



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

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

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



DON'T MISS...

Upgrade medical services to...

District Collector S Nagalakshmi directed the doctors and the medical staff to provide better treatment to the patients and maintain punctuality. The Collector conducted surprise inspections to Community health centres in Prathipadu on Wednesday. She inspected the General ward, Operation Theatre, Ophthalmology Department and Obstetrics Department of the hospital and appropriate instructions were given. She also examined various records including the register of drugs and drug store. She directed the medical staff...

-PAGE: 4

'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

Dawn of industrial era

CM Naidu lays roadmap for comprehensive development

Says will bring in 5 industrial policies in 100 days and build industrial clusters

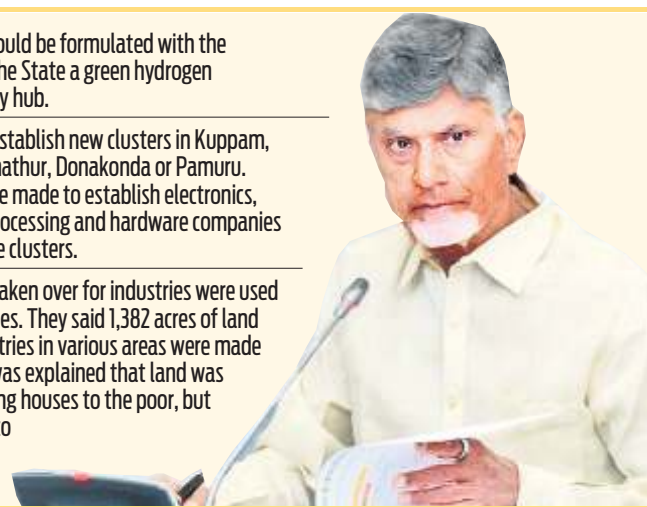
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has reviewed with the officials the new policies to be brought in for the establishment of industries in the State. The CM discussed with them the agreements made for investments on various occasions during the past 10 years and their current status. He said that when the Telugu Desam government was in power earlier, agreements were made for investments worth Rs 16 lakh crore, but due to the policies followed by the succeeding government, the industrialists stepped back. Many companies have cancelled investment agreements and new companies have not come due to the industrialists being put in trouble and subjected to political harassment. He said that there is a need to create trust among industrialists again.

Naidu instructed the officials to bring five new policies in the next 100 days and said that new industrial policy, MSME policy, food processing policy, electronic, IT and cloud policy and textile policy should be made ready. The officials were directed to create a favourable environment to attract investments

CM Naidu instructed the officials to bring five new policies in the next 100 days and said that new industrial policy, MSME policy, food processing policy, electronic, IT and cloud policy and textile policy should be made ready.

- That policies should be formulated with the aim of making the State a green hydrogen and green energy hub.
- The process to establish new clusters in Kuppam, Moolpet, Chilamathur, Donakonda or Pamuru. Efforts should be made to establish electronics, pharma, food processing and hardware companies in the respective clusters.
- That the lands taken over for industries were used for other purposes. They said 1,382 acres of land meant for industries in various areas were made house plots. It was explained that land was required for giving houses to the poor, but land was given to industries.



through the best policies. He said that policies should be formulated with the aim of making the State a green hydrogen and green energy hub. Similarly, the CM said that proposals for four new industrial clusters should be prepared and Central approvals should be obtained. The CM ordered to start the process to establish new clusters in Kuppam, Moolpet, Chilamathur, Donakonda or Pamuru. Efforts should be made

to establish electronics, pharma, food processing and hardware companies in the respective clusters. Also, the progress of Krishnapatnam, Nakkapalli, Orvakallu, and Kopparthi nodes was discussed. The meeting also reviewed the status of the bulk drug park to be set up at Nakkapalli at a cost of Rs 11,542 crore, the NTPC Green Hydrogen Hub to be set up at a cost of Rs 60,000 crore and the

BPCL projects currently under discussion. The officials told the CM that the lands taken over for industries were used for other purposes. They said 1,382 acres of land meant for industries in various areas were made house plots. It was explained that land was required for giving houses to the poor, but land was given to industries.

Continued on Page 2

Major reshuffle in police administration

96 DSPs transferred across state



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major reshuffle of DSPs across the State, DGP Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao affected transfers to 96 DSPs (Civil) through R No 782/G2/2024 on Wednesday. Interestingly, more than 50 DSPs have been told to report at the Police Headquarters.

K Damodar Rao has been posted as ACP Central Vijayawada, G Ratna Raju has been posted as DSRP, Vijayawada, VV Naidu as ACP, Traffic Division -1 Vijayawada, P Mallikarjuna Rao as Disha

K Damodar Rao has been posted as ACP Central Vijayawada.

P Mallikarjuna Rao as Disha Vijayawada.

Vijayawada, B Parthasaradhi CSB, Vijayawada, has been posted as SDPO, Kuppam, and K Prakash Babu, Disha Women PS, Vijayawada is posted as SDPO, Rajampet.

P Murali Krishna Reddy, ACP West, Vijayawada; BVS Nageswara Rao, DSRP, Vijayawada; DNV Prasad ACP, North Vijayawada; P Bhaskar Rao, ACP Central Vijayawada, and others have been told to report to the Police Headquarters.

The officers who were transferred and posted were instructed to report at their new places of posting immediately and intimate the date of assumption of charge to the headquarters.

No tension over pensions

Naidu govt implementing its promise says I&PR Minister Parthasaradhy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

I&PR and Housing Minister K Parthasaradhy has said that the Chandrababu Naidu-led NDA government has been implementing the election promises by providing revised pensions at the beneficiaries' doorstep. "Our government is committed to provide an increased regular pension on August 1. The previous government had troubled the pensioners with lame excuses. Today, we are providing pensions at the doorstep with the secretary staff," the Minister said.



Parthasaradhy stated that due to the incompetence of the previous YSRC government, the State is ruined financially, but even in such a situation, keeping the guarantee given to all the pensioners, the Naidu government is going to distribute Rs. 2,737 crore in one day.

Continued on Page 2

Probe land grabbing, getting of files

Party leaders meet CM; say thousands of acres encroached upon in Kadapa district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPI leaders have met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and requested him to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the land scams that took place during the previous YSRC government's rule in the State. It was brought to the CM's attention that thousands of acres have been encroached upon in Kadapa district alone. They also requested to investigate the gutting of files in the Madanapally Sub Collector's office. CPI national secretary Narayana,



State secretary Ramakrishna, leaders Muppalla Nageswara Rao, Akkineni Vanaja, Jali Wilson, JVS Murthy and Obulesu gave a repre-

sentation regarding various issues to CM Chandrababu Naidu at the Velagapudi secretariat on Monday.

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 govern-

ment 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.

"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 of disbursement of money for the loan waiver scheme during an event on the legislative assembly premises.



Death toll in Kerala landslides rises to 158; 191 still missing: P5



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 (Civil Services Examination-2022) has been "cancelled" and she has also been "debarred permanently" from all future examinations or selections conducted by the UPSC.

Continued on Page 2

Venkataramana is OSD for Minister Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Akula Venkataramana from Markapuram town has been appointed as the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to State Human Resource Development Minister Nara Lokesh.



appreciation for protecting the government properties that were being encroached.

Akula Venkataramana secured first place in Group 1 exams and became a role model to the young competitive exam aspirants during the undivided Andhra Pradesh. He established a library in Markapuram town in the name of his parents, Akula Sriramulu and Lakshmi Narasamma Memorial Trust, thereby providing free study material to the young men and women appearing for the competitive examinations and gaining their admiration.

He previously worked as ITDA Project Officer in Chintoor region of East Godavari district.

While Venkataramana was the ITDA PO, efforts were made to improve the living standards of the Tribals there. Later, he worked as RDO Badvel Revenue Division of Kadapa District and got public

Mumbai, Chennai may face risk of inundation

POSSIBILITY OF LOSING OVER 10% 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 histor-



ical 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 (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 socioeconomic 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, Mangaluru, 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.

Minister Narayana, CRDA officials visit Navi Mumbai

Team studies housing schemes, financial and development plans

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A team headed by Municipal and Urban Development Minister Ponguru Narayan has visited Navi Mumbai to study city planning and road network development projects. The Minister was accompanied by CRDA Commissioner Katamneni Bhaskar, Additional Commissioners Naveen and Surya Sai Praveen Chand. The team toured Navi Mumbai along with City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) officials. CIDCO, a Maharashtra government agency, plays a key role in the construction of Navi Mumbai.

◆ Minister Narayana's team studied the road network and other development projects in Navi Mumbai.

◆ The team visited the notified area affected by the Navi Mumbai Airport.



◆ After that, they had a meeting with CIDCO officials, who explained the housing schemes, financial plans and development plans.

◆ CIDCO officials also gave a PowerPoint presentation on the development of Navi Mumbai.

by the Navi Mumbai Airport. After that, they had a meeting with CIDCO officials, who explained the housing schemes, financial plans and development plans. CIDCO officials also gave a PowerPoint presentation on the development of Navi Mumbai.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is moving ahead with a goal of developing Amaravati as a world class capital city. In accordance with this, master plans had been prepared in the past. The government opined that if the Telugu Desam government had come

to power once again in 2019, Amaravati would have received special recognition. However, after coming to power, the coalition government has decided to speed up the construction of Amaravati. Recently, the government decided to proceed as per the old master plan.



UAE Ambassador visits Babu Museum

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador to India, HE Abdunnasser Jamal Alshaali, visited Babu 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, who is the architect of the Indian national flag. Later, he visited Buddhism and Jainism galleries, prehistoric gallery, Hindu sculpture galleries, coins gallery, Bidriware gallery and arms and weapons gallery and watched the augmented reality show. He was impressed and appreciated the Archaeology & Museum Department.

World Breastfeeding Week observance from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated as a global campaign every year from August 1 to 7, to strengthen the efforts for improving the breastfeeding practices. This year World Breastfeeding week will be observed on the theme 'Closing the gap: Breastfeeding support for all', said MT Krishnababu, Special Chief Secretary of Health & Family welfare Department. Krishnababu, along with Commissioner of Health & Family Welfare and NHMC Mission Director Harikiran, released Information Education and Communication (IEC) material developed by the Health Department for the campaign on Wednesday. Joint Director (Child Health & Immunisation) Dr Arjuna Rao and State consultants participated in the programme. On the occasion, the



Special CS said that Breastfeeding Week will be celebrated in the State at facility and community level involving caregivers, mothers and family members. "During the campaign, promotional activities will be conducted to create awareness on early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, the introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods at six months together with continued

breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond to offer a powerful line of defence against infection and malnutrition and boosters brain development in a child," he said. The observance will be inaugurated in the State by Minister of Health & Family Welfare Satyakumar Yadav in UPHC Sai Nagar, Dharmavaram, in Sri Sathya Sai district. The programme will also be launched simultaneously in all districts in the presence of district collectors and DM&HOs.

Minister orders probe into student suicide in Srikakulam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the wake of the suicide of a student in Srikakulam, Minister of Social Welfare Dr. Dola Sree Bala Veeranjanya Swamy has expressed profound regret and ordered a comprehensive investigation into the incident. The Minister, upon consulting with the District Collector and the Superintendent of Police, gathered crucial details about the heartbreaking event. Dr Veeranjanya Swamy stressed the importance of addressing student issues through proper channels. "Students should not spoil their golden future by taking their own lives," he stated. He emphasised the value of the students' futures and the severity of impulsive decisions, urging students to seek help from their

teachers and not lose their morale. Dr Veeranjanya Swamy highlighted the critical role of educators in resolving student issues and providing the necessary support. The Minister conveyed his deepest condolences to the bereaved family, offering solace in their time of grief. He assured them that the State's social welfare apparatus has been mobilised to ensure a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragedy. The Minister's directive for a full-scale investigation aims to uncover any underlying issues that may have contributed to the student's decision. This initiative is also intended to implement preventive measures to avoid such incidents in the future. Dr Veeranjanya

Swamy's call for students to reach out for help and his emphasis on the supportive role of teachers underscores a broader societal need for mental health awareness and intervention in educational institutions. Dr Veeranjanya Swamy stated that the government, through the Social Welfare Department, is dedicated to providing the necessary resources and support to ensure the well-being of all students. As the investigation progresses, he assured the public that all findings will be shared transparently and that appropriate actions will be taken to address any identified issues. The goal is to create a safer and more supportive environment for students, ensuring their mental and emotional well-being, he added.

YSRCP concerned over future of Arogyasri scheme

Govt attempting to downplay Arogyasri in favour of Ayushman Bharat: Vidadala Rajini

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Vidadala Rajini has expressed concern over the coalition government's negligence towards Arogyasri scheme, resulting in anxiety among the public. She demanded clarity from the State government on their healthcare policies, emphasising the need for transparency and continued support for Arogyasri and related healthcare initiatives. Speaking to media persons at the party central office on Wednesday, the former minister highlighted the legacy of the Arogyasri scheme, introduced by former Chief Minister late YS Rajasekhara Reddy in 2007, which aimed to provide healthcare to the poor preventing them from being deprived of medical treatment due to financial con-

- The current government for attempting to downplay Arogyasri in favour of Ayushman Bharat, noting that Ayushman Bharat covers only 60 lakh people in the State compared to Arogyasri's coverage of 1.42 crore families.
- She also highlighted the significant healthcare reforms initiated by the YSRCP chief, including the introduction of 17 new medical colleges with an investment of Rs 8,500 crore, aimed at strengthening medical education and healthcare infrastructure in the State.
- The Family Doctor concept, which was implemented to provide preventive care at the village-level, ensuring accessible healthcare for all.



straints. She reminded that the Arogyasri scheme has been significantly strengthened, increasing the number of procedures covered from 1,059 to 3,257 in the previous government. She also pointed out that the annual

expenditure on Arogyasri during the TDP regime was Rs 1,000 crore, which increased to approximately Rs 4,100 crore under the previous YSRCP's government administration and also the network of Arogyasri hospitals

expanded from less than 1,000 to over 2,300. She refuted the claims by ministers about inherited debts, recalling that the YSRCP government settled Rs 632 crore in unpaid dues left by the previous TDP government. Each month, approximately Rs 340 crore was spent under Arogyasri and Aarogya Asara. With the implementation of the election code from March onwards, there were obstacles to payments, she said. Criticising Union Minister Pemmanasani Chandrashekar for his comments on Arogyasri scheme, she said the Minister is echoing Chandrababu Naidu's thoughts. She criticised the current government for attempting to downplay Arogyasri in favour of Ayushman Bharat, noting that Ayushman Bharat covers only 60 lakh people in the State

compared to Arogyasri's coverage of 1.42 crore families. Furthermore, Ayushman Bharat includes only 1,949 procedures compared to the 3,257 under Arogyasri. Also, under Ayushman Bharat, only Rs 5 lakh is provided, whereas YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's government offered up to Rs. 25 lakh under Arogyasri. She also highlighted the significant healthcare reforms initiated by the YSRCP chief, including the introduction of 17 new medical colleges with an investment of Rs 8,500 crore, aimed at strengthening medical education and healthcare infrastructure in the State. She also mentioned the Family Doctor concept, which was implemented to provide preventive care at the village-level, ensuring accessible healthcare for all.

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 gracefully 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.

DC announces crackdown on ganja cultivation

PNS ■ PADERU

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has announced a decisive crackdown on farmers cultivating cannabis, citing its severe adverse effects on society. During a high-level meeting on Wednesday with officials from the Police, Agriculture, Forest, Horticulture, Medical Health, and District Water Management Agency (DWMA) departments, along with the DRDA, Kumar reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment to eradicating ganja cultivation and promoting sustainable alternative crops. The meeting highlighted the formation of a seven-member ministerial committee at the State level to spearhead the anti-ganja initiative. Kumar emphasised the necessity of establishing inter-departmental committees at the mandal and village levels, tasked with formulating and implementing strategies to eliminate

Tribal farmers and youth to be given opportunities in horticulture and other employment fields



ganja cultivation and promote sustainable alternative crops for tribal farmers. "Alluri Sitarama Raju district has unfortunately become synonymous with ganja," Kumar stated. "It is our collective responsibility to shatter this perception by eradicating cannabis cultivation." The Collector has mandated monthly meetings at the village, mandal, and district levels to devise preventive measures and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of ganja. To incen-

tive villages that abandon ganja farming, the Collector announced that significant infrastructure support will be provided. In addition, tribal farmers and youth will be given opportunities in horticulture and other employment fields, including the cultivation of crops such as strawberries and avocados. DIG Gopinath Jetty, former ACP of Chintapalli, noted a sharp increase in ganja cultivation since his tenure, highlighting its infiltration into schools, colleges, and public spaces. He

stressed the urgency of targeting areas where ganja seeds are planted during June, July, and August. Jetty also reported that last year, three lakh kilograms of ganja, cultivated on 10,000 acres, were destroyed. Another one lakh kg is expected to be destroyed soon. Volunteers, secretariat staff, and combing police are actively identifying cannabis crops, with a collaborative effort required from all departmental officials to achieve eradication. Additional SP Dheeraj, DRO B. Padmavathi, DFO Vinod Kumar, District Agriculture Officer SBS Nand, District Park Forest Officer Ramesh Kumar Rao, Deputy Director of Tribal Welfare Department I Kondalalarao, and other district officers attended the meeting.

HC notices to former CID chief, Additional Advocate General

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Notices were served on former CID chief N Sanjay and former Additional Advocate Aeneral Ponnayolu Sudhakar Reddy by the Andhra Pradesh State High Court on Wednesday, in connection with the alleged violation of service rules during the previous YSRCP government's rule. The High Court was acting on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition filed by United Forum for United Campaign president Satyanarayana questioning the propriety of Sanjay and Ponnayolu addressing a series of press conferences on the ongoing CID investigation into the AP Skill Development Corporation scam. The CID had named Telugu Desam Party presi-

dent and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, who was then in the Opposition, as the prime accused in the Rs 371-crore skill development scam. Naidu was also in Rajahmundry Central Prison in connection with the case. Satyanarayana argued that being public servants, Sanjay and Ponnayolu should not address press conferences and reveal information about the skill development case to the media, at a time when the investigation was yet to be completed. The High Court asked Sanjay and Ponnayolu to file their replies in their individual capacity. It also asked the State Chief Secretary, Law Secretary and the Principal Secretary to file a counter affidavit on behalf of the State government in the PIL.

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
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly cloudy
Temp: 33°C
Humidity: 75%
Sunrise: 5:48 AM
Sunset: 6:39 PM
Updated: July 31, 2024 5:00 PM

UPSC cancels candidature of..

Continued from Page 1

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 Pujja 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. After this detailed exercise, barring the case of Khedkar, no other candidate has been found to have availed more number of attempts than permitted under the CSE rules. "In the lone case of Ms Pujja Manorama Dilip Khedkar, the standard operating procedure (SOP) of the UPSC could not detect her number of attempts primarily due to the fact that she changed not only her name but also her parents' name," it said. Taking up the issue of complaints regarding the submission of false certificates (specifically OBC and PwBD categories) are concerned, the UPSC said it only does a "preliminary" scrutiny of the certificates like whether the certificate has been issued by the competent authority, the year to which the certificate pertains, issuing date of the certificate, whether there is any overwriting on the certificate, format of the certificate etc.

Probe land...

Continued from Page 1

During the interaction with the CM, the CPI leaders briefed that thousands of acres have been occupied in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Prakasam districts in the name of the three capitals. They alleged that the previous rulers had confiscated the lands by threatening the poor, common and middle class people and demanded justice for those who have lost their lands. They also said strict action should be taken against those involved in the land scams. They appealed to the Chief Minister to drop the cases filed against the CPI leaders and leaders of affiliated unions by the previous government, for various protests regarding the construction of Amaravati, Polavaram Project, burden of electricity charges on common people, RTC charges, implementation of bifurcation promises.

No tension over...

Continued from Page 1

He recalled that even though there were server problems last time, the officials and secretariat staff distributed the pensions with commitment. He claimed that Chandrababu is trying to put such a state in the groove and with confidence in the CM other States are looking to invest in AP. The Minister alleged that Jagan is running away from coming to the Assembly and spreading lies against the government. "Jagan should say what good he has done for the State; he should come to the Assembly and prove that the White Papers we are releasing are wrong," he demanded. He further stated that there were allegations against the Jagan government about putting Rs 1,500 crore due under Arogyasri to the hospitals, leading to the Arogyasri services being stopped. Parthasarathy asked the YSRCP leaders how it is reasonable to say that money has not been paid to Arogyasri after being pushed into a quagmire of Rs 11 lakh crore of debt. Minister Parthasarathy said that CM Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are committed to improving the health conditions in this State. He claimed that the government will go ahead to uphold the trust that people have placed in the opportunity given to them with great confidence.

Dawn of...

Continued from Page 1

While 66 percent incentives were paid during the previous Telugu Desam government's tenure, only 34 percent were given by the YSRCP government. CM Chandrababu Naidu said that the matter of giving industrial incentives will be looked into and believed that there will be good opportunities for investments. The CM said that while 14,125 acres were made available through 64 industrial parks during 2014-2019, only 31 parks were made available during 2019-2024. The CM said that industrialists and investors have lost faith with such developments. Those who had signed an agreement and went back with the policies of the YSRCP government should be consulted again.

Minister unveils plan to check graft in coop sector

Promises farmer-friendly reforms

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

In a major move to clean up the cooperative sector and boost support for farmers, Andhra Pradesh Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu has unveiled a comprehensive reform plan. Addressing officials of the Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank

(APCOB) at his camp office in Tekkali here on Wednesday, the Minister exposed rampant corruption within the system.

Atchannaidu highlighted serious irregularities such as fraudulent loan approvals, duplication in loan applications, and even loans obtained by officials using fake identities. To address these issues, he has

vowed to overhaul the cooperative system. A key focus of the reforms is to streamline the loan process for farmers. The Minister aims to reduce loan processing time to a single day by integrating land records, encumbrance certificates, and crop data with the Rythu Aadhaar card.

To enhance transparency

and efficiency, Atchannaidu has mandated the digitisation of cooperative societies. A massive financial injection of Rs 38.7 thousand crore is planned to be disbursed through cooperative societies and APCOB-DCCBs to farmers this year. The reform agenda also includes expanding loan options to cover long-term loans, education loans for farmers' children, and even foreign education loans. The Minister has ordered the establishment of DCCB and APCOB branches in every district to improve accessibility.

To broaden the reach of cooperative services, Atchannaidu has proposed offering loans to women's self-help groups, and support for government schemes like Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana at the village level. The Minister's directives have been met with enthusiasm as they promise to bring much-needed relief to farmers and instill accountability in the cooperative sector.

The Minister's reforms have been met with considerable enthusiasm, offering much-needed relief to farmers and setting a new standard of accountability within the cooperative sector.



Minister Kollu Ravindra visiting Manginapudi Beach near Machilipatnam on Wednesday

Infra facilities on Manginapudi Beach in PPP mode: Ravindra

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra has disclosed that the TDP-led NDA government is preparing special plans for the development of Manginapudi Beach near Machilipatnam in Krishna district. They will facilitate infrastructure facilities under

the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode, he said.

Minister Ravindra, along with Andhra Pradesh Urban Infrastructure Development Authority (APUIDA) representative Kiran, visited Manginapudi Beach on Wednesday. They engaged the visitors about the facilities and security measures on the beach.

Later, Ravindra recalled that during TDP's first regime from 2014 to 2019, many developmental activities were taken up. However, after YSRCP came to rule, all the developmental works were stalled. "They sold earth on the beach premises and destroyed the coastal region. Soon after the NDA government came to rule,

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu gave a special focus on the beach development," he added.

Meanwhile, the Minister said that as per the requirement, hotels, resorts and beach development programmes will begin shortly. He added that Manginapudi Beach will get back its previous glory.



100% subsidy for horticulture crops under Upadhi: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has announced that the district administration is offering 100 per cent subsidies for cultivating horticulture crops such as fruits and flowers on approximately 1,760 acres under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGN-REGS), also known as the Upadhi scheme. This initiative aims to support small, marginal farmers financially in the district. Dr Srijana also mentioned that horticulture cultivation supported by the Upadhi scheme has commenced in the district. As part of the encouragement to cul-

Support for small and marginal farmers cultivating fruits and flowers on 1,760 acres

tivate horticulture crops, Collector Srijana visited the jasmine flower garden, which was supported by the District Water and Management Agency (DWAMA) under the Upadhi scheme at Kotta Mangapuram of Mylavaram mandal in the district on Wednesday. She interacted with farmers face-to-face and enquired about the benefits of the scheme.

During the visit, Collector Dr Srijana spoke to the farmers gathered at the jasmine flower garden, informing them that out of a total of 1,760 acres of hor-



NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana visiting the jasmine flower garden at Kotta Mangapuram on Wednesday

ticulture crops, jasmine and rose flowers are being cultivated on an area of 40 acres. She explained that the remaining 1,720 acres are being utilised for cultivating mango, guava, neem, sapota, orange, custard apple, dragon fruits, cashew nut trees, pomegranates, apple bare, oil palms, and various other crops.

Furthermore, she mentioned that there will be an opportunity for farmers to purchase fruit and flower plants and fertilisers as they wish, with the total expenditure being covered by the Upadhi scheme funds.

Additionally, the government is providing crop management expenditure for three years, along with support for digging holes and planting the crops. She also stated that person-days will be sanctioned for the cultivation of internal crops under the Upadhi scheme. Dr Srijana highlighted that small and marginal farmers could benefit from the 100 per cent subsidies to cultivate fruits and flower gardens under the Upadhi scheme. She emphasised that the district administration is ready to support the farmers by providing person-days and financial assistance through DWAMA, the implementing agency of the Upadhi scheme.



National seminar at CSSIU calls for fight against child labour

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Centre for the Study of Social Inclusion in Universities (CSSIU) at Andhra University organised a national seminar on Child Labour Eradication in India - a Way Forward on Wednesday. The event brought together experts, policymakers, and academicians to discuss the root causes of this social evil and explore strategies for its eradication.

Prof. N Kishore Babu, Registrar of Andhra University, emphasised the exploitative nature of child labour and its detrimental impact on inclusive development. He attributed the problem to poverty, population growth, lack of employment opportunities, and social backwardness. Prof. Babu stressed the need for a multi-pronged approach, including awareness campaigns, strict enforcement of laws, and support for NGOs working in this field.

M Suneetha, Deputy Commissioner of Labour, Visakhapatnam, shed light on the legal framework surrounding child labour, highlighting the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and its subsequent amendments. She also outlined the efforts of the District Task Force Committee for Child Labour in rescuing children from hazardous working conditions.

Prof. Babu stressed the need for a multi-pronged approach, including awareness campaigns, strict enforcement of laws, and support for NGOs working in this field

Prof A Narasimha Rao, Principal of the College of Arts and Commerce, underscored the crucial link between poverty and child labour, emphasising the need for poverty alleviation programs. Dr AK Paricha, Emeritus Professor at Berhampur University, delivered a thought-provoking keynote address on the importance of childhood in shaping individuals and societies.

Dr P Subba Rao, Director of CSSIU, highlighted the plight of children engaged in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and domestic work. He emphasised the role of NGOs and international agencies in complementing government efforts to eliminate child labour. The seminar concluded with a call for concerted action from all stakeholders to address the complex issue of child labour and create a brighter future for India's children.

CM seeks proper evidence on mining irregularities

Officials give him details of probe into illegal mining of silica and quartz in Nellore district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has instructed the officials to accurately collect evidence on irregularities in sand, silica, and quartz mining and the irregularities of the past five years in the Mines Department. CM Naidu reviewed the department's activities and revenue affairs in the past five years during a review meeting at the Secretariat in Velagapudi in Amaravati on Wednesday.

The officials gave the Chief Minister the details of the investigation conducted so far on the illegal mining of silica and quartz in the joint Nellore

district. They said that large-scale illegal excavations have taken place in this area. The CM suggested investigating more deeply and collecting evidence.

The officials explained that while the revenue of the Mines Department grew by 24 per cent between 2014-19, but it fell to seven per cent between 2019-24. They explained that the government lost revenue of Rs.9,750 crore due to chaotic policies and irregularities in mining. The CM also reviewed the contracts with private agencies in sand mining during the period of five years, the irregularities and the damage caused to the government. The officials

brought to the attention of the CM that private agencies have not paid Rs.1,025 crore to the government as per the sand mining contracts. They said that cases have been registered. The CM ordered the officials to investigate the irregularities of the previous government in mining. It is advised to collect evidence on irregularities in sand, silica and quartz mining.

Naidu made it clear that the government is committed to the free sand policy as stated during the election. He clarified that their policy is that they can take the sand after paying the excavation, sanitation and transportation charges.

Minister flags off water release from Vengalarayasagar Reservoir

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

State Tribal Welfare and Women and Child Welfare Minister Gummidi Sandhya Rani, on Wednesday, inaugurated the release of water from the Vengalarayasagar Reservoir, marking a significant step towards boosting Kharif crop production in the region. The event, organised by the Water Resources Department, witnessed the participation of local MLAs, officials, and farmers. Minister Sandhya Rani emphasised the government's commitment to ensuring adequate water supply for agriculture, highlighting the importance of optimising existing water resources.

The Vengalarayasagar project, with a storage capacity of 1.683 TMCL, irrigates over 24,000 acres of land across Makkuva, Bobbili, and Sitanagaram mandals. The reservoir currently holds sufficient water to meet the demands of the Kharif season. Aimed at enhancing water use efficiency, the government has undertaken a modernisation project, including canal improvements and lining work, with support



from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This initiative is expected to reduce water loss and ensure uninterrupted supply to the fields.

Minister Sandhya Rani urged farmers to adopt modern agricultural practices and make informed choices regarding

crop selection, seeds, and fertilisers. She assured them of the government's support in providing timely inputs. The event was also attended by Bobbili and Parvathipuram MLAs, RVSK Ranga Rao and Bonela Vijaya Chandra, respectively, along with senior officials from the Water Resources Department.

YSRC slams Dy CM for spreading lies on missing women

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre gave clarification regarding the missing women and girls (30,000) from Andhra Pradesh during the previous YSRCP government, the Union government made it clear that a majority of the missing girls have been traced. YSRCP leaders came down heavily on Jana Sena chief and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, party leaders and Telugu Desam leaders for spreading false and misleading campaigns against the YSRCP-led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government.

The data revealed by Home Affairs Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar in response to a question by TD MPs Lavu Krishna Devarayalu and BK Partha Sarathi, clearly outlined the number of missing women and those traced from 2019 to 2024, proving those claims a

blatant lie. The official statistics say that in 2019, 6,896 women were reported missing, with 6,583 traced. In 2020, 7,576 women reported missing, with 7,189 traced. In 2021, 10,085 women reported missing, with 9,616 traced. In 2022, 10,433 women reported missing, with 10,994 traced and in 2023, 9,695 women reported missing, with 9,640 traced.

YSRC MLC and party mahila wing president Varudu Kalyani recalled that in a systematic smear campaign against the government of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the coalition parties, including Pawan Kalyan, made inhumane remarks claiming that girls and young women were disappearing across the State and being trafficked, blaming the volunteers for these incidents. She said that the union government led by BJP revealed the truth behind the false campaigns.

US Consulate General urged help to set up companies in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Industries, Commerce and Food Processing Minister TG Bharat said that US Consulate General Jennifer Larson has been urged to help in setting up companies in Andhra Pradesh.

He said that he met Jennifer Larson in Vijayawada on Wednesday. He has explained the opportunities to those who invest in AP and will help them in every possible way.

Many Telugu people are doing jobs in America. He asked companies to work hard to expand them in the State.

The Minister said that she responded positively to this matter.

Poll code in force after release of MLC election schedule

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has announced the immediate enforcement of the election code following the Central Election Commission's release of the MLC elections schedule for local bodies in the joint Visakhapatnam district. Emphasising the critical importance of strict adherence to the election code of conduct, Prasad's directive aims to uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

During a Webex meeting on Wednesday, Prasad briefed dis-

trict officials on the MLC election schedule, the code of conduct, and other related issues. The notification for the MLC elections is set to be issued on August 6, with nominations accepted until August 13. Scrutiny of nominations will take place on August 14, and withdrawals will be permitted until August 16. Polling is scheduled for August 30 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and vote counting on September 3.

Prasad directed all relevant department officials to adhere strictly to the election code of conduct as per the Election Commission's guidelines. He ordered the immediate removal of portraits, posters, and banners of political leaders from all government offices, buses, bus stations, and public places. Political photos on government websites must also be removed, and statues of politicians should be veiled. The GVMC in urban areas and the Zilla Panchayat officer in rural areas will serve as MCC nodal officers.

The Collector provided comprehensive guidelines on various issues, including government buildings, vehicle use, election expenses, and protocol. He emphasised that no officer involved in the election should attend any political meetings, and local body members should not hold political meetings without prior permission from the District Collector. Policy announcements and programs affecting voters should be postponed until after the elections.

Ministers and politicians are prohibited from using siren-equipped government or pilot vehicles for personal travel. Prasad also highlighted that prior approval of candidates is mandatory for election advertisements. All advertisements, campaign expenditure monitoring, bulk SMS/voice messages for election campaigns, and other electronic media modes, including television channels, private FM channels, cinema halls, and audio-visual displays in public places, must be approved by the District Media Certification and Monitoring Committee.



Thunderstorm with lightning, strong winds likely in AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and strong surface winds with speed ranging from 30-40 Kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next five days, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that strong surface winds with speed ranging from 30-40 Kmph is likely to occur at isolated places in Rayalaseema during the same period. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at a few places or at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

The southwest monsoon has been normal over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and weak over Rayalaseema. Rain occurred at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at one or two places in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours, the report added.

Upgrade medical services to patients, DC tells doctors

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector S Nagalakshmi directed the doctors and the medical staff to provide better treatment to the patients and maintain punctuality. The Collector conducted surprise inspections to Community health centres in Prathipadu on Wednesday. She inspected the General ward, Operation Theatre, Ophthalmology Department and Obstetrics Department of the hospital and appropriate instructions were given.

She also examined various records including the register of drugs and drug store. She directed the medical staff to enter all the details of the medicines in the register. The Collector inquired with the patients about the medical services being provided at the health centre.

Collector Nagalakshmi said that the number of patients being registered is low and she opined that only when they are assured that the doctors would provide better treatment, the patients come to the health centre.

The Collector advised the doctors and medical staff to conduct monthly examinations and pay special attention to a comfortable delivery. Collector Nagalakshmi was told that the ultrasound scanning machine at the health centre had not been functioning due to repairs



for a long time and lack of availability of a gynecologist doctor. Collector Nagalakshmi immediately spoke to the DIA and HO over mobile phone and asked to look into the possibilities of shifting the ultrasound scanning machine which is lying unused at Gottipadu Primary Health Center to Prathipadu CHC and give the details.

The District Collector inspected the Emergency Department and OP Departments of the Social Health Center being newly constructed in the same

The District Collector inspected the Emergency Department and OP Departments of the Social Health Center being newly constructed in the same premises.

The engineer explained to the Collector that the building structure work had been completed and the pending bills related to the construction agency were yet to be paid. The work would be completed

within another six months if the pending bill were paid.

The Collector spoke to the Sanitation Staff and Security Staff working in the Social Health Centre. The Collector also inspected the premises of hospital and directed the medical officials to ensure that nurse and head nurse would be available in the health centre during the night time.

Guntur RDO P Srikhan, DCHS Dr Subramanya Raju and medical Superintendent Dr. Nagarjuna and MDO Durga Prasad accompanied the Collector.

'Complete pending railway projects in AP expeditiously'



PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru Lok Sabha member Putta Mahesh Kumar urged the railway minister to take steps to complete the pending railway project in the state expeditiously.

MP Mahesh Kumar raised the issue of pending railway projects in the Parliament while speaking on the budget in the Lok Sabha. He mentioned some major railway projects which are under construction in AP.

He thanked the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman for allocating Rs 9,151 crore in the budget for providing railway infrastructure and basic amenities in railway stations for passengers on behalf of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and state Minister Nara Lokesh.

The MP also expressed gratitude for enhancing allocations for the construction of new railway lines in AP. Mentioning the Vande Bharat train services, the

MP appealed to the railway minister to provide a halt to Vande Bharat train in Eluru railway station. MP Putta Mahesh Kumar informed that he had submitted a representation to the railway Minister to provide a half in Eluru railway station to Vande Bharat train.

The MP said that the Kotipalli-Narsapur railway line, Vijayawada -Gudur,

Gudivada - Nuzvid railway line, Bhadrachalam-Kovvur railway lines pass through Eluru parliamentary constituency and urged to complete the projects as soon as possible.

He also asked to modernize the railway stations and improve the facilities for the passengers in the railway stations. He thanked the railway minister for including Eluru railway station in the 73 stations which would be upgraded.



Inflow recedes in Srisailem reservoir



PNS ■ KURNOOL

The inflow to the Srisailem reservoir has started receding and 66,232 cusecs of water being released to the downstream of the NS project by lifting 8 gates.

At the same time, 2,22,768 cusecs of water was being released to generate hydro power on the Left and right canals of the project.

At present the Srisailem project was receiving 2,91,003 cusecs and the inflow would recede further, dam engineer said. The water level at the Srisailem dam stood at 884.50 feet and 212.91 TMC of water impounded.



Students exhorted to excel in studies to scale heights

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Vignan educational institutions chairman Dr.Lavu Rathaiah exhorted the students to excel in studies to reach their goals.

A programme was organized on the Vignan Lara campus at Vadlamudi in Chebrolu mandal on Wednesday on the occasion of commencement of B.Tech first year classes. The chairman inaugurated the first year B.Tech classes.

Addressing the students and their parents on the occasion, Dr. Lavu Rathaiah thanked the parents for choosing the Vignan to admit their children after the APCEET counseling. He exhorted the student to cul-

tivate the passion of learning constantly.

He claimed that Panchasutras include Faculty Development Program, Planning, Training, Communication System, Counseling System, CRT Classes, and Teaching Method which the institution follows, helping the students to study well and reach their goals. He also asked the parents to encourage their children to study well with discipline.

The chairman also encouraged the students to participate in cultural and social programs which help to improve their communications skills. The Vignan Lara continues to organize events often, he said,

and asked the students to take part in them.

Dr.Rathaiah said that 90 percent of the students who studied at their institution got jobs in multinational companies. The faculty explores the innate talent of the students, he said, adding that the faculty members update themselves on advanced technology from time to time.

On this occasion, certificates were awarded to 26 students who showed the most talent in the Ideathon and Hackathon coding contests. Vignan educational institutions coordinator G Srikurmanath and Vignan Lara principal Dr.K Phanindra Kumar were among those who were present.

Provide quality items in mid-day meals: Collector



PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi directed the officials to ensure that quality should be maintained in the mid-day meal.

District Collector Vetri Selvi directed officials to provide nutritious food as per the menu in government schools and Anganwadi centres.

Collector Vetri Selvi inspected the mid-day meal scheme at Government High School on Wednesday as part of a visit to Chintalapudi mandal. She also had a mid-day meal along with the students. She instructed the officials concerned to maintain quality in food served in the mid-day meal programme to the students.

The Collector inquired with the school students whether a mid-day meal is

served as per the menu. She also interacted with the girl students some time and inquired them whether chikkis were being served to them. She asked the students whether they are taking iron tables every week. She asked the principal about the library and playground in the school.

She exhorted the students to improve their knowledge by reading books and also participate in games and bring laurels to their school at the international level. Collector Vetri Selvi also inspected the menu board of the Mid-day Meal Scheme. Later she visited the Anganwadi centre and spoke to the children. Nuzvid RDO Y Bhavini Shankari, ZP officer T Srinivas Viswanath and DEO S Abraham were among those who accompanied the Collector.

40 kg cannabis seized; eight peddlers arrested

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police seized 40 KGs of ganja while being transported in two cars and arrested 8 drug peddlers at Singarayakonda.

DSP M Kishore Babu said that the police seized 40 KGs of ganja at Poleramma temple near to NH 16. The 8 member drug peddler's gang was supplying ganja to various places.

On a tip off, a police team conducted a raid and seized 40 KGs of ganja and two cars which were used to bring ganja. The gang used to bring ganja from Visakhapatnam and dispatch to various places



from here. They would purchase ganja at a cheaper price at the agency areas in Visakhapatnam district and sell the same at higher prices at other places. SP Damodar appreciated DSP Kishore Babu for the seizure of a huge quantity of ganja and arresting 8 peddlers.

Engineering student ends life

PNS ■ KADAPA

An engineering student committed suicide by hanging himself to a tree at CTM railway station at the outskirts of Madanapalle on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased Navin (19) was studying B.Tech second year at a private college in Tirupati. He ended his life by hanging to a tree. The reason for taking the extreme steps is yet to be ascertained, the police said.

The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem.

Collector visits hatchery, interacts with aqua farmers



PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector A Thameem Ansariya visited the Ravi hatchery located at Gamallapalem village in Kottapatnam mandal on Wednesday.

She saw the process of production of shrimp seed and aqua cultivation. The Collector examined the production process of shrimps, cultivation of shrimps and the process to be undertaken as part of exports of shrimps.

Collector Thameem

Ansariya along with officials of Fisheries Department also saw the sea water reservoir unit, feed unit, shower unit, store room and other departments.

On the occasion, Ravi Hatchery Engineer Subba Reddy explained to the District Collector the performance of various units as part of the production process of shrimp fry.

Later, the Collector inspected the aqua culture being carried out in the area of Ethamukkala village. She spoke to Kulluru Subba Rao, an aqua

farmer cultivating shrimps.

The Collector inquired about how many acres the shrimp is being cultivated and how much the aqua farmers invest to raise the shrimp in one acre. She also inquired where the aqua farmers purchase the shrimp seed.

Later the Collector visited Devi Sea food unit and learned about the export process of prawns. Fisheries JD Chandrasekhar Reddy and other officials were among those who accompanied her.



Collector visits flood-hit villages, assures victims of help

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector C Nagarani visited some of the flood affected villages in Yelamanchili mandal on the river Godavari from Sakhinetipalli mandal in EG district. She visited the affected villages including Kanagayalanka and Pedalanka, accompanied by the officials. She interacted with the flood victims and inquired whether they are being given essential commodities.

Collector Nagarani inquired with the officials on the crop loss in the flood affected villages. The

flood victims told her that they are getting fodder for their cattle. The officials explained to her that coconut orchards are spread in 750 acres at Kanagayalanka village while betel leaf and other vegetable crops are raised by the farmers. The farmers incurred loss in 30 acres as the betel leaf crop was damaged due to the flood water. The Collector visited the medical camp set up for the flood victims and inquired whether anybody suffered snake bite. She asked the medical staff to keep anti-venom injections ready. Narasapuram RDO M Achyut Ambarish, Tahasildar CH Vijaysri were among those who accompanied the Collector.

Irrigation canals being cleared of hyacinth: DC

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector S Nagalakshmi has said that hyacinth is being removed from the irrigation canals at a cost of Rs 5.7 crore and the work order has already been issued.

The Collector, accompanied by the engineers, inspected the Krishna delta west canal from the Head regulator to the Duggirala regulator and Guntur channel on Tuesday.

She inspected the head regulator of Krishna West Division and inquired with the engineers about the quantity of water flowing in the canal and the availability of water. She also inspected the Kondaveetivagu stream the lift scheme and the pump house. The Collector inquired with the officials about the flow rate of the Kondaveeti stream.

The Collector also inspected the Guntur channel and the head regulator at 1.2 KM. She saw the removal of hyacinths from the canal and made some suggestions to the engineers.



Later she inspected the Duggirala regulator on the Krishna delta main canal.

Talking to the media, Collector S Nagalakshmi said that she had inspected the removal of hyacinth and other wild creepers from the canal. The hyacinth and other wild creepers which spread in the canal are being removed to ensure that water flows to the end of the canal without inhibitions. The Krishna west delta canal is being made ready to provide water to the Kharif

crops, she said. "As many as 76 works have been taken up in the irrigation canals to remove hyacinth and other wild creepers at a cost of Rs 5.7 crore. The work orders have already been issued in this regard. The works up to 70 per cent will be completed by 20 to 30 days," the Collector stated. Irrigation Engineer V Umamaheswara Rao, executive engineer NKV Prasad Rao and other officials were among those who accompanied the Collector.

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 Sangathan (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'

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 Mundakkai 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."

TRAIN ACCIDENTS

Oppn MPs slam govt over failure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs in Lok Sabha on Wednesday expressed concern over the "increase" in number of train accidents in the country, while those of the treasury benches lauded the government's efforts to expand the railway network. Several members also put forth their demands for railway lines in their areas as the Lower House discussed the Demand for Grants for the railways ministry. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP from Aurangabad Abhay Kumar Sinha said the recent train accidents indicate there are many shortcomings in the functioning of the railways that need to be addressed. "Since Independence, only 18 per cent of new railway tracks have been laid. Every year, 275 km expansion has happened, which is very little," he said. "It should be increased, more railway tracks should be laid down, and old tracks should be repaired so that accidents can be stopped," he said. Sinha also said during the tenure of Lalu Prasad as the railways minister, the Indian Railways was earning profits and "the whole world was talking about it".

"Today, the fares are increasing and the railway is still suffering. The government is trying to give the Indian Railways to private hands," he alleged. He warned that privatisation of the railways would lead to a large-scale increase in unemployment. Lok Sabha MP N K Premachandran also raised issues related to rail safety and said the budget allocation for this is insufficient. Premachandran, a member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), said the safety of passengers should be a government priority. TDP MP Krishna Prasad Tenneti, meanwhile, thanked the Centre for the package given to Andhra Pradesh and said it reaffirms that the BJP trusts the alliance. "The allocation to Andhra Pradesh is a huge boost and a breath of life for the state. We have suffered for the last five years due to the previous state government," he said. "I am confident that the Budget reaffirms their trust in our alliance," he said. Congress MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, Harish Meena, was critical of the railway budget and accused the government of neglecting safety issues.



'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.

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.

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.

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 (NDDB) 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.



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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 in 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 cantankerous 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 issues 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)

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

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

TRAGIC LOSS OF LIVES OF IAS ASPIRANT

Madam—The tragic loss of three civil services aspirants who drowned in a rain-flooded basement of a coaching centre in Delhi is heart-wrenching. This incident highlights the apathy and connivance of officials who turned a blind eye to urban planning violations. The coaching centre flouted all safety norms, using its basement as a library despite regulations. The city's drainage system, clogged due to rampant illegal constructions, exacerbated the situation. A thorough investigation is necessary to fix responsibility. Both state and central governments must learn from this tragedy, review the status of urban bodies, and strictly enforce norms to prevent such violations. It is deplorable that the negligence of authorities and the greed of the coaching centre led to such a loss.

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

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**FIRST COLUMN**
FROM HURT TO HEALING

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



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

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

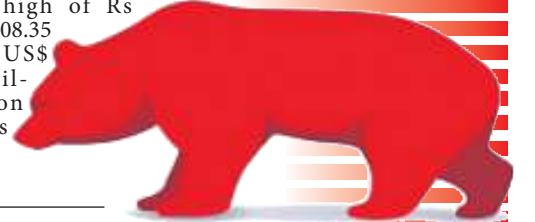
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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.

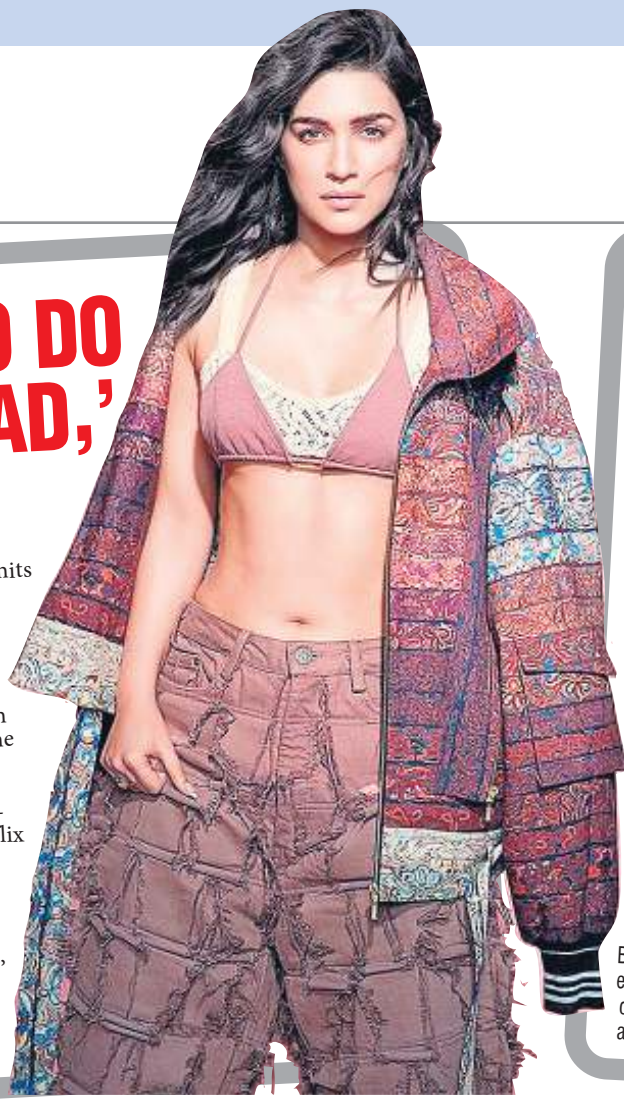
Aon's study is based on a survey gathering input from nearly 24,000 professional women from over 560 companies in India. According to the study, working mothers had their own challenges, with 75 per cent responding that they faced a career setback of one-to-two years after maternity leave and close to 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.

'I ALWAYS WANTED TO DO A MEATY, FEMALE LEAD,' SAYS KRITI SANON

Kriti Sanon has been riding a wave of success with back-to-back hits this year, with both *Crew* and *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* grossing over the Rs. 100 crore mark at the box office. Her standout performance in *Mimi* earned her a National Award for Best Actress in 2023. Upon winning this prestigious award, Kriti said in a recent interview, "The National Award is the highest form of validation. When you come from a non-film background, it takes a much longer time for people to know who you are and the work you do. The National Award gave me that sense of calm and security."

Kriti Sanon is set to debut as a producer with her production house 'Blue Butterfly Films' in her upcoming film *Do Patti*, a captivating mystery thriller set in the hills of North India, scheduled to release on Netflix later this year. She will also be starring in the film. "I always wanted to do a meaty, female lead. I was craving to headline something powerful and it came into my life at the right time, for which I will always be grateful," said Kriti when asked about this opportunity.

With her successful acting career and now stepping into production, Kriti Sanon continues to inspire and break new ground in the film industry. Fans eagerly await her new film, which promises to be another remarkable milestone in her journey.



'It was frighteningly cold in Manali & Big B delivered angithis for the crew'

Actor and costume designer Dolly Ahluwalia added her admiration for Amitabh Bachchan's timeliness to the growing chorus of his colleagues expressing their own experiences working with the renowned actor. They collaborated on the unofficial Shoojit Sircar film, *Shoebite*. In an interview, she claimed that Bachchan gave one of his best performances to date in the film and that seeing it brought her to tears. Although Bachchan personally attempted to step in and help with its release, it was unsuccessful.

When asked which actors she looked up to and learned from during her appearance on *The Punjabi Link* YouTube channel, she replied, "I got a chance to work with Mr. Amitabh Bachchan in Shoojit Sircar's *Shoebite*. It is not yet available. This was one of Big B's best performances to date. They even claim that he meddled, but nothing came of it." Recalling their interactions and elaborating on what she had learned

from him, she stated, "Timeliness. He would arrive ten minutes early, whereas we used to be five minutes late. Additionally, the reverence he formerly showed for the crew, the light lads and everyone else. The word is amazing. In Manali, it was frighteningly cold and snowing. After they had set up a tent just for him, he questioned, "What about the others?" Set up tents for them as well. Deliver them, angithis."

Even though he had been patiently waiting for hours before the shot, she also applauded his ability to change in front of the camera. Kareena Kapoor Khan, according to her, possesses the same "magic." In the industry, Bachchan's timeliness is a highly talked-about topic. Everyone who has talked about working with the megastar has done so, including Prahlad Kakkar and actor Govinda. Recently, Amitabh Bachchan starred in *Kalki 2998 AD*, the biggest hit of his career and received a lot of praise for his supporting role.



'Asim found himself isolated'

The abrupt departure of reality star Asim Riaz from *Khatron Ke Khiladi*, which happened after a furious altercation with host and director of Singham, Rohit Shetty, has been making headlines. After Asim lost a task and referred to other competitors Shalin Bhanot and Abhishek Kumar as "losers," an enraged Rohit kicked him off the show for "bad behaviour." The only person spotted encouraging a former *Bigg Boss* participant was actor Shilpa Shinde, who also appeared on the show and is currently recovering from minor surgery—but only after being warned. Asim was seen arguing with Rohit in a number of recordings that surfaced from the show, in which Shilpa was heard pleading with him to keep quiet.

The actor from *Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hai* now said in an interview that although Asim's actions were wrong, she held other competitors accountable for pressuring and demonstrating their superiority over him, which caused him to act out. "Kuch bhi nahin hua tha. Aap ke sar paani chala jata hai. Down-to-earth, hona chahiya. Ek banda ek taraf aur baki ek jhoond hai, usko bhadkaya gaya as they knew his nature. Sablog success handle nahin kar pate. Sab log galat the, sab log sahi the. Maine use baar baar bola ki woh chup rahi, bahas na kare (people should be humble. Asim was alone on one side and others ganged up against him, provoked him. I kept urging him not to speak or argue with Rohit Shetty. They knew his

nature and yet bullied him and instigated him. Everyone cannot handle success," she shared. Rohit was irritated by Asim's statement on the broadcast that he could purchase a car every three months. Shilpa emphasised that Asim shouldn't have viewed *Khatron Ke Khiladi* like the *Bigg Boss* House, believing that other candidates' label of "aggressiveness" is incorrect. "Woh aggressive nahin tha, but he is talkative... He wanted to share his experience and the pain he has gone through. Usko zyada bolne ki aadat hai. Usko chup karana padta hai. Uske bolne ka andaaz galat ho sakata hai. He was not an aggressive person. He is extremely talkative and doesn't know where to stop, which backfired," she revealed.

Shilpa further added, "Yeh Bigg Boss nahin hai.. aapki wahan dosti huyi toh uski respect kami chahiya. Isko kheencho mat rubber ki tarah, stunt wala show hai mosh se jhagda karne ki koi zarurat nahin hai. Tu-tu main main huyi. Jo Asim ke fans nahin hai unhone bhi notice kiya ki usko bully kiya, cheez ko daba sakate the. Sab miikar ek insaan par haavi hogaye. I was quiet and asked him to be quiet, too. Usne apne pair par kulhadi maari (This was not *Bigg Boss* and if you have made friends on the show, respect the friendship.) This issue shouldn't have been stretched beyond a certain point. *Khatron Ke Khiladi* is a stunt-based show; there was no need to get verbal. Even those who are not his fans would have noticed that Asif was being targeted and bullied. I kept asking him to stay silent," said Shilpa. Asim posted BTS pictures from his next single, *Built in Pain Vol. 2*, on Instagram after being kicked out of the show!



Pax Jolie-Pitt sustains brain injury post e-bike accident



Pax Jolie-Pitt, the son of Hollywood stars Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, reportedly sustained a brain injury in a traffic accident in Los Angeles. According to reports, Pax Jolie-Pitt lost control of his electric bicycle as he approached a traffic light and crashed it into a car. According to reports, he crashed into the rear of a car that was stopped at the junction.

According to the report, the 20-year-old was not wearing a helmet when the collision occurred and the car's driver checked on him right away. Pax was taken to a hospital in Los Angeles after complaining of hip discomfort and a head injury. Despite the physicians' initial concerns about a "minor brain bleed," Jolie-Pitt's condition remains stable.

The collision was so "brutal," according to the article, that onlookers on the street believed Pax had "died on the spot" because he was lying motionless on the ground when it happened. The actor was next to Pax in the hospital. Pax didn't regain consciousness until the paramedics came to the scene, which was on Los Feliz Boulevard, not far from Angelina's residence.



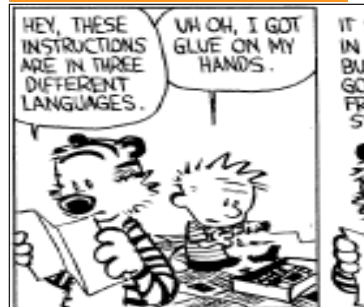
STANDALONE
Day 7 of Indian Couture Week, which is currently in full swing, was an extravagant event. The stunning collection by designer Rimzim Dadu left everyone in awe, while Sobhita Dhulipala added even more flair as the show-stopper. The *Made in Heaven* actress walked down the ramp looking stunning in her ivory costume.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



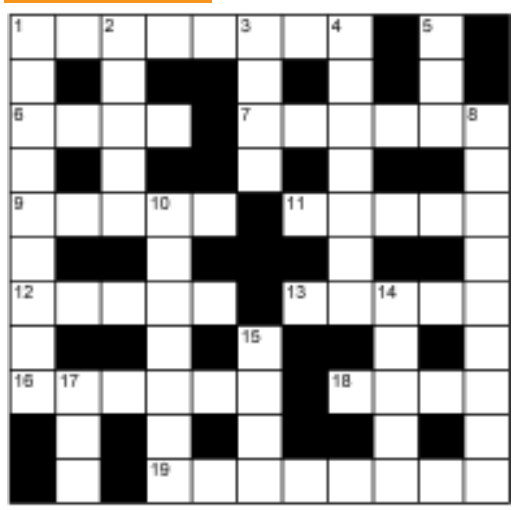
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



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.

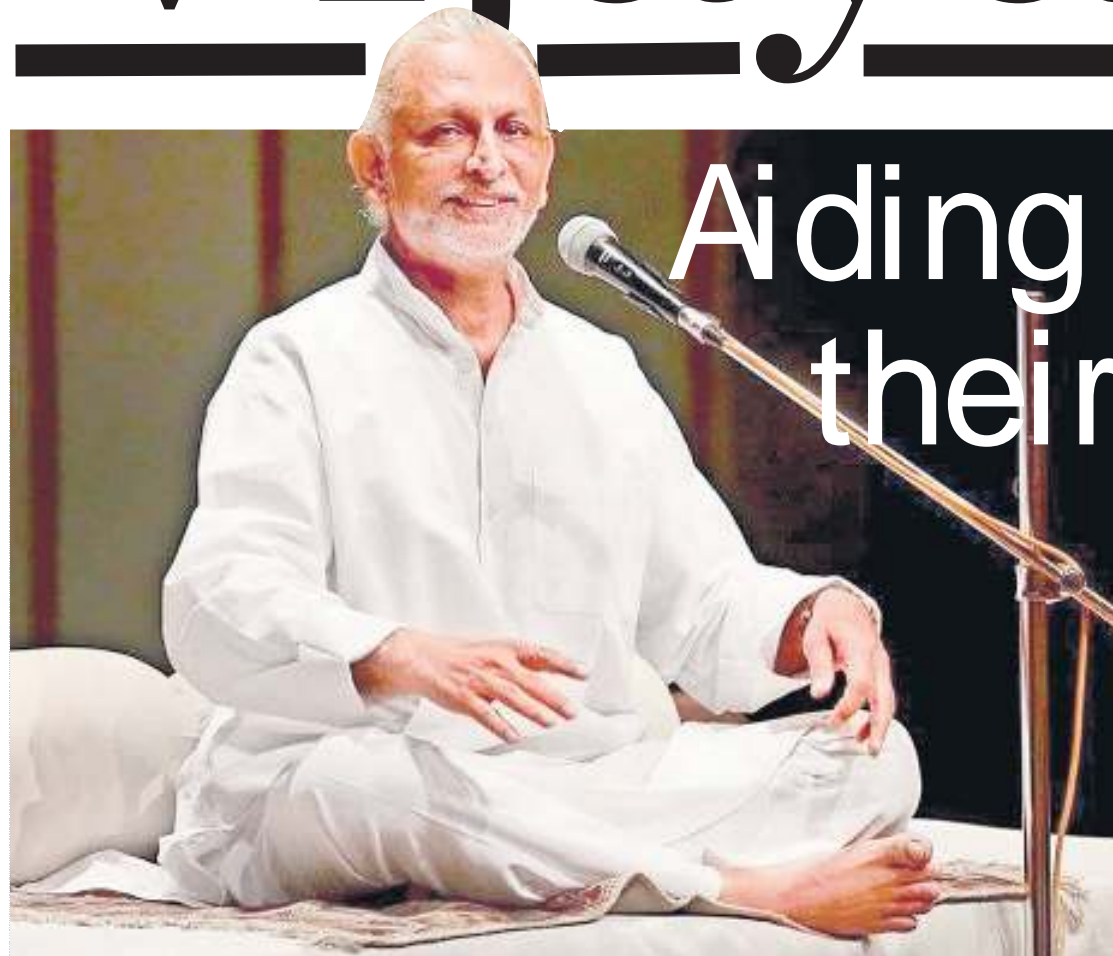
ACROSS

- 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





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 Myrthi, 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.)

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 Aphy-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 Kushal 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."

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 theaters 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.