting a sapling in Ramagundam on Wednesday

Venkateswarlu, R Prakash, Ravi Kumar, Malla Reddy, Venkataswamy, Narasimhulu, Pratap and Surendra, Administrative Officer Ashok Kumar, CC to CP Pawan Raj, CI Indrasena Reddy and others were present. Earlier, the CP paid a surprise visit to Jaipur police station and inspected the office records in the

police station. He enquired from the authorities there the crime rate under the police station limits. He made several suggestions to them on the course of investigation to be taken up. Mancheril DCP A Bhaskar, Jaipur ACP Venkateswarlu, CI Mohan, SI Ravi and others took part in the event.

Missing worker from Sircilla traced in Sharjah, repatriated

PNS ■ SIRICILLA

Akena Ravi, who went to Dubai in search of work from Sircilla district, was at last traced to Sharjah area and was repatriated to India. Thanks to the efforts made by Indian Embassy in Dubai and the local Indian Association. In fact, Ravi went missing from July 17 causing a lot of concern to his family members. Moreover, his friend who went to Dubai along with Ravi returned to the district recently, heightening the anxiety of the family members. Worried over the safety of Ravi, his family members took the matter to the notice of the government whip Aadi Srinivas and made him address a letter to Indian Embassy in Dubai to find the whereabouts of Ravi. An investigation to locate Ravi

commenced. The police traced Ravi to Shajah area in a miserable condition. He was not able to walk. The local Indian association provided shelter to him and informed Indian Embassy officials and also to his family members. Gulf Karmikula Rakshana Samiti president and social worker GundelliNarsimhulu explained the matter to authorities there and shifted Ravi to Dubai from Sharjah. He was produced before the embassy officials and got the missing person case closed. He was sent to Hyderabad by air. Ravi's family members went to the airport at Shamsabad to receive him. The family members thank Aadi Srinivas, the Govt whip, and social workers of Dubai for the safe return of Ravi to India.



Siddipet Police Commissioner B Anuradha planting a sapling in Siddipet on Wednesday

Need to protect environment stressed

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

City police commissioner B Anuradha planted saplings on the premises of the police headquarters here on Wednesday as part of Vana Mahotsav. Addressing the gathering, the SP appealed to all to plant saplings for the good of posterity. Cleanliness and development of greenery and to create a pleasant atmosphere, the planting of saplings is essential, he said. She planted 800 saplings on

the premises of the police commissionerate here along with the district police officials and personnel. She asked the police personnel to protect every sapling that is planted. Additional DCP Admin S Mallareddy, Armed Reserve additional DCP Subash Chandrabose, Siddipet ACP Madhu, Husnabad ACP Satish, reserve inspector Purnachander, SB inspector Sridhar Goud, Administrative and others were present.

Collector directs teachers to prepare students for 10th class public exam

PNS ■ NIRMAL

District Collector Abhilasha Abhinav on Wednesday stressed the need to improve the quality of education in government schools on a par with private schools. The Collector made a surprise visit to a social welfare girl's school near Jam village under the Sarangapur mandal. During the inspection of the school, she addressed 10th class students and asked them questions in various subjects. She advised pupils to study diligently and achieve success. The Collector interacted with the teachers and school authorities. She asked the teachers to ensure that the student score high marks in public examination. She directed the authorities to take all steps to ensure



Nirmal Collector Abhilasha Abhinav addressing a meeting in Nirmal on Wednesday

that the student do not fall victim to seasonal diseases. She plants a sapling on the school premises. District Education Officer Ravinder Reddy, District Panchayat Officer Srinivas, District Medical Health Officer Dr

Dhan Raj, Irrigation Department Executive Engineer Lakshmi, Deputy Engineer Srinivas, Tahsildar Sridevi, MPDO Lakshmi Kanta Rao and officials of the respective departments were present.

Congress govt will always stand by farmers: MLA



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar, along with Congress leaders at the party meeting at Elikatta village in Ranga Reddy district

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In an event held in Elikatta village under Ferooq Nagar Mandal on Wednesday, Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar emphasised the importance of farmers, stating that the country's progress depended on the welfare of its farmers. The event, organised by local leaders, including Congress Party mandal unit president Challa Srikanth Reddy, Block Congress president Balaraju Goud, Congress Party Village Committee President Baddula Mallaiah Yadav, and MPTCs Association State Vice President Kavali Srisailem, saw MLA Shankar being honored for his contri-

butions. Speaking at the meeting, MLA Shankar paid a tribute to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by garlanding her statue in the village. He also highlighted the Congress government's recent initiative of farm loan waiver up to Rs 2 lakh, providing them with much-needed financial relief. The local farmers expressed their gratitude by honoring the MLA, who, in turn, honored them for their hard work and dedication. He criticised the previous BRS government for depriving people of their freedom. He stated that the previous government had consistently failed the farmers and the general populace by suppressing their

voices and concerns. He recalled instances of illegal detentions and the closure of Dharna Chowk, which prevented people from protesting. He said the current Congress government restored freedom and allowed all communities to express themselves. The event was attended by several prominent leaders, including Challa Srikanth Reddy, Balaraju Goud, Baddula Mallaiah Yadav, Kavali Srisailem, Naram Pentareddy, Naram Ram Reddy, Arla Yadaiah Yadav, Chakalichandraya, Venkatesh Goud, Budda Narasimhulu, Naram Sripada Reddy, Anjaneyulu Goud, MD Yusuf, Naram Kripada Reddy and others.

Officials told to tackle glitches in Dharani portal

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

District Collector Muzammil Khan has advocated that the revenue system should be strong at the mandal level and wanted the officials to ensure that the problems of people should be resolved at mandal level. He was reviewing the problems being faced by Revenue officials in tackling glitches in Dharani portal. He called for conducting training programmes to sensitize Revenue Inspectors, Senior

Assistant, Junior Assistant and all categories of employees. The Revenue officials should have full knowledge about revenue subjects. He directed the Tahsildars to ensure that people do not complain against them. He stressed the need to tackle the glitches in Dharani portal. A Dharani portal assistance centre should be set up in offices of Tahsildars, RDO offices. Prior to the applicant filing the application, he should be PrajaVaani programme

should be held without fail at Tahsildar offices on Mondays without fail. On Monday evening, a report should be submitted on the disposal of representations received during PrajaVaani programme. On Fridays, a meeting should be held with government officials to submit an action taken report on the representations received. He insisted that no inconvenience should be caused to the people. The SC, ST, Human Rights, Green Tribunal and other commissions should get

the reports within time. The caste, income, residential certificates should be issued within the stipulated time. The scrutiny of applications received to derive financial benefit under Kalyana Lakshmi and Shadi Mubarak should be completed immediately without keeping them in pending. Action should be taken to safeguard valuable government lands. Fencing should be erected around government lands and boards indicating government lands should be installed

there. With regard to preventing the encroachment of tank beds, the officials should check the irrigation, revenue and google maps to protect the lands. Additional Collector D Madhusudhan Naik, Assistant Collector MinalShreshtha, district revenue officer M Rajeshwari, RDOs G Ganesh, L Rajender, assistant director survey and land records Srinivasulu, Tahsildars, Nayab Tahsildars, RIs, senior assistants and others took part in the meeting.

ACROSS THE STATES



C P Radhakrishnan takes charge as Maha Governor

C P Radhakrishnan was sworn in as the Governor of Maharashtra on Wednesday evening. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya. Radhakrishnan, the 21st governor of Maharashtra since the state was formed in 1960, succeeds Ramesh Bais. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, other ministers and senior officials were present at the function at Durbar Hall, Raj Bhavan. The new governor was then accorded a ceremonial guard of honour by the Indian Navy. Radhakrishnan served as governor of Jharkhand for nearly one and a half years prior to his new appointment. He also held additional charge as governor of Telangana and lieutenant governor of Puducherry for brief periods. With more than four decades of experience, Radhakrishnan is a respected figure in Tamil Nadu politics.



377 people died while cleaning sewers in 5 years

A total of 377 people have died from 2019 to 2023 while hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks but there is no report of practice of manual scavenging in the country, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday. Responding to a question in the House, Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale listed the steps taken for effective implementation of Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013. In response to another question on the number of people engaged in manual scavenging, Athawale said, "There is no report of practice of manual scavenging currently in the country". "A total of 377 persons have died in states/UTs during the last five years from 2019 to 2023 due to hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks," he said in a written response.



Five Naxalites surrender in Bijapur district

Five Naxalites, one of them carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Wednesday, police said. They turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here citing that they were disappointed with atrocities committed by senior cadres and the "inhuman" and "hollow" Maoist ideology, a senior police official said. The five were active in the Bhairamgarh area committee of the banned outfit, he said. Police dubbed the development as significant as it took place during the 'martyrs' week', observed by Maoists every year from July 28 to August 3 during which they step up their activities. Of the surrendered Naxalites, Mangu Potam (40) was active as the head of Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sangthan (DAKMS), a frontal wing of Maoists, in Pomra village and carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh, the official said. He was allegedly involved in the incidents of murder and loot, he said.

MCD OFFICIAL ON COACHING CENTRE DEATHS

'It's failure for all of us, could've done duty better'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MCD Additional Commissioner Tariq Thomas on Wednesday accepted the civic body's failure in the Rajinder Nagar coaching centre deaths and said there are serious structural issues, which need to be addressed.



Interacting with the protesting students at UPSC coaching hub Rajinder Nagar here, the senior civic body official said there can be no excuses to the incident and the agency should have done its duty better. "We have structural issues like you said and they need to be addressed in a systematic way, that is my solution," Thomas said addressing the concerns of students protesting outside Rau's IAS Study Circle.

"I am accepting it (Rajinder Nagar tragedy) is a failure for all of us and me personally. I am openly saying this shouldn't have happened," he said



"In the two-day rescue operation, 1,592 people were rescued. This is the achievement of a coordinated and extensive mission to save so many people in a short span of time," Vijayan said

Death toll in Kerala landslides rises to 158; 191 still missing

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

The death toll in the devastating landslides in Kerala's Wayanad district rose to 158 on Wednesday, while 191 were missing even as the rescue teams intensified efforts to find survivors trapped under the debris on the second day of the search operations.

"Rescue operations in Wayanad are continuing in full swing. Our land has never experienced such painful sights before," Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

The Wayanad district administration confirmed the deaths of 158 people in the calamity.

Earlier, addressing a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram, the chief minister said that so far,

144 bodies have been recovered. Among them, 79 are men and 64 are women.

"191 people are still missing," according to the latest count.

Earlier in the day, a Cabinet meeting chaired by CM Vijayan expressed condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the disaster.

Vijayan said the scenes in Mundaikkai and Chooralmala areas of the district are devastating. "Both these areas have been completely destroyed," he said.

He added that efforts to rescue as many people as possible from the disaster zone are progressing well.

"In the two-day rescue operation, 1,592 people were rescued. This is the achievement of a coordinated and extensive mission to save so

many people in a short span of time," Vijayan said.

He said that in the first phase, 206 people from 68 families in the nearby areas of the disaster were shifted to three camps. "This includes 75 men, 88 women, and 43 children," the chief minister said.

Following the landslide, 1,386 people who were stranded and those who were trapped in their homes were rescued as a result of the ongoing rescue mission. "This includes 528 men, 559 women, and 299 children who were shifted to seven camps. Two hundred and one people were rescued and taken to the hospital, of which 90 are currently undergoing treatment," he said.

Vijayan said that in Wayanad district, there are currently 8,017 people in 82 relief camps.

PM Modi monitoring Wayanad landslide crisis, says Union Minister Kurian

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is closely monitoring the landslide situation in Kerala's Wayanad district, Union Minister George Kurian said here. Kurian, who visited the people affected by the landslide in Wayanad on Tuesday night, said that the central government has assured all possible assistance to the state for the rescue efforts of those affected by the tragedy. "The situation is being monitored by the central government at the highest level. The Honourable Prime Minister is monitoring the situation and has deputed me to visit the affected areas."

'India not responsible for climate crisis'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is not historically responsible for the climate crisis, but it should not emulate polluting practices of the West from the 19th century during its development, Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland said.

In an interview with PTI via Zoom, Scotland said India has the opportunity to lead a just and equitable energy transition by sharing expertise and technology within the 56-nation club called the Commonwealth, which represents 2.7 billion people. She also said that India can

exemplify a new, clean and safe development model that can serve as a beacon of hope for the Global South.

"India is a developing country, which was not historically responsible for creating this (climate) crisis. So, India is in a similar position to many of the Global South countries. And that is absolutely true," the Commonwealth secretary general said. Despite not causing the crisis, she said, India is suffering from severe climate consequences, including extreme heat, floods and intense monsoons, and must take action. "Look at the level of heat in

some of the cities in India, look at the floods, look at the monsoons. Our people are suffering. So there is a responsibility on all of us, responsibility which India has committed herself to and has taken action on to make it better," Scotland said.

India experienced 536 heat-wave days this summer, the highest in 14 years, with the northwestern region recording its warmest June since 1901, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Official data showed that the country recorded 41,789 suspected heat stroke cases and 143 heat-related deaths.

Rohingya infiltration into India has increased manifold: Himanta

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that Rohingya infiltration into India has significantly increased, and the threat of demographic invasion is both real and serious.

"Rohingyas are continuously coming into India using the India-Bangladesh border and many states are suffering from the demographic invasion", Sarma said at a press conference here. Assam is guarding only a part of the Indo-Bangladesh border but a large area is still porous, he added.

The West Bengal and Jharkhand governments are soft on these infiltrators and have

taken no action to stop it, he alleged. "In fact, West Bengal's Chief Minister gave a statement that the state will give shelter to those coming from Bangladesh which even the government of the neighbouring country has not endorsed", Sarma said.

Assam and Tripura governments have taken strong steps in this matter with police in both the states arresting several Rohingya infiltrators on several occasions, he said.

"Assam is no longer a safe haven for Rohingyas as we do not follow a soft policy. Our situation is better than West Bengal and Jharkhand and has not worsened since the BJP government has come to power", the Chief Minister added.

Agniveer scheme will keep our forces battle-ready, young: Sitharaman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agniveer scheme will help keep armed forces battle-ready and young, and there is no need to do politics over it, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Rajya Sabha.

Dismissing criticism over the scheme, the minister said recruiting young people in the age group of 17.5-21 years will ensure actually that India has younger soldiers who are on the front line. "One of the expected outcome of the scheme is that armed forces will have a much younger force by recruiting those in the age group of 17.5-21 years," she said. "And I don't think there is a need for us to unnecessarily worry that this is causing some kind of distortion. Not at all. It is with the acceptance of the armed forces that it has been brought in," Sitharaman said.

"Agniveer is a scheme which we brought in with great sense of commitment to keep our armed forces battle-ready and young and fit people get into the army," she added. The minister was replying to remarks made by senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram during the general discussion on the Union Budget. She emphasised that Agniveer scheme is very important and the country needs to have greater sense of looking at national interest.

Over 40,000 people appointed in edn sector in last 4-5 years: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central government has appointed over 40,000 people in last 4-5 years in vacant posts in the education sector, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Pradhan said a system of Professors of Practice (PoP) has been introduced to enlarge the scope to bring experienced people from the industry in higher academic institutions such as IITs.

The PoPs appointed by the universities are "need-based" and not permanent positions.

Pradhan said the PoPs would bring expertise and new ideas to education.

"PoP is a major recommendation under the New Education Policy. Now there is

a consensus that besides degree, we would also have to give importance to competency," said Pradhan.

The endeavour is to take education towards employability and entrepreneurship. Hence, a relationship between industry and academia is required, he added.

The minister was replying to a supplementary asked from CPI (M) member John Brittas, who asked whether the government has reserved 10 per cent of the academic posts for PoPs and will it bring down the reservation for SC & ST and OBC in higher institutions.

Brittas said almost 26 per cent of academic posts and 46 per cent of other posts are vacant now and whether such a PoP system will affect the employment opportunity for youths.

23-yr-old shoots self during video call with woman blackmailing him

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR (UP)

A 23-year-old man allegedly shot himself in the head during a video call with a woman who was blackmailing him, police said on Wednesday.

The two had allegedly been in a relationship and the woman was blackmailing him over a video she had recorded of him, they said.

The incident allegedly took place inside the man's car near Saraiya petrol pump in Gorakhpur's Gulriha area on Tuesday night.

Prima facie it appears to be a case of suicide, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Gaurav Grover said.

Akhilesh Sharma, a father of two daughters, had been under severe distress due to the woman's blackmailing, his family members have alleged.

India is in deficit in fodder supply for animals: Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is in deficit in terms of fodder supply for animals, Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh said on Wednesday.

Replying to a query whether the government was aware of the shortage of animal fodder faced by the farmers, Singh said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, "Yes Sir. The country is deficit in fodder".

"The ICAR- Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute (IGFRI) Jhansi has estimated that there is deficit of 11.24-32 per cent and 23 per cent for green and dry fodder, respectively, in the country," he added.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has been supplementing the efforts made by the State governments by implementing the Centrally Sponsored Scheme National Livestock Mission with a Sub Mission on Feed and Fodder Development since 2014-15, he highlighted.



The scheme was realigned in July 2021 with the objective to enhance fodder availability with the following components namely, (i) Assistance for Quality Fodder Seeds Production; (ii) Entrepreneurial Development Programme on fodder; (iii) Fodder production from Non forest waste land/rangeland/grassland/non-arable land; (iv) Fodder Production from Forest land. That apart, the Department of Agriculture is implementing the Central Sector Scheme 'Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)' through the National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) as an implementing agency to form and promote 100 FPOs, primarily fodder-centric FPOs. Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute (IGFRI) Jhansi-ICAR has also prepared Fodder Resources Development Plan for 25 states to enhance fodder availability in the states based on their cropping pattern and livestock species.

In reply to a separate query, Singh said the milk production in the country has increased from 187.7 million tonnes in 2018-19 to 230.6 million tonnes in 2022-23. The highest milk-producing states in the country are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, he said, adding that "these States together contribute 53.08% of total milk production in the country".

Singh highlighted that India is ranked first in milk production contributing 25 per cent of global milk production.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Halwa politics

Rahul Gandhi raises the issue of the caste census in Parliament using halwa as a metaphor

It all began when Leader of the Opposition of Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi used the traditional 'halwa' preparation ceremony following the budget presentation to question the involvement of marginalised community members in the budget process. He extended the metaphor by noting that only high caste people are involved in making the halwa who distribute it to the elite sections of population. It did not go down well with the treasury benches and the pandemonium followed. Parliament has been engulfed in chaos over the contentious issue of a caste census for long. This debate not only stirred up intense discussions but also led to a significant clash between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and former Union Minister Anurag Thakur. Prime Minister Modi backed Thakur. He took to Twitter saying, "this speech by my young and energetic colleague Shri Anurag Thakur is a must-hear. A perfect mix of facts and humour, exposing the dirty politics of the INDI Alliance." Thakur had hit back at Gandhi over his speech in the Lok Sabha saying people who do not know their caste are asking for caste census. The demand for a caste census has been a long-standing issue taken up by the INDIA bloc. Proponents argue that it is crucial for understanding the socio-economic conditions of various castes and for formulating targeted welfare policies.



India has a complex caste system that significantly impacts social and economic dynamics. A caste census would help identify disparities and enable the Government to address them more effectively. Indeed, a comprehensive caste census would provide detailed data on the socio-economic status of different castes,

which is vital for creating effective policies and programs aimed at uplifting marginalised communities. Many marginalised communities continue to face discrimination and lack of opportunities. A caste census could highlight these issues and pave the way for targeted interventions to promote social justice. The Opposition, particularly the Congress party, has been vocal in advocating for it. Rahul Gandhi has emerged as a leading voice, arguing that a caste census is necessary for ensuring social justice and equitable development. He contends that without accurate data, the government cannot effectively address the needs of marginalised communities. On the other hand, Anurag Thakur has taken a firm stance against the opposition's demand. Thakur argues that the government is already implementing numerous schemes aimed at social upliftment and that a caste census may lead to further division within society. Thakur accused the opposition of playing divisive politics and undermining the Government's efforts to promote inclusive development. As the pandemonium in Parliament continues, the issue of caste census remains unresolved. The caste census can be a turning point in deciding Government's approach to welfare. The issue should not die in the din of Parliament.

PICTALK



Children play at fountains near Lal Chowk on a rainy day in Srinagar

Delhi sinks in cesspool of Government apathy



SIDHARTH MISHRA

Recent tragedies, such as the flooding of a coaching institute basement that claimed three young lives, highlight Delhi's mismanagement



Historical writings many times create a perspective of adulation for some of the most undeserving characters. Take the instance of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of the Mughal dynasty, whose rule started in Shahjahanabad and ended at Palam. He was extended by the British for his connivance with the rebellious soldiers and died in Myanmar. His 'tragedy' is best known by the lines which he penned himself before he died. He wrote, 'kitna hai badnashib zafar dafn ke lie do gaz zamin bhi na mili ku-e-yar m?' (How unfortunate is Zafar! For his burial; Not even two yards of land were to be had, in the land of his beloved.). In the popular culture, it's seldom recalled that he was a worthless leader, incapable of administering, always cribbing and too preoccupied with palace conspiracies. Nearly 150 years later, we in Delhi have a government which is as Zafaresque in its bearing as the Mughal rule in 1857. The day leaders from INDIA block converged in the national Capital in the support of incarcerated chief minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal, the same evening his party ruled Delhi government and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)

presided over a catastrophe in the flooded basement of a coaching institute in the heart of the national Capital. Nobody among those supposed to be in charge of the city administration seems to be mourning the loss of three young lives. They in typical Zafaresque style are busy blaming one and all possible. Kejriwal's regents in the Delhi government have done their bit. Minister Atishi Marlena has said that she has ordered a magisterial enquiry, which you can bet would have no clear finding to present. Her colleague Saurabh Bhardwaj has claimed that though he holds meetings with the officials nobody listens to him. Not to leave behind, city's Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena too has joined the charade blaming the city government and the MCD for not taking the necessary initiative to prevent such a tragedy. In the midst of all this, our modern-day Zafar aka Arvind Kejriwal would be busy penning another sob story in his prison cell about his persecution and alleged continuous loss of weight. How do you expect the MCD to be functional when you have a Mayor



KEJRIWAL'S REGENTS IN THE DELHI GOVERNMENT HAVE DONE THEIR BIT. MINISTER ATISHI MARLENA HAS SAID THAT SHE HAS ORDERED A MAGISTERIAL ENQUIRY, WHICH YOU CAN BET WOULD HAVE NO CLEAR FINDING TO PRESENT

who is unauthorisedly occupying the chair much beyond her term expired? Shelly Oberoi is a beneficiary of the political crisis engulfing Delhi. The Lieutenant Governor scuttled the election of the new Mayor because the file did not have a note by the Chief Minister, who could not put his pen on the file as he was in jail. That was the technical reason but the political reason was that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not want to have an embarrassment ahead of the Lok Sabha elections losing the Mayoral polls. Now that the polls are over and the BJP has won all the seven Lok Sabha seats in the national Capital, the Lieutenant Governor could have gathered sufficient wisdom to allow an election and have somebody head the municipal body who was authorised to do so. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi works through various committees, including the one responsible for keeping the drains in the city clean. Ever since the AAP came to power in MCD in 2022 with a thin majority, the slugfest between AAP and BJP has ensured that most of these powerful committees have remained non-functional.

When such a stalemate has swamped the Civic Centre, the headquarters of the MCD, how does one expect the city to have civic governance? During the last Lok Sabha polls earlier this year, the campaign in the city was cankerous focusing mostly on mudslinging. It was a campaign where the issues about Delhi were all lost in the bitter cacophony. No wonder even after the polls issued of Delhi remain unaddressed. There is no indication that it will be addressed anytime soon. While Kejriwal continues to play a Zafar albeit his rule does not extend beyond his cell in Tihar Jail, the Centre through its representative is in the role of Nero, the Roman emperor who once famously said, "I have only to appear and sing to have peace once more in Gaul." Delhi has been sans governance for several years and will take several years to bring it back on the rails. The Centre should realise that it cannot continue to play Nero but intervene and save it from the kind of destruction that Rome faced. (The writer is an author and president, the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEED FOR RAILWAY SAFETY AUTHORITY

Madam — There is an urgent need to establish a railway safety authority as a statutory body with powers to frame safety standards, conduct audits, enforce accountability, and investigate accidents. Improved communication and coordination among railway boards, zonal railways, divisions, and production units are essential. Increased funding for track renewal, bridge repair, signaling upgrades, and coach refurbishment is crucial. Advanced safety systems like Anti-Collision Devices (ACDs), Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), Train Protection Warning System (TPWS), and Automatic Train Control (ATC) should be installed to ensure passenger safety and reduce accidents.

The recent derailment of the Howrah-CSMT Express, resulting in two deaths and 20 injuries, underscores the need for these measures. Learning from Japan's Shinkansen, which has maintained a perfect safety record with advanced systems, could be highly beneficial.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

Manu Bhaker's historic Olympic win



Kudos to India's shooting ace Manu Bhaker for making history by becoming the first Indian post-independence to win two medals in a single Olympics. Bhaker and her partner Sarabjot Singh secured bronze in the 10M Air Pistol Mixed Team event, defeating the Koreans 16-10.

This added to Bhaker's earlier bronze in the Women's Individual 10M Air Pistol event, making her the first Indian since Norman Pritchard

in 1900 to achieve such a feat. Congratulations to the Indian shooting pair for winning the country's second bronze medal at the Olympics. Bhaker's composure amidst the hype is commendable, and she stands as an inspiration for every Indian youth with her dedication and love for the sport. In closing, Manu Bhaker's remarkable achievements at the Olympics have etched her name in history and brought immense pride to India. Her success, alongside Sarabjot Singh, in securing bronze medals in both individual and mixed team events showcases their exceptional talent and teamwork. Bhaker's unwavering dedication and resilience serve as an inspiration to young athletes across the nation. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to both Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh for their outstanding performances and wish them continued success in their future endeavors.

Bidyut Kumar | Faridabad

Worse still is the blame game between Delhi's state and central governments, which overshadows the tragedy.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

CRICKET HAS CHANGED

Madam — Apropos the article, "The evolution of cricket and umpiring", published on July 22, 2024, this is my response. Cricket has undergone metamorphosis of change and it has become more and more a technology-driven sport like most of the modern day sports. The advent of ODIs and followed by T20Is, including of course the IPL, have all attracted millions of fans across the globe and have taken the game to its highest pedestal.

English counties propelled the sport in the late 19th century, and it was around this time cricket went international, with the US and Canada playing each other first, followed by Australia's tour of England, which led to the creation of The Ashes. Perhaps, this period formed the basis of the worldwide status cricket now has. Throughout the 20th and

21st century, cricket retained its core rules, but later became a much more skill-based sport. On top of this, the technological advancements made across the sporting world meant that cricket was changing for players, officials and as well the spectators. 'Ball tracking' is one of the key technological innovations in the game, which not only meant better analysis of a bowler's technique, but also the ability to better read LBWs by tracking the ball's path trajectory. Living at a time where T20 internationals have become the most popular of all the three formats, cricket has seen a big surge in viewership. No wonder, being the game's super power, India's recent T20 world cup win at Barbados will only take the game to its extraordinary heights like never before. It is one sport that is liked by every Indian and binds India like no other sport.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Budget prioritises applied research but neglects basic science

Promoting applied research at the cost of fundamental sciences, like physics and ecology, could jeopardise scientific progress and innovation

The recent budget emphasises operationalising the Anusandhan National Research Fund (ANRF) for research and prototype development and increasing private participation in generating funds for research. Though these are commendable, the government should consider a few academic and research community apprehensions. One main concern is the declining trend among researchers and policymakers towards supporting basic science research. Basic science, sometimes called fundamental or pure science, is driven by curiosity and the quest for understanding the underlying principles governing the natural world without immediate concern for practical applications. Discoveries made through basic research often lay the groundwork for subsequent advancements. For instance, a theoretical endeavour to understand atomic and subatomic particles and quantum mechanics initially led to the development of tech-



nologies such as semiconductors and MRI machines. This expansion of knowledge is not merely an academic exercise; it creates a foundation upon which applied sciences can build. We need good physics, chemistry, mathematics, and biology researchers to do this. Unfortunately, our teachers fail to convey the application of basic research to the student community. Natural calamities are recurring in every part of our country. Still, we haven't deliberated with our researchers working in the field of ecology, climate studies or the environment. Biodiversity and the environment are the lifelines of our planet, and we need good researchers to study them in the future. Unfortunately, research in

systematics, ecology, etc., hardly gets the attention of our policymakers. We hardly have a national institution whose mandate is systematics or ecology, though these are part of many institutions as a division. Researching with sophisticated instruments in the lab is comparatively easier than researchers in the field. Why should a researcher spend years in a forest studying wildlife? They are real scientists who are providing yeoman service to the nation. Unfortunately, they are not getting enough recognition or acceptance from our policymakers or society. Because of this, many good researchers passionate about fundamental science research are moving towards more lucrative areas. This will create a cavity in our future scientific knowledge base. Policymakers should understand that the success we have received in space research or health care in recent times is because of the strength of the fundamental science we have built over the peri-

od. We need to create an environment where basic science education and research are promoted. For this, the government should allot part of the budget for ANRF exclusively for basic science research. The huge financial investment required for basic science and the uncertainty of results may deter private entities from funding such endeavours. But if we neglect basic science in the long run, our science will suffer badly. The stagnation of basic science can lead to a lack of new theories and principles, which hinders the development of innovative technologies and solutions. The government should prioritise basic science research in policy documents and provide necessary support to researchers working in the field. We can address emerging challenges only if we have a robust basic science workforce.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



**FIRST COLUMN**
FROM HURT TO HEALING

By understanding our desires and analysing our actions, we can find ways to heal ourselves



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Nobody can hurt me without my permission, said Mahatma Gandhi, however, the truth is that most of us hurt each other in our relationships and we do it because we just want to do it. There is no larger reason for it, but it's something that just happens. According to psychologists, most people hurt someone because they want something they think they can't have, or have something they don't want. If we closely observe ourselves, then we would find that most of us are in one of the above two conditions, and we don't know what to do about it, hence we think that the only method of getting what we want is to hurt someone. So, is this the only way out? Is it the right method to follow? We all know it's wrong because it creates a lot of pain on both sides, so why do we do it?

Simply because we don't understand how to have that thing that we badly want or get rid of that thing that we do not need without hurting. There may be numerous reasons for us to hurt people, however the most common of them is 'unfulfilled expectations' which we all experience in our various relationships. Take for example, we just met someone and have fallen in love with him/her. Now before there is any kind of exchange of feelings, we just start dreaming about things that are totally out of context.

After a lot of pursuing, chasing and pushing, when we finally fail to get the desired reply from the other end, we start feeling miserable and then start blaming the person by saying things like 'You



hurt me', 'You broke my heart' etc. We should sit aside in a quiet corner and ask ourselves whether our expectations right from the beginning were realistic. Did the opposite person give us any inclination to believe so that he/she also feels the same as we are feeling? Were feelings of love mutual on both sides? When it was time to understand what he/she was saying, we were building love castles in the air, when it was time to give some space to the opposite person, we were suffocating the person with our forced love & affection. Is this the right kind of behaviour?

Remember! Any kind of one-sided relationship is extremely painful and maleficent because it makes you feel like a spare part in someone else's life as if you aren't as important to them as they are to you. Hence to prevent oneself from such pain and agony, it is best to have clear communication with the person whom you have feelings for. It doesn't matter what kind of a relationship you are in, but you have got to communicate your feelings because when we open the door of a dialogue, we open our hearts.

So always express yourself because carrying the burden of unspoken words can take a toll on you. It's 100 times better to say what you genuinely feel rather than repeating 'I love you' 100 times. However, it's so unfortunate that most of us prefer to bleed from within and stick to our 'no expressing' stubbornness. A wise person would thus always think about these reasons when being hurt rather than wasting time on 'Why me?'

So c'mon don't give up so easily because life is too short for such mundane things, just forget what hurt you but never forget what it taught you. Learn your lessons and move on.

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

Reforming the personal income tax regime



UTTAM GUPTA

In the Budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister has made the 'new regime' of personal income tax more appealing, while continuing to rationalise the capital gains tax structure



In the Union Budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has endeavoured to make the 'new regime' of personal income tax (PIT) a bit more attractive besides continuing the process of 'rationalising' and 'simplifying' the structure of capital gains tax (CGT) that was started in her budget for FY 2023-24. Sitharaman had introduced the new PIT regime in the Budget for 2020-21. Even while retaining a 5 per cent tax for annual income in the Rs 250,001-Rs 500,000 range (as under the old regime before 2020-21), on income higher than Rs 500,000, the government levied: 10 per cent on Rs 500,001-Rs 750,000; 15 per cent on Rs 750,001-Rs 1,000,000; 20 per cent on Rs 1,000,001-Rs 1,250,000; 25 per cent on Rs 1,250,001-Rs 1,500,000. For income above Rs 1,500,000, the 30 per cent tax continued. Unlike the old regime where persons could claim annual exemptions and deductions on long-term investments up to a maximum of Rs 375,000, none was allowed under the new regime.

However, individuals were given the choice to go either for the new regime or continue with the old regime. In the Budget for 2023-24, she altered the tax new structure to provide for nil tax on income up to Rs 300,000; 5 per cent tax on income in the Rs 300,001-Rs 600,000 bracket; 10 per cent in the Rs 600,001-Rs 900,000 bracket; 15 per cent in Rs 900,001-Rs 1,200,000; 20 per cent in Rs 1,200,001-1,500,000; and 30 per cent on above Rs 1,500,000. Besides, salaried persons and pensioners can also claim a standard deduction of Rs 50,000. This was much better than the 2020-21 package. Under it, a person with an annual income of say Rs 1,500,000 needs to pay Rs 140,000 as tax when compared to Rs 150,000 payable under the old regime albeit with tax breaks. Besides, the former left the person with cash-in-hand of Rs 1,360,000 against only Rs 975,000 under the old regime (after paying tax Rs 150,000 and investment Rs 375,000). Furthermore, under the new (modified) regime a salaried person won't have to pay any tax on annual income up to Rs 750,000. In the Budget for 2024-25, the FM has further tweaked the slabs to provide

for nil tax on income up to Rs 300,000; 5 per cent tax on income in the Rs 300,001- Rs 700,000 bracket; 10 per cent in the Rs 700,001-Rs 1,000,000 brackets; 15 per cent in Rs 1,000,001- Rs 1,200,000; 20 per cent in Rs 1,200,001-1,500,000; and 30 per cent on above Rs 1,500,000. Besides, salaried persons and pensioners can now claim a standard deduction of Rs 75,000. For a person with an annual income of Rs 1,500,000, these changes will yield an incremental savings of Rs 15,000 over the tax payable as per the 2023-24 budget. She will need to pay only Rs 125,000 as tax. Moreover, a salaried person won't have to pay any tax on annual income up to Rs 825,000 up from Rs 750,000 earlier. Already, nearly two-thirds of those filing IT returns have shifted to the new tax regime.

The additional sweetener from the 2024-25 budget will incentivize more persons to shift. Coming to CGT, the subsisting tax rates varied widely depending on the asset such as equity shares, bonds, physical assets, listed or unlisted, holding period, etc. This was prone to arbitrage/misuse, evasion and protracted litigation. Last year, the government began the process of reforming it. In the Finance Bill, 2023 passed by the Lok Sabha on March 24, 2023, it amended to change the tax treatment of capital gains from non-equity or debt mutual funds (DMF). DMF is a scheme that invests in fixed-income instruments, such as corporate and government bonds, corporate debt securities, money market instruments etc. that offer capital appreciation. Earlier, any capital gain on redemption of units in a debt fund held for three years or longer was treated as long-term capital gain (LTCG) and taxed at a flat 20 per cent with the

benefit of indexation (it adjusts the cost of a person's investment to account for inflation, effectively reducing her capital gains and in turn, her tax liability). Any capital gain on redemption of units before three years was treated as short-term capital gain (STCG) and taxed at an individual's income tax (albeit personal) slab rate.

The amendment dispensed with this distinction in the case of 'Specified mutual funds' (SMFs) which essentially refer to mutual funds where not more than 35 per cent of their total proceeds are invested in equity shares of domestic companies. As a result, gains arising from SMFs irrespective of the period for which the units are held by investors are deemed STCGs and hence, liable to tax at the rate applicable to the slab in which their total income falls.

The new tax treatment effective from April 1, 2023, also applied to exchange-traded funds (ETFs), gold funds, outbound mutual funds equity funds etc. In the budget for 2024-25, the FM has gone for a major overhaul of the CGT regime. For all categories of assets - financial or physical, listed or unlisted - except debt and non-equity MFs and unlisted bonds, long-term capital gains (LTCG) will attract tax at a uniform rate of 12.5 per cent. The holding period for deciding long-term is 24 months except in the case of stocks, equity mutual funds and REITs/InvITs where the threshold is 12 months. In the case of debt and non-equity MFs and unlisted bonds, the gains will be taxed at the applicable slab rate. For assets held for less than 24 months, short-term capital gains (STCG) will be taxed at the applicable slab rate. However, in the case of stocks, equity mutual funds, listed bonds and REITs/InvITs, the STCG will be taxed at 20 per cent. This is up from

15 per cent levied earlier. Pertinently, for these instruments, even the LTCG tax of 12.5 per cent is higher than the 10 per cent levied earlier. Three broad messages emanate from these changes.

First, these reward long-term investors who will now pay LTCG of 12.5 per cent down from 20 per cent or the applicable slab rate (generally 39 per cent) earlier depending on the asset class. A higher annual exemption limit of Rs 125,000 (up from the existing Rs 100,000) from LTCG from stocks and equity MFs is an added sweetener. Second, while reducing the LTCG tax rate, FM has taken away the benefit of indexation.

This way she has plugged a major source of revenue loss in the real estate sector whereby developers could drastically reduce the tax outgo by taking advantage of indexation. However, owners of old houses acquired before 2001 (ancestral property) have been spared as they will continue to get indexation benefits. Third, investors looking for short-term gains pay more as the STCG tax rate on stocks and equity mutual funds now is 20 per cent up from 15 per cent earlier.

These persons being mostly rich persons/high net-worth individuals with surplus funds, Sitharaman's endeavour to collect more tax from them is fully justified. The new CGT regime is undoubtedly a big improvement. However, the government should aim at a structure where irrespective of the asset class, listed or unlisted and the holding period, the capital gains arising therefrom are an addition to her income in the relevant year. Therefore, tax should be levied at the rate applicable to the slab his total income falls in (all sources put together).

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)



IN CASES WHERE THE STRATEGIC SALE IS MOOTED, THE GOVT FACES A BIGGER CHALLENGE AS APART FROM A FAVOURABLE MARKET, IT NEEDS BIDDERS WITH DEEP POCKETS

The OTT platforms are redefining star power and entertainment

These platforms not only showcase diverse stories and talents but also help actors reach a global audience and achieve instant stardom

In today's rapidly changing entertainment landscape, Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms have emerged as a powerful force in redefining how we consume content and perceive celebrity status. These platforms have not only revolutionized the way stories are told but also introduced a new breed of superstars, offering actors opportunities to gain recognition and connect with audiences on a global scale that rivals traditional commercial movie stardom. The accessibility of content through platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ has disrupted the established order in both Hollywood and Bollywood. Unlike conventional cinema, where fame often dictated success, OTT platforms prioritize diverse



CHAITANYA KUMAR PRASAD

storytelling and talent. This shift has empowered actors who were previously relegated to supporting roles or lesser-known projects to take center stage and achieve instant fame. For instance, actors like Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Pankaj Tripathi, Vijay Varma, and Jaideep Ahlawat in India, along with Phoebe Waller-Bridge in the West, have risen to stardom through standout performances on OTT platforms.

These digital stages provide a unique opportunity for actors to connect with audiences worldwide, transcending borders and cultural boundaries. OTT platforms have also given rise to a new form of celebrity influence, one that values performance, quality, and character relatability over traditional box office metrics. The popularity of these stars is rooted in their ability to connect with audiences through captivating stories and authentic performances. This evolution has opened doors for exploring a wide range of genres and unconventional characters, allowing actors to showcase their versatility and depth. By stepping beyond the typical main character archetypes, actors now have the opportunity to portray

complex roles that not only highlight their talent but also solidify their star status and diversify their portfolios. What sets OTT stars apart is their relatability and authenticity, which enhances their appeal. Unlike traditional movie icons who are often seen as larger-than-life figures, OTT stars are perceived as more down-to-earth and relatable. This relatability translates into strong brand value, as audiences feel a deeper connection to these actors and their on-screen personas. OTT platforms also serve as a hub for brand collaborations, where actors endorse products that align with their on-screen personas. This integration of content and commerce has opened up new avenues for revenue generation for actors,



while also boosting their brand image. Additionally, OTT platforms have the distinct advantage of reaching a larger and more diverse audience, further enhancing their appeal. The influence of OTT platforms is also evident in how they have breathed new life into theatrical releases. There is now a 'reverse osmosis'

effect where movies that may have had limited box office runs or regional appeal find broader audiences and renewed popularity when released on streaming services. Moreover, the allure of OTT platforms has attracted big stars and celebrated directors to create original content specifically for streaming audiences. Renowned filmmakers and top-tier actors, who traditionally dominated the theatrical space, are now embracing the creative freedom and diverse storytelling opportunities offered by OTT platforms. High-profile projects like Martin Scorsese's 'The Irishman' on Netflix and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Heeramandi' are prime examples of this shift. During the COVID-19 pandemic,

when theaters were shut down, OTT platforms not only sustained the entertainment industry but also thrived as the sole infotainment channel for audiences.

The era of DVD rentals and brick-and-mortar video stores has given way to the convenience of streaming services, which offer a vast library of movies and TV shows at the click of a button. Streaming platforms have emerged as launchpads for movies and series that gain immense popularity, often surpassing traditional cinema. Shows like 'Stranger Things,' 'Money Heist,' and 'Sacred Games' have garnered cult followings, turning their actors into global sensations. The viral nature of streaming content, combined with its global accessibility,

can catapult relatively unknown actors and smaller productions into the limelight, achieving a level of fame that rivals big-budget blockbusters. OTT platforms also cater to niche audiences by offering content that may not have widespread commercial appeal but resonates deeply with specific viewer groups. This has allowed for a variety of stories and genres to thrive, from indie films to experimental series. By tapping into these niche markets, OTT platforms have redefined the concept of a 'hit,' allowing for diverse forms of success that go beyond traditional box office.

(The writer is former Addl. DG DFF & Festival Director IFFI. Views are personal. Inputs: Zoya Ahmad, Vaishnavie Srinivasan)

IN BRIEF



Tata Steel net profit jumps 75% to Rs 918.57 cr

Steel major Tata Steel on Wednesday reported a 75 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 918.57 crore in June 2024 quarter as the company managed to reduce its expenses. It had reported a net profit of Rs 524.85 crore during the April-June period of preceding 2023-24 fiscal, the company said in an exchange filing. The total income fell to Rs 55,031.30 crore in the reporting period from Rs 60,666.48 crore a year ago. During the quarter under review, the company reduced its expenses to Rs 52,389.06 crore from Rs 58,553.25 crore in the same period a year ago. Meanwhile, the board of the company gave approval to acquisition of a 26 per cent stake in TP Parivart Ltd. As part of the plan, the company said it will infuse, in one or more tranches, up to Rs 35 crore and execute a Share Purchase & Shareholders' Agreement (SPSA) with Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL) and its wholly-owned subsidiary TP Parivart Ltd (TPPL), to acquire and hold 26 per cent equity stake in TPPL.



Key infra sectors growth slows down to 20-month low of 4%

The growth in production of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to a 20-month low of 4 per cent in June this year due to a decline in the output of crude oil and refinery products, according to official data released on Wednesday. The core sectors' production grew by 6.4 per cent in May 2024. The growth of core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 8.4 per cent in June 2023. The previous low level of growth was recorded in October 2022 at 0.7 per cent. During April-June this fiscal, the output of core sectors rose by 5.7 per cent against 6 per cent in the same period last fiscal. The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) which measures overall industrial growth. Crude oil, and refinery products' output contracted by (-) 2.6 per cent and (-) 1.5 per cent, respectively, in June. The growth rate in the production of natural gas, fertiliser, steel and cement slowed down to 3.3 per cent, 2.4 per cent, 2.7 per cent and 1.9 per cent, respectively, during the month under review.



Alternative Investment Funds to tap SME-focused IPOs

The high returns from Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in recent years, coupled with government support for the sector, have encouraged Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to explore this growth potential. AIF is a fund established or incorporated in India which is a privately pooled investment vehicle. Paradise Moon Investment Fund, an AIF, has announced its launch with the aim of raising Rs 750 crore over the next few years, targeting investors looking to leverage the growth of the SME market pre and post-IPOs. The fund aims to provide investors with a unique opportunity to tap into the growing potential of the Indian stock market and capitalize on the dynamic landscape of SME IPOs, an official said. Approximately 900 SMEs have been listed on the SME platforms of both the National Stock Exchange and the BSE, with significant traction observed over the past 2-3 years. "We seek to invite investment in Category 1 Alternative Investment Fund (AIF), with the visionary goal of becoming a leading investor in SME (pre and post) IPOs.



FM says Budget balanced, takes care of all segments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the Union Budget strikes a fine balance between growth, employment, and fiscal consolidation, and promotes cooperative federalism.

Replying to the discussion on the Union Budget 2024-25 and Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir Budget in Rajya Sabha, the minister said the government is on track to achieve the pre-announced fiscal deficit target of 4.5 per cent by 2025-26.

Sitharaman, also a former defence minister, said the Agniveer Scheme to recruit people in the age group of 17.5 to 21 years, is aimed at keeping the armed forces fit, young and battle-ready.

The minister, who presented her seventh Union Budget, also said the economic document proposes

unflinching support for cooperative federalism.

"I would like to underline that our

The minister, who presented her seventh Union Budget, also said the economic document proposes unflinching support for cooperative federalism

unflinching commitment to cooperative federalism. The total resources proposed to be transferred to the states in 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 22.91 lakh crore. This actually entails an increase of Rs 2.49 lakh crore over 2023-24," the

minister said. She said capital expenditure is pegged at Rs 11.11 lakh crore.

"This is the biggest ever allocation for capital expenditure and it shows increase of about 17 per cent over the RE and provisional actuals of the FY 2023-24," she said, adding that during the Congress-led UPA era, the capex allocation was Rs 13.19 lakh crore between 2004-05 to 2013-14.

"Whereas during our tenure from 2014 to 2024, the allocation for capex has been Rs 43.82 lakh crore from 2014-15 to 2023-24," she said. On criticism that she only referred to two states in her budget speech and ignored the rest, Sitharaman said the budget is for all states, in past also, including the UPA era, the names of all states were not mentioned.

She emphasised that if a state has not been mentioned in the speech, it does not mean there is no allocation for it.

India, Vietnam should explore possibility of free trade pact: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Vietnam should explore the possibility of a free trade pact to further strengthen the economic cooperation, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh said on Wednesday.

Chinh, who is accompanied by a high-level delegation, including several ministers, deputy ministers and business leaders, is on a three-day visit to India. Going forward, the two nations should aim to increase their bilateral trade to USD 20 billion, the Vietnamese Prime Minister said while addressing the Vietnam-India Business Forum.

"I would like to ask that we expand our...market access to each other's products such as through a suitable FTA between Vietnam and India. Of course, we need to discuss this...We need to make sure that our benefits are shared with each other for Indian businesses. I hope that you (India) would continue to invest and invest more in Vietnam," he said at the Business Forum organised by Ficci.



File Photo

Speaking on the occasion, Jitin Prasada, Union Minister of State for Commerce & Industry, and Electronics and Information Technology, called for stronger economic cooperation between India and Vietnam, emphasising the complementary nature of their growth strategies and the potential for mutual benefit.

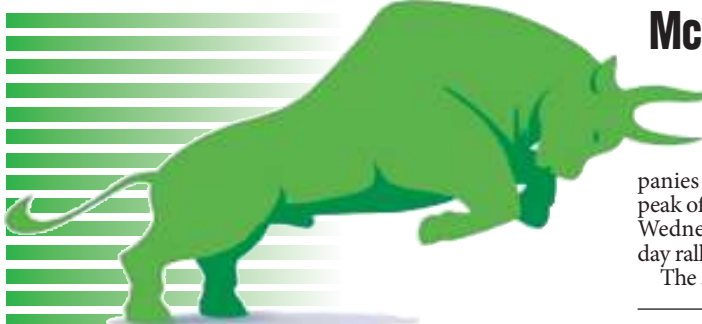
RBI issues norms to improve safety of payment systems

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Tuesday said non-bank payment system operators will have to put in place a real-time fraud monitoring solution to identify suspicious transactional behaviour and generate alerts.

Also, non-bank payment system operators (PSOs) will have to ensure that an online session on mobile application is automatically terminated after a fixed period of inactivity and customers are prompted to re-login, according to

Master Directions on Cyber Resilience and Digital Payment Security Controls for non-bank PSOs. The directions have come into effect from Tuesday, but the Reserve Bank has also prescribed a phased implementation to provide adequate time to PSOs to put in place the necessary compliance structure. RBI said the directions aim to improve safety and security of the payment systems operated by PSOs by providing a framework for overall information security preparedness with an emphasis on cyber resilience.



Mcap of BSE-listed companies jumps to lifetime peak of Rs 462.38 L cr

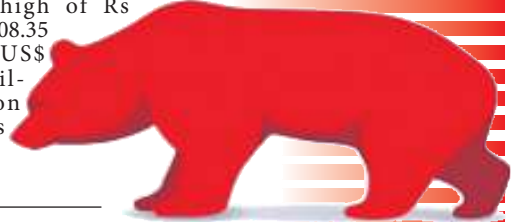
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped to a lifetime peak of Rs 462.38 lakh crore on Wednesday helped by a four-day rally in benchmark indices. The 30-share BSE Sensex set

higher by 285.94 points or 0.35 per cent at 81,741.34 -- its all-time closing high. In the last four trading sessions, the BSE benchmark jumped 408.62 points or 0.50 per cent, making investors richer by Rs 5.45 lakh crore.

Investors' wealth climbed Rs 5,45,337.02 crore in the

past four days to reach a record high of Rs 4,62,38,008.35 crore (US\$ 5.52 trillion) on Wednesday.



Stock markets rise for 4th day Metal, power shares gain ahead of key Fed policy decision

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by nearly 286 points to close at a record high while Nifty settled above 24,950 level on Wednesday, extending their winning run to the fourth day on gains in metal, power and select auto shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex settled higher by 285.94 points or 0.35 per cent at 81,741.34 -- its all-time closing high -- with 20 of its components advancing and 10 ending lower. The index opened higher and jumped 372.64 points or 0.45 per cent

to hit an intra-day high of 81,828.04. The NSE Nifty rose 93.85 points or 0.38 per cent to

close at an all-time high of 24,951.15. During the day, it surged 127.3 points or 0.51 per cent to hit a high of 24,969.35.

"The domestic market is attempting to cross above the psychological threshold of 25,000, as subdued Q1FY25 earnings and stretched valuations are curbing the challenge, while positive global trends and sector rotation are supporting the traction," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Positive global sentiment driven by expectations of an easing interest rate cycle by the US Fed and the RBI in the medium term, owing to benign inflation, ignited the rally, he added.

Steps for consortium for indigenous green steel technology commenced: Official

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The process of setting up a consortium involving all stakeholders to develop indigenous technology for green steel has started, a senior official said.

In the transition period, the government has urged the international technology provider Danieli to reduce the cost of the clean energy-based Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) plant to make it affordable for steel companies.

The cost of imported technology remains a significant hurdle for adoption to green steel, the official said.

"Steps have been initiated to form a consortium involving

labs, IITs, steelmakers, and equipment manufacturers to focus on developing indigenous green technology for steelmaking," Steel Secretary



Nagendra Nath Sinha said.

In June, the Steel Ministry floated tenders under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, with an outlay of Rs 455 crore, seeking industry participation to pilot green

steel-making. The fund will provide partial support for the project.

A consortium proposed under the leadership of the Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) has expressed interest in piloting India's first green steel-making initiative using a 100 per cent hydrogen-based DRI production method.

"We have asked the technology provider (Danieli) to reduce the cost of the 0.5 million-tonne hydrogen-based DRI plant to Rs 400 crore from their original quote of Rs 800 crore so that steel companies can afford it," he said.

Vedanta receives clearances from BSE, NSE for proposed demerger

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd on Wednesday said it has received clearances from leading exchanges BSE and NSE for its proposed demerger.

The development assumes significance as it will pave the way for Vedanta's plan to split into six independent listed companies, including oil and gas and aluminium.

"... BSE and NSE, vide their letters dated July 31, 2024 and July 30, 2024 respectively, have conveyed that they have 'no

objections/no adverse observations', on the proposed scheme," Vedanta said in a regulatory filing.

The company said that it will soon file an application with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

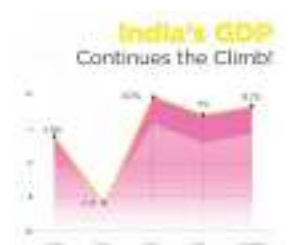
"The scheme remains subject to receipt of other applicable statutory and regulatory approvals including inter alia from the National Company Law Tribunal and the respective shareholders and creditors, under applicable laws," the filing said.

Fiscal deficit stood at 8.1% of full-year target at June-end: CGA data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of the first quarter touched 8.1 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Wednesday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between expenditure and revenue -- was Rs 1,35,712 crore as of June-end, according to data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).



The deficit stood at 25.3 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) in the corresponding

period of the financial year 2023-24.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year. The deficit was 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24.

In absolute terms, the government aims to contain the fiscal deficit at Rs 16,85,494 crore during the current fiscal.

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the union government for the first three months of 2024-25, CGA said the net tax revenue was Rs 5,49,633 crore or 21.1 per cent of the BE for the current fiscal. The net tax revenue collection was 18.6 per cent at end-June 2023.

The central government's total expenditure in the first quarter stood at Rs 9,69,909 crore or 20.4 per cent of BE.

COMMUNICATION SATELLITE

Space regulator offers private entities orbital slot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's space regulator on Wednesday offered an orbital slot to private sector companies to build and operate a communications satellite to provide services in diverse sectors such as telephone, television, radio and internet. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) released an



Announcement of Opportunity for making available Indian

Orbital Resources to the Non-Government Entities (NGEs).

INSPACe Chairman Pawan Goenka said the initiative underscores the government's commitment to empower talented Indian NGEs with the resources and support they need to succeed and contribute to India's journey to leadership in the global space economy.

The announcement of opportunity aims to identify an applicant with Indian management and control and having

the requisite technical and financial capabilities to own, establish and operate a Geostationary Orbit satellite for providing communication services.

"This Announcement of Opportunity is a game-changing opportunity for NGEs to participate in the global space economy and establish a world-class communication satellite system," Goenka said.

Around 42% of women surveyed face bias at work, says study

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Around 42 per cent of women surveyed face bias at work, says a study which found 90 per cent of women working in corporate jobs highly motivated to 'go the extra mile' to grow in their careers. The '2024 Voice of Women Study India' by global professional services firm Aon has revealed that 42 per cent of women working in corporate jobs stated they face bias or

potential bias at work and 37 per cent revealed they have experienced insensitive behaviour.

However, over 90 per cent of women responded that they are prepared to put in extra time, volunteer for challenging projects and upskill themselves to grow in their careers.

Around 6 per cent of women surveyed said they had faced sexual harassment at least once, yet less than half officially reported the incident to their employer.

Aon's study is based on a survey gathering input from nearly 24,000 professional women from over 560 companies in India. According to the study, working mothers had their own challenges, with 75 per cent responding that they faced a career setback of one-to-two years after maternity leave and close to 40 per cent said going on maternity leave had a negative impact on their pay and their role was changed to something they did not prefer.



Aiding people in expanding their spiritual horizons

The Satsang Foundation has contributed its mite to the all-round and holistic improvement of society. *The Pioneer* interacts with the founder, Sri Madhukarnath, gaining more insights about their vision and mission.



AARTI SREENATH

The Satsang Foundation, founded nearly 25 years ago, embodies a mission rooted in ancient wisdom and selfless service. The Foundation plans, arranges and carries out actions and projects that lead to actual transformation and improvement in human thinking for a more inclusive and genuinely united global community.

With their goals and tasks based on the joint aims of caring for humanity and seeking the truth, they aim to assist individuals in discovering ways to broaden their spiritual perspectives and live a multidimensional life.

Sri Madhukarnath, also popularly known as Sri M, the Foundation's current leader, recounts its origins: "The Satsang Foundation began with a mission given to me by my guru, Maheshwari Baba Ji. He was a humble figure, not known for fame or material wealth, and he tasked me with spreading ancient wisdom. With the

help of a few devoted friends, we established the Satsang Foundation in the late 1990s. We chose the name 'Satsang' to reflect our mission—'Sat' means truth, and 'Sang' signifies a community of seekers. Our aim has always been to teach and serve without seeking personal recognition."

At the heart of the Foundation's work is the principle of universal happiness, derived from the ancient *Upanishadic* teaching, "*Loka samasta sukheeno bhavantu*," which translates to "May all beings be happy." He further elaborates, "This idea guides our efforts both spiritually and practically. We are committed to this principle, which transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. We follow the *Kriya Yoga* tradition and offer its teachings free of charge to those genuinely interested. While Sri Guru Balaji and Maheshwari Baba Ji are the founders, I currently lead the Foundation, which is registered in Bengaluru but operates mainly in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh."

The Satsang Foundation's engagement with the local community is multifaceted. "Our free schools serve underprivileged

children by providing them with education, yoga, physical activities and nutritious meals," Sri M explains, adding, "These schools are funded entirely by donations, which allows us to maintain independence from government interference. The children often view the schools as their second home, and they appreciate the holistic education and care we provide."

In addition to educational initiatives, the Foundation operates a 100-bed hospital in Madanapalle that offers free medical care. "Our hospital is fully equipped to provide comprehensive care at no cost to patients. The only fees are for medicines, which are charged at minimal rates. This setup ensures that we can offer high-quality medical services to those in need without financial burden."

Reflecting on the initial challenges faced by the Foundation, Sri M acknowl-



saplings to address deforestation.

"Through Myrthri, we provide plants to individuals who are responsible for their care. This project helps combat deforestation and promotes environmental stewardship. We've advocated for tree planting wherever trees are cut down, working with highway ministers to implement this practice."

Furthering their environmental efforts, the Foundation is engaged in water conservation projects, including creating *kunds* to retain water and cleaning rivers like the Godavari. "We have been working on various environmental projects, such as creating *kunds* to help conserve water and cleaning rivers to improve water quality. Our work on the Godavari River, for example, has helped restore its natural beauty and ecological health."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation provided essential services and psychological support. They offered oxygen supplies, arranged hospital trans-

fers, and provided other essential services. Sri M recalls, "Additionally, we broadcasted meditation teachings worldwide, including to the WHO Headquarters in Geneva, to help people cope with the psychological impacts of the pandemic. Many individuals reached out to us, expressing their gratitude for the support during such a difficult time."

Sri M's motivation to continue the Foundation's work stems from a deep conviction in the potential for positive change. "No matter how much we suffer or face challenges, we must prove to the world that we need community and mutual support," he says. "Humanity still holds a spark of goodness, even if it is sometimes obscured. By nurturing this spark, we can create a harmonious and flourishing existence for all. My message is to view the world as our shared responsibility and to take care of it for future generations. We must focus on nurturing the goodness within us to build a better world."

Looking to the future, the Foundation is preparing for the 2028 Kumbh Mela, with the goal of making it a plastic-free event. "Our vision for the 2028 Kumbh Mela is to eliminate plastic waste," Sri M states.

Bhagyashree Limaye recalls shooting at the breathtaking Konkan locales for *Munjya*

Actress Bhagyashree Limaye enthralled the audience with her latest venture *Munjya*. In an exclusive interaction with *The Pioneer*, she discusses the film and her adolescent drama, *Sisterhood*.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

We witnessed a movie like *Munjya* embrace a timeless story, bringing viewers into a world of myth, legend and cultural heritage. In fact, industry insiders also credit this trend to a number of persuasive factors. And then there's the actress Bhagyashree Limaye, who is enthralled by the same film. *Munjya's* timeless appeal and profound cultural depth are because, in her opinion, these stories—which have been passed down through the generations—are profoundly ingrained in the nation's cultural consciousness as well as the audience's attraction.

We immediately spoke with the *Arranged Patchup* fame, who is still soaking in the success of her most recent stint after she gave a smash like *Munjya*. "It feels undoubtedly lucky to be involved in a large-scale, successful endeavour. It clearly gives you an advantage and highlights your part. The hustle, in my opinion, never truly ends. It doesn't follow that things will be simple for you just because you worked on a successful project. Every project has a particular set of requirements and presents new problems. To determine if you fit for any new role, you must put yourself to the test."

She is thrilled to be a part of *Munjya*, but she is unsure how this accomplishment will affect her future career. She believes that the struggle and the learning process will never go away, despite this success. Regardless of prior achievements, the industry will always require auditions and look tests. That is her perspective! The supporting actress goes on, "It was a really simple and seamless experience to play Rukku in *Munjya*. The locations and filming in Konkan were breathtaking. We would all unwind on site together after shooting. Off set, we had a fantastic bond as well."



Then there was *Sisterhood*, an adolescent school drama that debuted lately on Amazon miniTV and in which our interviewee once again had a major role. She says, remembering the journey, "Ann was a totally different person. It was a little unclear at first. She believes she is intelligent, even when others don't. She is unaware of it, yet she exudes a special kind of confidence and faith that verges on hallucination. Everyone learns from their experiences, which mold them into who they are; nobody is genuinely stupid. Ann really says something really lovely and perceptive that really altered my opinion of the character: "You cannot understand God with your limited brains." She has intelligence all her own. It was interesting to play Ann."

Regarding sisterhood, the actress believes it is exceedingly uncommon and frequently underestimated. Sisterhood is vital because female friendships and companionships are often underestimated. There is nothing like the special connection, profound understanding, and emotional support that women have for one another when they are friends. Having women in your life is truly a blessing, as they are able to support and comprehend one another in a manner that males cannot. She considers those sisters to be the most significant people in her life!

"I got to relive my school experiences while I was filming the *Sisterhood* series. Even now, we still get together, hang out and communicate frequently. There is a group on WhatsApp! The disappearance of beauty standards while we are on celluloid was something else I noticed. The nose shape of an actress has vanished, along with her complexion! Then, there's the increased production of female-focused movies—the correct representation of us was lacking. Well, *abhi sirf ek hero nahi chahiye hota hai!*" Bhagyashree shared a few fascinating bits. And now our interview is coming to a close!



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF BEAUTY STANDARDS WHILE WE ARE ON CELLULOID WAS SOMETHING ELSE I NOTICED. THE NOSE SHAPE OF AN ACTRESS HAS VANISHED, ALONG WITH HER COMPLEXION!



Sustainable options for furniture

With sustainability becoming the buzzword in our lives, natural fibres are emerging as a preferred choice for furniture manufacturers and environmentally conscious consumers. Natural fibres offer a sustainable alternative to synthetic materials, contributing significantly to lowering the environmental impact.

With natural fibres, you can create a beautiful and comfortable home. Unlike synthetic materials that rely on fossil fuels and can release harmful chemicals, natural fibres such as jute, hemp, flax, and bamboo are renewable. They are also biodegradable, a key attribute as the world struggles with mounting waste management challenges. Natural fibres also offer several other benefits, making them ideal for furniture production. Their cultivation often requires less water and pesticides compared to conventional crops. Moreover, natural fibres need less processing, leading to lower energy consumption than synthetic alternatives, which minimises the environmental footprint during production. Even from an aesthetic perspective, furniture made using natural fibres offers a unique and appealing texture. The organic look and feel of these materials can complement a variety of design styles, from rustic to contemporary. Moreover, the versatility of natural fibres allows them to be blended with other materials, providing a wide range of design possibilities.

Functionally too, natural fibres are known for their strength and durability. For instance, bamboo is known for its tensile strength, making it an excellent material for robust furniture pieces. Similarly, hemp fibres offer resilience and longevity, ensuring that furniture items maintain their form and function over long periods. Likewise, linen, derived from the flax plant, is incredibly strong and naturally breathable.

Besides the environmental benefits, natural fibres are often produced locally, and their consumption benefits farmers. Incorporating natural fibres into your furniture choices can help support the farming community. You can create beautiful and inviting spaces with furniture made of natural fibres while embracing nature and making a conscious effort towards a more sustainable future.

(The author, Dhruvin Patel is the Director of HOF Furniture Systems Pvt. Ltd.)

what's brewing?



The Ohara School of Ikebana's Hyderabad Chapter has celebrated 35 wonderful years since its founding. They hosted an Ikebana demonstration by Iemoto Hiroki Ohara, accompanied by associate professor Hozuki Oyamada, on Wednesday at The Park, Somajiguda, under the capable direction of President Nirmala Agarwal. The session will run for two days, starting today and ending on Friday, with Takahashi Muneo, the Consul General of Japan, in attendance.

● Nirmala Agarwal

● Indu mathy

● Ridhi

● Deepthi

● Anisha

● Nanda

● Rekha Reddy

● Prathibha

PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary

National Girlfriend Day has arrived, a day to celebrate the important ladies in our life! Great chances to express to your girlfriend how much she means to you with kind words and presents that have meaning. Make her feel valued and loved, whether your goal is to spend quality time with her or surprise her with something special.

ATULYA TEA TREE & SALICYLIC ACID BODY WASH
Atulya Tea Tree & Salicylic Acid Body Wash combines the power of tea tree oil and salicylic acid to effectively fight and prevent body acne. This body wash soothes irritated skin, reduces redness and diminishes blemishes, promoting a smoother and more even skin texture. It deeply cleanses pores and regulates oil production, leaving your skin refreshed and balanced.
Price: INR 399 for 300 ML



ANDAL GEMS & JEWELS
This National Girlfriend Day, let Andal Gems & Jewels elevate your celebrations with their exquisite range of fine jewellery to create unforgettable memories. Their collection is curated with care, offering a perfect blend of tradition and elegance, ideal for expressing your heartfelt emotions. Explore their stunning eternity rings, symbolising eternal bonds and timeless love, offered in six enchanting gemstones sourced from across the globe.



MARS COSMETICS
MARS blush hour liquid blush, housed in a sleek tube for effortless application, this liquid blush delivers a stunning dewy-matte finish that enhances your natural beauty. Ideal for adding a touch of radiance to your cheeks, this blush is a must-have in your makeup routine.



3-IN-1 SOLUTION
Aegte mattifying pore blur beauty filter primer + sunscreen, a 3-in-1 solution that combines the benefits of a sunscreen, primer and pore blurring formula. Priced at Rs. 999, this innovative product provides SPF 55++ protection, ensuring your skin is shielded from harmful UV rays. Its pore-blurring formula minimises the appearance of pores, resulting in a smooth and even skin texture.



VELVET SPRAY SQUALENE
The newest variant of the Velvet Spray is named after Squalene, a natural oil produced by our skin that is crucial for maintaining hydration and keeping the skin supple. However, as we age, squalene levels in our skin deplete. To address this, they have bio-mimicked squalene with a plant-based ingredient called squalane, derived from olives. This ingredient is clinically proven to have higher absorption, allowing for long-lasting moisturisation.



INNISFREE
INNISFREE, renowned for its natural ingredients from Korea's Jeju Island, has gained a loyal following globally. Known particularly for hydrating and nourishing the skin, it is widely recognised for its use of natural ingredients. The brand's best-selling products have won the hearts of Indian beauty enthusiasts. From everyday essential sunscreen to the makeup must-have No Sebum Mineral Powder, it provides a plethora of solutions catering to the unique needs of diverse Indian skin types, becoming a staple in everyday skincare routines.

SUOSKIE'S SKINCARE
National Girlfriend Day is an ideal time to show your love and care through thoughtful gifts symbolising protection and well-being to your lady-luck. This year, elevate your gift-giving by offering your better-half the gift of radiant skin. Suroskie's rose glass skin mist, rose glass face serum and rose petals melt cleanser are perfect expressions of your affection, ensuring your girlfriend feels cherished and pampered.



OZIVA ADVANCED HAIR GROWTH SERUM
The Oziva+ Advanced Hair Growth Serum is your go-to solution for maintaining luscious locks even during the monsoon season. Crafted with pure plant actives like Rednesnyl, derived from natural sources, this serum reactivates your hair growth cycle by stimulating stem cell proliferation, which visibly enhances hair number and density. Its formulation includes linden root extract to replenish scalp microbiomes and nourish the scalp, fostering a healthier environment for hair growth.

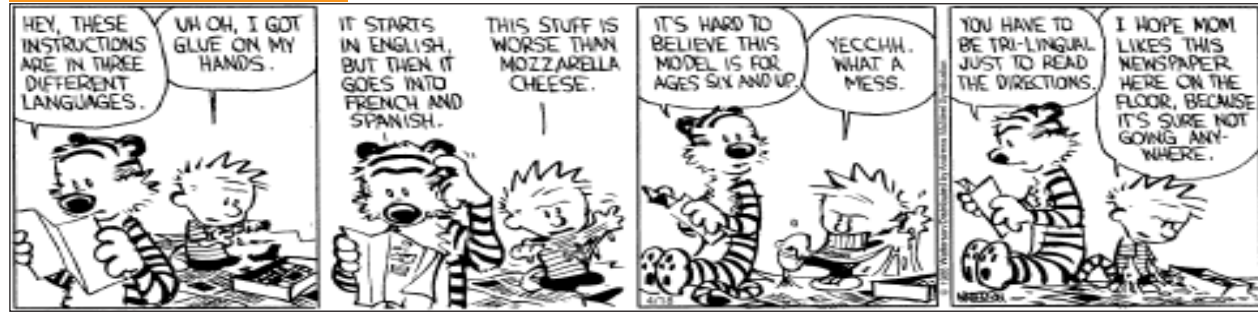


FUN

ARCHIE



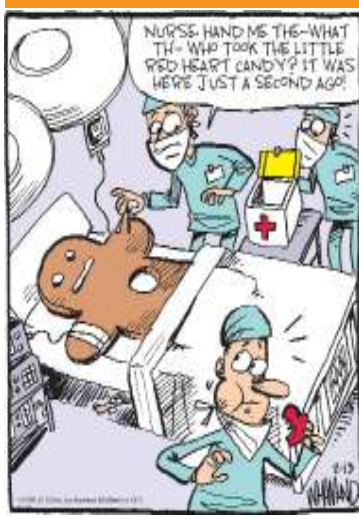
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



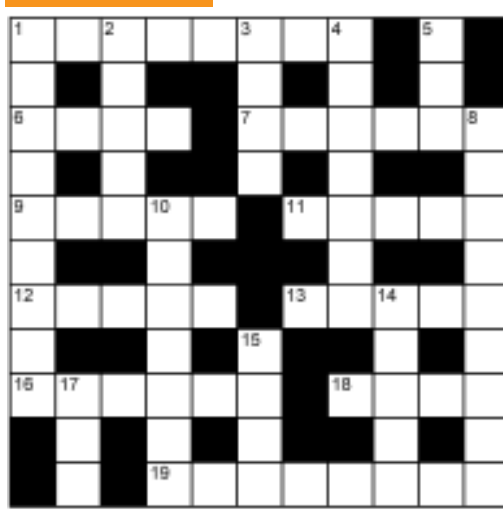
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

- Sparkling precious stones
- A machine for weaving
- This vehicle has no wheels and is pulled over snow
- Make a rough estimate
- Clamber up
- Prepare for a sports match
- Where a cow stores its milk
- A dry land with few plants
- A long soft seat
- A group of words which makes sense

DOWN

- Extremely pleased
- Overhead
- A bird makes this
- Detected with the nose
- False hair on the head
- Bears do this in the winter
- These spin webs
- Die under water
- Astound
- A female sheep

SOLUTION

S	B	E	T	D				
D	A	T	E	S	H	I	P	
A	N	G	R	I		T	A	N
H	I	C	H	A	I	R		
N	E	A	S					
T	R	E	C	R	E	T		
O	R	G	A	R	I	S		
N	H	E						

GINGER MEGGS



IF SHIVAM BHAJE PERFORMS WELL, WE'LL CONSIDER TAMIL REMAKE

Ahead of *Shivam Bhaje's* release, producer Maheshwar Reddy shares some interesting insights about the film.



PNS | HYDERABAD

As the release date for *Shivam Bhaje* draws near, producer Maheshwar Reddy shared exclusive insights into the film's journey and his broader vision for the industry. Directed by Apsar and featuring Ashwin Babu and Digangana Suryavanshi in lead roles, the film promises a captivating blend of romance, action and drama. *Shivam Bhaje*, which has now hit the theatres, has already created considerable buzz with its engaging trailer. In a recent conversation with us, Maheshwar Reddy offered a glimpse into his creative process and future plans.

Recalling his initial reaction to the film's story, he shared, "I was immediately drawn to *Shivam Bhaje* when I first heard the plot. I was so impressed that I committed to it on the spot. After discussing it with Ashwin, he too was quick to embrace the project. His enthusiasm was infectious and we quickly moved forward



with the production." When asked about the film's genre and plot, Reddy revealed, "The story of *Shivam Bhaje* is intricate and layered, blending elements from multiple genres. It's not confined to a single genre; instead, it weaves together various genres in a way that will appeal to a diverse audience. The film contains numerous twists, but I'm keeping those under wraps for now.

As a devotee of Lord Shiva, I can assure you that the narrative is compelling and thoughtfully crafted." Discussing the decision to release the film now, Reddy said, "We felt this was the ideal time for *Shivam Bhaje*. From a distribution perspective, this date was strategically chosen to maximise its reach. Looking

ahead, we have several big projects in the pipeline and I have invested more in this film's budget to ensure top-notch quality and content."

Music plays a crucial role in *Shivam Bhaje*, with the film's music director also starring as the hero. Reddy shared, "After witnessing his work in *Hidimb*, we knew we had to bring him on board. The music and background score he has created for *Shivam Bhaje* are exceptional. We shot the film primarily around Hyderabad, which adds an authentic touch to the story that unfolds entirely in this setting."

Reddy also mentioned the positive reception of the film's trailer by industry veteran Victory Venkatesh. "Venkatesh appreciated the trailer, which was encouraging for us. While we haven't shown the full film to anyone yet, the positive feedback from someone with his stature is very gratifying."

Addressing the broader industry perspective, Reddy remarked, "A film's success largely depends on its content. Regardless of tick-

et prices, if the film is good, audiences will flock to see it. Positive word of mouth is essential for generating interest and drawing viewers."

Looking ahead, Reddy shared his future plans. "We're planning a project with the IIT Krishnamurthy team and are considering a film with Kartikeya, pending the perfect script. If *Shivam Bhaje* performs well, we'll consider a Tamil remake and have already sold the Hindi dubbing rights. A sequel is also on the cards if the film is a hit."

Maheshwar Reddy's enthusiasm and strategic vision highlight his commitment to delivering high-quality entertainment. With *Shivam Bhaje* poised for its grand release, audiences can look forward to a film that promises to engage and entertain across multiple fronts.

Game Changer's new poster confirms Kiara as 'Jabilamma'

The anticipation for the upcoming film *Game Changer*, a grand political drama, has been growing with every passing day. The film, directed by director Shankar and starring the charismatic Global Star Ram Charan, commenced production some time ago, has captured the attention of fans and critics alike. Dil Raju, the producer, recently announced that *Game Changer* is set for a Christmas release, with the post-production phase currently underway, much to the delight of eager fans.

On Wednesday, the makers of *Game Changer* extended a warm birthday wish to Kiara Advani, the film's female lead, who is celebrating her special day. Sharing a captivating poster, the team posted, "Team #GameChanger wishes our Jabilamma Aka @advani_kiara a very Happy Birthday. Her vibrant energy will soon enchant your hearts."

In the poster, Kiara Advani is a vision of grace and elegance, donning a stunning traditional ensemble. Her red embellished blouse, paired with a flowy purple lehenga, is an embodiment of traditional glamour. Adorned with a necklace, bangles, a nose ring and flowers in her hair, she exudes a captivating charm that is both radiant and enchanting. The poster is a teaser of the film's first song, *Jaragandi*, and confirms Kiara's role as Jabilamma. Her vibrant beauty in this Desi avatar is truly a sight to behold, with her captivating presence stealing the show.

Joining Kiara Advani in the cast are Anjali, Samuthirakhani, SJ Suryah, Srikanth, Sunil, Naveen Chandra and others, each bringing their own unique flair to the film. With such an ensemble, *Game Changer* is poised to deliver a cinematic experience that is both rich and diverse. At the helm of this ambitious project is

Dil Raju, the producer, who has been instrumental in the film's production. With a Christmas release on the horizon, *Game Changer* is set to be a pan-Indian political drama that will captivate audiences across the country.



Keerthy brings out fun rebellious ploy in Raghu Thatha

Writer and director Suman Kumar, the renowned writer of acclaimed OTT projects like *Family Man*, *Farzi* and *Guns & Gulaabs*, makes a bold transition into the world of theatrical cinema. The official trailer release of his much-anticipated Tamil movie *Raghu Thatha*, featuring National Award winning actor Keerthy Suresh, dropped today.

Taking to Instagram, Suman Kumar shared the exciting trailer, giving audiences a glimpse of what to expect from his first theatrical debut as a director. The movie has already generated considerable buzz, thanks to its intriguing premise. *Raghu Thatha* marks a new chapter in Suman Kumar's career, as he ventures into the world of big-screen cinema, bringing his unique vision and narrative style to a broader audience.

The film is set to release on August 15th, 2024, in theaters across India. *Raghu Thatha* promises to be a standout addition to the South Indian film landscape. Don't miss the chance to experience this cinematic journey in theatres near you.



Journey of Viswam has both action, humour

The much-anticipated film *Viswam* marks the first-time collaboration between the rugged Macho Star Gopichand and the stylish director Sreenu Vaitla. As the project nears its completion, the filmmakers have launched an exciting promotional campaign with a video titled *The Journey of Viswam*, aimed at ramping up anticipation and offering a sneak peek into what audiences can expect.

The *Journey of Viswam* showcases a blend of sleek, well-choreographed action sequences that are both visually striking and dynamic. The video highlights the film's robust comedic elements, promising to entertain viewers with a mix of humour and high-energy moments. This balance between action and comedy reflects Sreenu Vaitla's signature style, which integrates intense action with light-hearted humour.

In the latter part of the video, viewers are treated to a glimpse of the film's comedic

tone, which aligns with Vaitla's reputation for blending laughter with thrills. The film's aesthetic appeal is enhanced by its striking shooting locations, which add to the overall visual experience as seen in the promotional material.

Gopichand's portrayal in *Viswam* is noted for its stylish intensity, with his character also incorporating a comedic edge. Kavya Thapar joins him as the leading lady, adding a fresh dimension to the film. Together, they navigate picturesque settings, engage in high-octane action, and deliver rib-tickling humour, promising an entertaining cinematic experience. Produced by TG Vishwa Prasad under People Media Factory and Venu Donepudi's Chitralayam Studios, *Viswam* features cinematography by KV Guhan, a musical score by Chaitan Bharadwaj and a screenplay penned by Gopi Mohan, known for his work on various Sreenu Vaitla blockbusters. Amar Reddy Kudumula handles the editing, while Kiran Manne serves as the art director.



Buddy ticket prices reduced for family audiences: Allu Sirish

Allu Sirish's *Buddy*, featuring Gayatri Bharadwaj and Prisha Rajesh Singh as the heroines, is set to hit theaters on August 2. Produced by KE Gnanavel Raja and Adhana Gnanavel Raja under the banner of Studio Green Films and directed by Sam Neha, *Buddy* is an adventurous action entertainer. Neha Gnanavel Raja is also credited as a co-producer.

Speaking at the pre-release event, actor Allu Sirish reported that the pre-release screenings of *Buddy* have garnered positive reactions from audiences of all ages. He was pleasantly surprised by the feedback and acknowledged that high ticket prices had been a barrier for second-week showings. After discussions with

around 200 exhibitors, ticket prices have been adjusted to 99 for single screens and 125 for multiplexes. He expressed that the ticket prices were reduced to encourage more family audience to watch the film in theatres. Sirish expressed gratitude to Gnanavel Raja for this adjustment and described his role as secondary to the teddy bear, who he believes is the real star of the film. He praised the film's action sequences and overall entertainment value and encouraged everyone to watch *Buddy* on August 2.

Adivi Sesh released trailer of Uruku Patel

Uruku Patel, an upcoming romantic action drama, stars Tejus Kancherla, famous for his performances in *Husharu* and *ADX Love*. He co-stars with Khushboo Choudhary in this movie. On Wednesday, actor Adivi Sesh launched the trailer for the movie directed by Vivek Reddy. The trailer showcases a man's journey to charm and wed a smart woman. The film release will reveal the mysteries surrounding his desire and whether he accomplishes it. The trailer captivates with its powerful conversations and broad appeal. Kancherla Bala Bhanu's production, *Uruku Patel*, featuring music by Pravin Lakkaraju, will be released in theatres shortly.



RAM WRAPS UP DUBBING FOR DOUBLE ISMART

The highly anticipated film *Double ISMART*, directed by Puri Jagannadh, is gearing up for its Pan India release on August 15. This sequel to the blockbuster *iSmart Shankar* promises to ramp up the intensity and grandeur with a high-stakes clash between Ustaad Ram Pothineni and Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt. As part of the film's promotional push, the makers have released a new video showcasing Ram Pothineni's dubbing session. The clip features Ram delivering a powerful dialogue that captures the essence of his mass-appeal character: "Mama... mask unte neeku dongodu mathrame kanapadhadu... Mask lekunte niku min'adu kanapadhadu..."

This gripping line underscores the larger-than-life persona Ram is set to portray, hinting at the film's high-octane action and dramatic flair. The intensity of the dialogue reflects the film's promise

of delivering an electrifying, massy experience that is expected to captivate audiences. Meanwhile, it has been officially announced on Wednesday that the film's trailer will be released on August 4. Sanjay Dutt, playing the antagonist, adds a significant Bollywood touch to the film. The trailer and songs released so far have created a buzz, heightening anticipation for the movie. Produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur under the Puri Connects banner, *Double ISMART* also stars Kavya Thapar as the female lead alongside Ram Pothineni. The film features a score by the talented Mani Sharma and showcases cinematography by Sam K Naidu and Gianni Giannelli. Mark your calendars for August 15, when *Double ISMART* will make its grand debut in theatres across Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi languages.



Telugu film industry to receive Gaddar Awards

The Telugu Film Industry extends its heartfelt gratitude to A. Revanth Reddy, the Chief Minister of Telangana and Komatireddy Venkatreddy, Minister for Cinematography, for their steadfast commitment to the growth of the industry in the state. The Government of Telangana has announced the Constitution of the "Gaddar" Awards to recognise and honour exceptional talent across various fields of art and craft, including the Telugu Film Industry. This initiative highlights the state's dedication to celebrating and supporting artistic excellence beyond regional boundaries.

Revanth Reddy has shown a keen interest in the industry's recent achievements, including its expansion across India and efforts to match international standards. This encouragement from the state government is seen as a significant milestone for the industry.

To ensure the effective implementation of the "Gaddar" Awards, a committee will be formed in collaboration with the Telangana State TV & Film Development Corporation. This Committee will include representatives from the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce and the Telugu Film Producers' Council. The Committee will draft the necessary guidelines and present them to the Chief Minister and the Minister for Cinematography. K.L. Damodar Prasad, Secretary of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce, expressed enthusiasm for the initiative and reassured that the Committee's formation and guidelines will be finalised promptly to facilitate the awards' launch.

The introduction of the "Gaddar" Awards underscores the Telangana Government's commitment to fostering talent and supporting the arts, reinforcing the state's position as a significant player in the Indian film industry.

Gambhir praises India's tenacity but calls for further improvement on turning pitches

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Head coach Gautam Gambhir praised India for pulling off a tenacious Super Over win in the low-scoring third T20I against Sri Lanka for a series whitewash, but called for consistent improvement on pitches assisting sharp turn. In a contest delayed by an hour due to rain here on Tuesday, India struggled against both spin and pace on a fresh pitch to make a mere 137/9. But the Suryakumar Yadav-led side showed doggedness in the second half despite Sri Lanka's domination to force the contest into a Super Over, restricting the hosts to 137/8 from 129/4 after 18 overs, and eventually winning the match to seal a 3-0 win. "Guys, congratulations on a great series win. Congratulations to Surya as well, outstanding captaincy and with the bat as well. I asked for something before the start of the game and you absolutely delivered it. This is what happens when you keep fighting, (and when) you don't give up," Gambhir told the team in a dressing room chat shared by



BCCI on X. "These kind of games happen and the only way these key games can happen (in favour) is when we keep fighting on every delivery and for every run and this was the example." Gambhir, however, urged the team to keep working on improving collectively on turning tracks which posed a

different challenge to the batting group in particular. "We keep getting better, we keep improving our skills as well because we still need to get better on playing on wickets like these, because we might end up getting these kind of wickets (in future). So we should first assess the situation and conditions

really quickly and what is the par score as well," he said. Gambhir urged players, who are not a part of the three-match ODI series starting on Friday, to enjoy their break but at the same time, keep working on their fitness. "Some of the guys will not be a part of the 50-overs format will have a longer break, so

make sure when you come back for the Bangladesh series...You can take a break. You absolutely deserve it, but more importantly, keep your skills and especially the fitness levels high." "You don't want to come for that series thinking that 'okay, I can just turn up, probably deliver for the team. So make sure that from the fitness point of view, the fitness levels are right up there," he said. Hardik Pandya praised Shubman Gill and Riyan Parag for their gritty 54-run stand which pulled India out of trouble. "In batting first, we were challenged, the conditions were difficult, but after losing those early wickets, Shubman and Riyan, the way they batter and created the partnership was brilliant," he said. "When you speak about situational awareness, at that point of time what both of you did was very, very important. That gives us a platform to at least reach to a decent total (to which) our bowlers can make sure and bowl at the right areas," he said. Pandya praised Washington

Sundar (25 off 18 balls) and Ravi Bishnoi (8) for their respective contributions highlighting the importance of runs from lower order batters. "I always emphasise on the fact that the lower order has to come and chip in, and Washy and those eight runs by Bishi (Ravi Bishnoi) was very important," he said. Pandya also praised Suryakumar for his inspired bowling changes, with the India skipper bringing on Rinku Singh (1-0-3-2) for the penultimate over and himself for the last over (1-0-5-2) which turned the game on its head. "As Gauti bhai mentioned, Surya, well done in making sure that the way you rotate the bowlers, showing faith in the bowlers which you gave (the ball to) in the last couple of overs that was brilliant and as a bowling group, obviously, it was fantastic," he said. "When you win games like this, eventually it kind of takes us forward. We are taking it step-by-step, but this was definitely a right step going forward for the future and well done to all the guys who are playing ODIs, kill it, continue," Pandya added.

Italy wins gold in women's team epee fencing to disappoint passionate French crowd again

AP ■ PARIS

The fans atencing are among the loudest and most passionate at the Paris Olympics, especially when France is challenging for a gold medal. They usually leave disappointed. Italy overcame a passionate "Marseillaise"-singing crowd at the Grand Palais to hand France its fourth fencing silver medal of the Games in the women's team epee Tuesday. Alberta Santuccio got the winning touch for Italy in overtime against France's Auriane Mallo-Breton to complete a hard-fought 30-29 win for gold. It was the second time that Mallo-Breton lost a Paris Olympic final by a single point after a 13-12 loss to Hong Kong's Vivian Kong Man Wai in the individual epee Saturday. French fencers are 0-3 in finals against non-French opponents at the 2024 Olympics, with those losses coming in epee events. The host nation's only gold came when Manon Apithy-Brunet beat her teammate Sara Balzer in the women's saber final on Monday. "If you look at the (epee) finals, of course we seem to be losing, but we're in the finals

all the same," Mallo-Breton said Tuesday through an interpreter. "I think that in the teams, there are possibilities to go and get some wonderful medals, and we hope that the other (French) teams will be able to go and do that, so we're going to be supporting them." Team fencing involves squad members fencing one-on-one in a rotating sequence that means everyone gets to face each opponent once. Despite the overtime loss, Mallo-Breton was still France's standout in the final with a combined record of 14-10 against all opponents. Italy has one gold, one silver and one bronze medal so far in fencing. Five more team events remain. Polish fencer Aleksandra Jarecka was shaking on the floor with emotion after winning her team bronze. Jarecka tied the score with less than three seconds to go and then won the tiebreaker point for a 32-31 overtime win against China. Just before that was an unexpected twist when an apparent glitch with the scoring system seemed to give Poland an extra point in the last minute, only to take it away.

Swiatek remains on course for another title

AP ■ PARIS

For almost five full games at the Paris Olympics, No. 1-ranked Iga Swiatek's high-bouncing topspin shots were being sent back over the net by No. 52 Wang Xiyu of China with crushing baseline groundstrokes of her own. Wang even held a break point that would have given her a 3-2 lead in the opening set. Then Swiatek restored the expected order on Court Philippe Chatrier - the site of her four French Open titles - and won four straight games to close out the first set along the way to advancing to the quarterfinals with a 6-2, 6-4 victory amid stifling conditions on Tuesday. "It's never about only one player," Swiatek said. "I was aware that she can play great tennis. And I accepted that some points she can really take advantage. But I wanted to really be intense and push in the right moments. Also be patient and not slow down. So I think my intensity worked and in important moments I was the one that was more solid." In part because of Swiatek's dominance on the red clay at Roland Garros, where the Olympic tennis tournament is being held, the 23-year-old from Poland is favored to add a gold medal to her growing collection of big titles.



Swiatek's quarterfinal opponent will be eighth-seeded American Danielle Collins, who eliminated Camila Osorio of Colombia 6-0, 4-6, 6-3. Second-ranked Coco Gauff was left fuming over a perceived missed officiating decision in a 7-6 (7), 6-2 loss to Donna Vekic of Croatia. Angelique Kerber, the 36-year-old German who has won three Grand Slam titles and used to be ranked No. 1, beat 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez of Canada 6-4, 6-3 to become the oldest women's quarterfinalist since tennis returned to the Olympics in 1988. Kerber has said the Paris Games will be the final tournament of her career. Anna Karolina Schmiedlova of Slovakia eliminated Jasmine Paolini - the Italian who was the runner-up at the French Open and Wimbledon this year - 7-5, 3-6, 7-5. Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine rallied past seventh-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4.

It's amazing leadership from big hearted Suryakumar: Washington Sundar

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Suryakumar Yadav's ability to Stake risks at crucial junctures of the game like using Rinku Singh in the penultimate over and himself in the final one won India the third and final T20I against Sri Lanka, said all-rounder Washington Sundar. In a low scoring match on Tuesday, India pulled off a stunning win with Suryakumar making some interesting bowling changes towards the end of Sri Lankan

innings. Chasing 138, Sri Lanka were cruising towards a comfortable win when they needed 12 runs from the last two overs with six wickets in hand, but Suryakumar introduced Rinku Singh in the penultimate over who returned 1-0-3-2, and brought himself on in the final over to take a couple of more wickets and stun Sri Lanka. In the Super Over, Sri Lanka lost two wickets in just four balls as India knocked off the target of three runs on the first ball itself with Suryakumar



hitting a four to seal a series clean sweep. "Honestly, it's amazing of him, amazing of his leadership skills to be honest because (with) 12 balls (left) and 12 (runs) to win and for him to bring Rinku (on), especially when Kusal Perera is batting, and Rinku got him out and Surya (then) himself came in the last over and won the game for us," Sundar told the media after the match. "We all know he has a big heart when he goes out there to bat but also he has a big heart in terms of leadership

as well. All the credits to him and (it was) amazing of him." Sundar said it was Suryakumar who kept on insisting that India must take wickets in the middle overs to maintain pressure on Sri Lanka, even though the hosts remained in command during the run chase. "Surya kept telling us that one or two wickets in between game would definitely change and obviously in these kind of games, low scoring games, even run-a-ball would put a lot of pressure on the batsmen

because they need to get the job done especially when the wicket has something for the bowler," he said. "He kept saying that (with) one or two wickets in the middle, especially in the middle overs between 11 to 15, (we) will definitely be in the game and exactly that's what happened. "I hope the audience enjoyed the game because you won't see such games every now and then but to be a part of this kind of a game and to be a part of this game honestly feels great," he added.

Daniel of Ireland wins Olympic gold and also hopes to pick up some new YouTube followers

AP ■ NANTERRE, FRANCE

Daniel Wiffen won Ireland's first Olympic gold medal in the pool in 28 years. That was thrilling enough as he wiped away tears standing on the podium, the Irish flag draped over his shoulders. Perhaps just as importantly, the 23-year-old Irishman is sure to pick up some new followers on his YouTube channel - a pitch he made when asked how people can learn more about a swimmer who is largely unknown outside his country. "People should watch," Wiffen said after winning the 800-meter freestyle on Tuesday night. "I blog every week - show you exactly what an Olympic champion does day-in, day-out in the pool." Get ready for a flood of fans, Daniel. Wearing round glasses and



looking studious, Wiffen cried as the Irish anthem played in La Defense Arena. He may not look the part of an Olympic champion, but his performance in the pool says otherwise. Wiffen will be back later in the Paris Games, hoping to win another gold on Sunday in the 1,500 meters - the final day of competition in the pool. "I don't normally cry, so I really

hope nobody is going to see that," Wiffen said. "But it did come out of me, and it's obviously just a special moment. I've never heard that national anthem from an Olympics before." Wiffen surged past Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri on the final lap, looking as fresh as he did at the beginning of the grueling race. He won in 7 minutes, 38.19 seconds, overpowering defending Olympic champion Bobby Finke (7:38.75) of the United States and Paltrinieri (7:39.38). Mona McSharry won bronze for Ireland's first medal of these Games on the previous night in the 100 breaststroke. "I was dying the last 20 meters," Wiffen said. "I'm not sure if you saw that, because my arms are in absolutely so much pain. But I knew that the crowd is gonna

carry me in, and that's exactly what happened. Then I saw the red light on the block, and that was it." Until these Olympics, Ireland's swimming history was essentially confined to Michelle Smith de Bruin, who surprisingly claimed three golds and a bronze at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics amid suspicions she was doping. She later received a drug ban that essentially ended her career, but she kept her medals. Wiffen was not asked about Smith de Bruin as he huddled with reporters, primarily Irish who were not looking to spoil a special night. "To be honest - it's going to sound really weird to say - I've dreamt of this moment so many times in my head, I've gone over it so many different ways of how it was going to happen," he said.

France, Germany, Canada clinch Olympic basketball quarterfinal berths

AP ■ VILLENEUVE-D'ASCO, FRANCE

France's miracle last-second comeback at the Paris Games got even better a few hours later, when the host nation clinched a spot in the quarterfinals and a trip to Paris for the knockout round next week. Also now officially in the Olympic quarterfinals: Germany and Canada. And on Wednesday, the winner of the U.S.-South Sudan game also will have a spot in the quarterfinals all wrapped up. The field for the medal round began taking shape Tuesday, especially after reigning World Cup champion Germany pulled away from a halftime tie and beat Brazil 86-73 in the final game of the evening. That victory came just after France got a four-point play from Matthew Strazel to tie the game late in

regulation and beat Japan 94-90 in overtime behind 18 points from Victor Wembanyama. Those results left France and Germany atop Group B at 2-0 and ensured of the top two spots in the group over Brazil and Japan, both of whom are 0-2. Canada's win over Australia earlier Tuesday also pushed it to 2-0 and now assured of no worse than a wild-card spot in the quarterfinals. "I just heard that," Germany forward Franz Wagner said about clinching the spot in the quarterfinals. "Honestly, I didn't know. It's good." There are three different groups of four teams in the Olympic tournament; the top two finishers in each group make the quarterfinals, and the final two spots in the next round go to the best third-place teams in group play.

Kaylee still rules Olympic backstroke

AP ■ NANTERRE, FRANCE

When it's time to race, Kaylee McKeown is sure hard to beat. American Regan Smith came into the women's 100-meter backstroke at the Paris Olympics with the world record and no shortage of confidence. At the turn Tuesday night, it was Smith in the lead with McKeown right on her heels. By the time they reached the other end of the pool, it was the Aussie lunging there first. McKeown still rules the backstroke. "She is an absolutely incredible racer and she knows what to do when it matters," Smith said. Smith, who broke McKeown's world mark with a time of 57.13 seconds at the U.S. Trials last month, led at the turn but couldn't hold off the hard-charging Aussie, who defended the title she won in Tokyo three years ago. McKeown surged to the front about halfway through the return lap and reached for the

wall in 57.33, winning by a relatively comfortable margin over Smith's finish of 57.66. "The nerves were definitely there but I just reminded myself it's a pool in a different venue, and I train every single day of my life," McKeown said. The U.S. Also grabbed the bronze as Katharine Berkoff touched third in 57.98, capturing her first Olympic medal and following in the footsteps of her father, David Berkoff, who won four medals - two of them gold - in Seoul and Barcelona. Smith reached over the lane rope to congratulate McKeown, but this one had to sting. The 22-year-old Minnesota native appeared to be in top form and primed to win her first gold medal. Instead, it was McKeown capturing her fourth gold overall. She swept the backstroke events in Tokyo and also claimed a relay gold. "It's one race at a time," McKeown said. "I've checked off three boxes so far and there's a few more to go."

American swimmers are getting used to silver
It was a night of silvers for the Americans, who took the runner-up spots in all three of the finals. Bobby Finke came up short in defense of his Olympic title in the men's 800 freestyle, relegated to silver by Ireland's Daniel Wiffen. The Americans also finished second in the men's 4x200 freestyle behind Britain, which captured its second straight gold in that event. Through four days at La Defense Arena, the U.S. Has a bunch of medals - 15 in all - but only two of them are gold. Seven silvers and six bronzes round out the tally.

Irish win first swimming gold since 1996
Wiffen won Ireland's first gold medal in swimming since scandal-plagued Michelle Smith finished first in three events at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Wiffen surged past Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri on the final lap, looking as fresh as he did at the beginning of the



grueling race. Actually, he was in excruciating pain. "I was dying the last 20 meters," Wiffen said. "I'm not sure if you saw that, because my arms are in absolutely so much pain. But I knew that the crowd is gonna carry me in, and that's exactly what happened. Then I saw the red light on the block, and that was it."

Wiffen won in 7 minutes, 38.19 seconds, climbing on the lane ropes to hold one finger skyward. Finke also came on strong late in what was essentially a three-man race, also passing Paltrinieri to take the silver in 7:38.75. The bronze went to the Italian, who posted a time of 7:39.38. It was another dazzling performance by an Irish

swimmer, on the heels of Mona McSharry grabbing a bronze in the 100 breaststroke the previous night. Until these Olympics, the country's swimming history was essentially confined to Smith, who surprisingly claimed three golds and a bronze in 1996 amid suspicions she was doping. She later received a doping ban that

essentially ended her career, but she kept her medals. **British men defend their relay title**
The British men defended their title in the 4x-200 freestyle relay, holding off the United States and Australia. The team of James Guy, Tom Dean, Matthew Richards and Duncan Scott -- the same foursome that captured gold in Tokyo three years ago -- finished in 6:59.43. The only difference from the last Olympics was Dean took the leadoff, with Guy going second. It was good enough for another gold, Britain's first swimming victory of the Paris Games. Luke Hobson, Carson Foster, Drew Kibler and Kieran Smith gained a bit of redemption for the Americans with a silver medal in 7:00.78, making up for a disappointing fourth-place showing at the last Olympics. Maximilian Giuliani, Flynn Southam, Elijah Winnington and Thomas Neill earned the bronze for Australia in 7:01.98.

Doubling up
French star Léon Marchand had a very busy day, advancing to the final in both the 200 butterfly and 200 breaststroke. Marchand did a double in the morning preliminaries, then gutted through another back-to-back in the evening semifinals with about 80 minutes between races. He posted a time of 1:53.50 in the fly semis, trailing only defending Olympic champion and world-record holder Kristóf Milák of Hungary (1:52.72). Marchand was faster than everyone in the breaststroke round, posting a time of 2:08.11 with another raucous home crowd cheering him on. Marchand will have to double up one more time in the finals Wednesday, looking to add to the gold he earned in the 400 individual medley. "The French crowd has been amazing for me," he said. "I'm just really lucky to be in good shape this week to swim as fast as possible."