

We also appealed to the Centre to extend the Smart Cities Mission as two years were wasted due to the Corona pandemic. The Centre extended the Smart Cities Mission responding positively to requests from BJP-ruled states. Karimnagar and Warangal cities can be developed fully now thanks to the Centre's decision. However, the TG government has to cooperate by sanctioning matching grants without diverting Smart Cities Mission funds.
 - Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs

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Centre should have state-specific financial approach for development, says
Kerala FM

RAJPAL YADAV ON ARRANGED MARRIAGE V/S LOVE!

'I am very proud of my DAUGHTERS'

DON'T MISS...

Thrilled to witness rise of esports...

Seeing the huge gathering of Hyderabad fans for the Battlegrounds Mobile India Series 2024 finale, India's ace shooter and first individual Olympic gold medalist, Abhinav Bindra, said he is thrilled to witness the rise of Esports in India and Indian teams joining global tournaments. The three-day Esports extravaganza at the Hitex Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad concluded on Sunday with the TEAM XSPARK emerging as champions on Sunday. This event marks the first-ever LAN finale of BGIS held in Hyderabad, saw the winners take...

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Asteroids fly-by Earth in...

Two asteroids, one of them discovered earlier in June, passed by the Earth this week, a rare occurrence with serendipitous timing to commemorate the International Asteroid Day, according to space agencies around the world. None of the asteroids posed any threat to the planet, they said. Explaining the footage taken by The Virtual Telescope Project, astrophysicist Gianluca Masi said that asteroid 2024 MK, with a diameter of around 200 metres, was at a distance of about...

-PAGE: 5

'AI to be gamechanger...

AI's cross-border nature will require a 'Global Compact' to ensure its benefits reach all of humanity and to safeguard against any potential misuse, Arundhati Bhattacharya, the top boss of Salesforce India has said exuding confidence that for India, Artificial Intelligence will be a "gamechanger" in delivery of public services. Bhattacharya, the CEO and Chairperson of Salesforce India and former Chairperson of the SBI, said that AI is poised to bring about a transformation in every sphere - from...

-PAGE: 8

From Dhoni, Tendulkar to...

The who's who of Indian cricket fraternity, including Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar, hailed the title triumph in the T20 World Cup, saying it will inspire the country's "starry-eyed children to move one step closer to their dreams". India's first T20 world champion skipper Dhoni led the chorus of former and current cricketers, hailing Rohit Sharma's men for regaining the trophy after 17 long years after beating South Africa by seven runs in a pulsating final in Barbados on Saturday. Former skipper Dhoni...

-SPORTS

DELHI EXCISE SCAM

High Court order on Kavitha's bail pleas today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court is likely to pronounce on Monday its order on the bail pleas of BRS leader K Kavitha in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged excise policy scam.

Justice Swarasa Kanta Sharma, who had reserved the order on the two bail pleas of Kavitha on May 28, is scheduled to pass the verdict at 2:30 PM on July 1.

Kavitha has challenged the trial court's May 6 order by which her bail applications in the CBI's corruption case and the ED's money laundering case were dismissed.

Kavitha's lawyer had submitted that out of the 50 accused in the excise matter, she is the lone woman, and urged the court to consider granting her bail as the law keeps women on a different pedestal.

The CBI and ED had opposed the bail pleas of Kavitha, saying she was highly influential and powerful enough to influence witnesses.

Countering the submission made on behalf of Kavitha that she, being a woman, be released on bail, the probe agencies had contended that



it was the woman who was playing the main role in the conspiracy here and she was an active politician and a member of the legislative council and cannot seek parity with vulnerable woman.

The CBI's counsel had argued that Kavitha was not just a woman but a very influential woman and was powerful enough to influence witnesses as one of the witnesses has even stated that he was threatened by her.

The ED's counsel had also contended that Kavitha was a co-conspirator and a beneficiary of the excise scam and the proceeds of crime were directly going to her.

2

Is Sabitha getting ready to join Congress?



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The next BRS MLA to join the Congress may be Sabitha Indra Reddy who hails from the Maheshwaram constituency.

A campaign is going on in social media that she is getting ready to join the Congress soon. Social media says that discussions are already over with the Congress and she may join in a week or two.

Recently, reacting to a party leader from Maheshwaram during her visit, Sabitha said that she would get a minister post only if it is willed.

The leader then said, "Madam, the Congress government might have kept the Home and Education ministries aside for you. The Congress government may give one of them to you."

Instead of asking how she can become a minister as she is in the BRS, Sabitha speaking about providence signals that she may join the Congress soon.

2

LoP is strongest democratic tool for every Indian: Rahul

P2

Bid to improve quality of education in schools

Govt begins exercise for transferring teachers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government began the official exercise for transferring teachers by considering the number of students studying in all government schools in the state. The official process of transferring teachers will be taken up

to improve the quality of education in all government schools.

The BRS government had issued GO No: 17 on June 27, 2015, and GO No: 25 on August 21, 2021. As per the orders, one teacher was

appointed for a school with 0-19 students, two teachers for a school with 20 to 60 students and three teachers for a school with 61 to 90 students. The current state government allotted teacher posts by taking into consideration the strength of students and the need for providing quality education in schools. One teacher has been allotted for a school with a strength of 1-10 students, two teachers for a school with 11 to 40 students and three teachers for a school with 41 to 60 students.



tion in schools. One teacher has been allotted for a school with a strength of 1-10 students, two teachers for a school with 11 to 40 students and three teachers for a school with 41 to 60 students.

'Revanth encouraging defections as he has no faith in Cong MLAs'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is encouraging defections from other parties to protect his government as he has no confidence in his own party MLAs, Telangana BJP president G. Kishan Reddy said.

Participating in a 'Mann Ki Baat' programme on Sunday here, he said that people have lost faith totally in the rule of the Congress and that the Congress has been behaving in a manner indicating that it has given up moral values totally

by inducting the MLAs of other political parties.

Kishan said that there is no difference between KCR who mocked democracy and Revanth Reddy. He said that there are no indica-

tions that the Congress would implement its assurances given during elections and that both the BRS and the Congress are deceiving people.

Later, participating in a discussion on 'Workshop on new Criminal Major Acts' organised by the Forum for Nationalist Thinkers at the Sardar Patel Auditorium on Sunday, Kishan said that there is a need to change IPC and CrPc.

2

PM 'endorses' Araku coffee

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a heartfelt tribute during his 'Mann Ki Baat' radio address on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) for its extraordinary success in bringing Araku Valley coffee to global prominence. Emphasizing the coffee's unique qualities, PM Modi celebrated the dedication of tribal communities in Alluri Sitaramaraju district, whose hard work, supported by GCC and the Andhra Pradesh Government, has transformed a local product into an international sensation.

"It is a matter of immense pride for India that Araku Valley coffee, with its exceptional aroma and

taste, is now cherished worldwide," declared the Prime Minister. He highlighted that the extensive cultivation of Araku coffee has economically uplifted over 150,000 tribal families, thanks to the GCC's unwavering efforts in promoting coffee farming.

Reflecting on his visit to Visakhapatnam, PM Modi fondly recalled enjoying Araku Valley coffee with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, highlighting its superior flavor. He noted the coffee's multiple global awards and its popularity at high-profile events such as the G20 Summit in Delhi. PM Modi urged everyone to experience the unique taste of Araku Valley coffee.



2

Boost to Smart Cities in TG

Centre extends Mission till March 2025

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre has approved the extension of the Smart Cities Mission till March 2025. The Centre responded positively to the appeal made by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy recently.

During the New Delhi visit on June 24, the Chief Minister met the Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar and requested him to extend the deadline for the Smart City Mission till June 2025.

The Centre had set the deadline for completing the Smart City Mission by June-end. Projects were taken up in Warangal and Karimnagar under the Smart City Mission in the state. 45 projects have been completed already in Warangal. Another 66 projects costing Rs 518 crore are progressing. 25 projects were completed and another 22 costing Rs 287 crore are progressing in Khammam. The Chief Minister has already informed the status of the projects to the Union Minister.

In the larger interests of the public, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy pleaded with the Centre to

extend the Smart City Mission until the projects are completed.

Responding positively, the Centre wrote a letter to the states on Saturday extending the Smart City Mission till March 31, 2025. The letter clarified that approved projects will be continued and no new projects will be sanctioned.

The funds for projects being executed will be released on a first come first basis till September 2024.

In the larger interests of the public, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy pleaded with the Centre to extend the Smart Cities Mission until the projects are completed.



DIVERSION OF FUNDS

Bandi asks for probe into irregularities

Says Cong MLAs getting funds, but not BJP MLAs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that the Centre extended the Smart Cities Mission throughout the country as he had written letters thrice regarding the release of funds and extension of the Mission, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that development projects

were hit by the diversion of Smart City Mission funds by the BRS government.

He said that BRS leaders took commissions from contractors and that some Congress leaders too are behaving similarly. Sanjay asked the Congress government to order a probe immediately into the irregularities in using Smart City Funds.

Continued on Page 2



Cong leaders, friends bid adieu to DS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The last rites of former United APCC President D. Srinivas were conducted on Sunday in the presence of Congress leaders, friends and his associates at his farmhouse located on Nizamabad Bypass Road on Sunday with state honours. Earlier, many leaders irrespective of political affiliation, paid tributes to the body of DS. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar and BJP MLAs, senior leader Marri Shashidhar Reddy, Congress MLC T. Jeevan Reddy, VH and others paid their tributes to DS.

CONGRESS WILL HONOUR DS: CM

Stating that the Congress will



CM Revanth Reddy along with Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and VH consoles DS' sons Arvind and Sanjay at DS's residence in Nizamabad on Sunday

stand by, Dharmapuri Srinivas's family, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that the party will discuss with his family and will take up something to honour Srinivas.

The passing away of the senior Congress leader is a huge loss for the party, he said.

2

Respond to Cong's 'job calendar' promise

BRS leader KTR asks Rahul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao asked AICC leader Rahul Gandhi to respond on the 'job calendar' released by the Congress in Telangana before the Assembly elections. KTR posted a message regarding this on X on Sunday.

"Dear @RahulGandhi Ji, you had promised Telangana's unemployed that two lakh posts in government service would be filled in the first year of Congress rule. Your party also published a 'job calendar' (full page advertisements) in all newspapers along with dates after your promise. It is over seven months now but not even a single job notification has



been issued so far and 10 promised dates have passed. How will your government deliver on the promise to fill two lakh posts without issuing notifications? Please do respond as no one in the Telangana Government seems to care," KTR said.

Process on to implement job calendar, says TPCC

Countering BRS MLAs T. Harish Rao and KT Rama Rao, the TPCC's Media and Communications Chairman, Sama Rammohan Reddy, said that 'Jobs Jataara' is continuing under the new government. As per the promise given by this government, it has stood as a guarantee for the unemployed, he said. Sama said the government has started the process to implement the job calendar. Sama posted regarding this on X. "Leakages of question papers, disputes over reservations, suspension of results and cases during the BRS government's tenure left the unemployed disappointed. The High Court twice cancelled the Group 1 examination for which nearly four lakhs had applied. We appointed a new Chairman and Board members after excluding previous TGpsc members. The TGpsc has also regulated the conduct of examinations on the lines of the UPSC. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy himself went to New Delhi, met the UPSC Chairman and inquired about the practices being followed at the national level. The new government has overcome court cases which had become a major hurdle under the various recruitment boards during the BRS government's tenure.

Monumental feat: BCCI announces Rs 125 cr reward

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Sunday hailed India's epochal title win in the T20 World Cup and announced a prize money of Rs 125 crore for the team for its monumental feat in the just-concluded ICC showpiece.

India defeated South Africa by seven runs in a tense final at Bridgetown, Barbados, to land their second world title in the T20 format.

"Under the exceptional leadership of Rohit Sharma, this team has shown remarkable resolve and resilience, becoming the first team in the history of the ICC T20 World Cup to win the tournament unbeaten," said Shah in a statement.

"They have faced and silenced their critics with stellar performanc-



es time and again. Their journey has been nothing short of inspirational, and today, they join the ranks of the greats." Shah later took to social media to announce a cash reward of Rs 125 crore for the team.

"I am pleased to announce prize money of INR 125 Crores for Team India for winning the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024," Shah wrote on X.

2

Monday Mirchi

CBN CHERRY-PICKING BABUS, FROM TG TOO

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has been cherry-picking officials. He is very careful about who gets what posting. Efficiency seems to be the only criterion, and, in this context, he is looking at not just Andhra cadre IAS officers, but also those from other states, including Telangana. A little bird told us that Chandrababu is in touch with Union Minister Amit Shah about these deputations. The buzz is that a few hand-picked officials from the Telangana cadre may be deputed to Andhra and the requests have already been made. Yours truly will shortly reveal in this space the details of the cops and other officials in this privileged line-up.

THE TRANSFER THAT DID NOT HAPPEN

Pamela Satpathy continues to be at the helm in Karimnagar, though on 15 June, the Telangana government transferred Collector, including Karimnagar Collector Pamela Satpathy. She was then not given any posting, but asked to report to GAD. However, the transfer was cancelled in the next reshuffle. Bureaucratic circles are puzzled about what happened so quickly. A little bird told us that all is not well between the Chief Secretary and Pamela. However, Pamela is known for her hard work and political intervention may have helped her keep her position.

PLUM POSTINGS DESPITE REGIME CHANGE

Recommendations work wonders when it comes to the administration in Telangana. One pattern evident from the recent transfer of 44 officials is that most of the Ministers and politicians had their way.

However, the postings of K Ashok Reddy and EV Narasimha Reddy took bureaucratic circles by surprise. For, Ashok Reddy was OSD for Harish Rao; and later he was made I & PR Commissioner. Now, he has been posted as the Managing Director of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. For newbies, Ashok has experience of working in the water board. EV Narasimha Reddy was TSIC MD for a really long time during the BRS regime. He was later posted as Director of Tribal Welfare. Now, he has got the plum post of Director of School Education. Noticeably, both were close to BRS and conferred IAS before being transferred. Some bureaucratic circles see community as the common thread running through their elevation in the present regime.

BABUS CANNOT APPLY JUST IN PLAIN PAPER FOR VRS!

Rules are important, whether in service, out of service or while on the way out. In Andhra Pradesh, senior bureaucrat Praveen Prakash, after being eased out of the Chief Minister's Office under the previous dispensation, appeared poised for a political plunge by evincing interest to quit service. Following regime change, Praveen Prakash one fine morning asked the new Chief Secretary to 'accept' his application seeking voluntary retirement from service. Until then, the Chief Secretary was in the dark about Praveen's application. Subsequent enquiries revealed that Praveen had 'applied' for voluntary retirement in plain white paper and that too not in proper format. The buzz in bureaucratic circles is that such applications cannot be processed under any circumstances.

- Yours truly

KCR and Jagan have similarities in their defeat

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

There are several similarities between Telangana former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) and Andhra Pradesh former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in their defeat in the Assembly elections in their respective states. Only major difference was without changing the sitting MLAs KCR and by changing the majority sitting MLAs, Jagan were defeated in the Assembly elections. If KCR would have changed some sitting MLAs and if Jagan would have not changed some sitting MLAs, the results of their parties in the Assembly elections would have been different. After becoming the chief minister both KCR and Jagan completely remained



away from the people and even to their party leaders. The MLAs, even the ministers were also not able to meet their chief ministers. Both stopped the tradition of going to the Secretariat. While the Telangana former CM KCR turned his official residence Pragathi Bhavan as the Secretariat and Andhra Pradesh former chief minister Jagan had turned his camp office at Tadepally as the Secretariat. Jagan used to go to

their party leaders. This has turned as over confidence to both of them. There was no interaction with the party leaders, cadre and with the public by both of them. After becoming the chief ministers both were mostly confined within the four walls till the elections were announced. Both depended on bureaucrats than on their party leaders. Both run the revenge politics when they were in power. In Telangana KCR sent Revanth Reddy to jail and he became the Chief Minister. In Andhra Pradesh Jagan sent Chandrababu to jail and he also became the Chief Minister. Both had no habit of listening to the party leaders whatever they say. Both felt that they knew everything. Now KCR and Jagan are struggling to save their parties from defections.

Chirag defends govt on NEET, slams Oppn

PNS ■ PATNA

Union minister Chirag Paswan asserted that the government was in touch with "all stakeholders" in the NEET paper leak case and a decision "in the best interests of students" will be taken at an "appropriate" time.

Talking to reporters here on Saturday, he also slammed the opposition for stalling Parliament's proceedings over the issue, alleging that it reflected a "flawed mindset" (galat soch). The NEET case is being probed by agencies concerned and the matter is also before a court of law. Nonetheless, the government is holding talks with all the stakeholders. An appropriate decision will be taken at an appropriate time, in the best interests of students', Paswan said.

He was responding to queries

about the ruckus in Parliament a day ago, when the uproar by the opposition led to repeated adjournments.

The young leader said, "The opposition is displaying a flawed mindset. If it wants to raise issues concerning the public, it must allow the House to run properly and take part in debates and discussions."

The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president was on his first tour of Bihar, his home state, since he was inducted into the Union cabinet earlier this month.

Replying to another query, Paswan said NDA ally Nitish Kumar, the Chief Minister who heads the JD(U), will 'lead' the coalition in state assembly polls due next year.

Asked about the opposition's charge that recent spurt in crime in Bihar signalled a worsening of law and order, the Hajipur MP said.

Consider Telangana Ministers' letters for Tirumala Darshan



Transport Minister Ponnampalapati Prabhakar at Tirumala on Sunday along with his family members

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Commenting that in the past there were some difficulties for worshippers from Telangana at Tirumala, Telangana Transport Minister Ponnampalapati Prabhakar appealed to the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, the Endowment Minister and the

Minister Ponnampalapati asks AP govt

Temple Executive Officer to ensure that the same policies that were in place in the past regarding recommendation letters of public representatives is adopted now also.

"Worshippers from Telangana are also Telugu. While inviting foreign devotees, the authorities must ensure that Telangana devotees do not face difficulties. AP Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan came to Kondagattu of Karimnagar district and visited Anjaneya Swami. We made all the arrangements for them. The AP government should behave like that towards Telangana public representatives," Ponnampalapati said.

He said that he prayed to Lord Venkateswara to see that the assurances given to the two

BJP criticises Revanth on Smart Cities Mission extension

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for claiming credit for extending the Smart Cities Mission till March 31, 2025, across India.

The BJP official spokesperson in TG, NV Subash, said that just like former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, the current Chief Minister, Revanth Reddy, is also taking credit for Central projects and decisions. Subash called Revanth as a credit snatcher just like KCR.

He said that the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, had requested the Centre for the extension.

Subash posted regarding this on his X account on Sunday. "The Centre extended the Smart Cities Mission up to March 31, 2025, across India, but Revanth takes credit for Telangana's extension."

Harish lashes out at Rahul for ignoring TG's jobless

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA T. Harish Rao criticized Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for ignoring the plight of the unemployed in Telangana. He asked why Rahul remains indifferent to the hunger strikes and protests of the unemployed highlighting Motilal Naik's hunger strike at the Gandhi Hospital.

"Unfortunately, Motilal Naik has been on hunger strike for the past seven days without any response from the government," said Harish while visiting Naik.

"On behalf of the BRS, we appeal to Motilal to end his strike. This isn't just his fight. He is fighting for the lakhs of unemployed in Telangana. He



has announced he will suspend his strike until the government takes action. We have repeatedly tried to convince him, saying, 'Let's fight together; we are with you. Your life is important, especially since you are fatherless,' Harish said.

The BRS leader said the Congress has shown only fake concern and is using the

unemployed for political gains and then abandoning them after elections.

Earlier, Professor Kodandaram, Riaz, Balmuri Venkat, Akunuri Murali and Revanth Reddy visited coaching centres in Ashok Nagar for the unemployed. They conducted bus yatra and brought Rahul Gandhi to Ashok Nagar making promises, recalled Harish. "You secured jobs, but the unemployed did not," he pointed out questioning why they are silent now.

Harish recalled Rahul's promise to fill two lakh posts within a year when he visited Ashok Nagar. Seven months have passed, and Harish asked why job notifications have not been issued.

Vinod to approach SC regarding new crime laws

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There is a possibility that the victims of crime will suffer the most due to the new laws that will come into force from July 1, BRS leader Boinapally Vinod Kumar said. He said that he will approach the Supreme Court regarding this.

Speaking to the media on Sunday on the issue, Vinod said that the Centre repealed three laws regarding crimes. In their place, three new laws will come into force on July 1.

In August 2023, the Centre introduced these three Bills in Parliament. Members of the standing committee gave many suggestions regarding the Bills. However, the Modi government ignored them and passed the Bills, Vinod said. He said there is a possibility of the victims of crimes suffering due to the new laws.

No political interference in sports: Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan has pledged to revitalise sports in Andhra Pradesh, vowing to reclaim sports associations from political interference that has plagued them under the YSRCP government. Accompanied by athletes including renowned cricketer Hanuma Vihari from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, and Delhi, Kalyan received appeals for reforms aimed at fostering genuine sports development.

The athletes emphasized that competent leadership within



sports associations is crucial for nurturing talent and ensuring transparency. They advocated for appointing experienced individuals from respective sports to head associations, stressing that political appointees without sports backgrounds should not lead. They highlighted concerns

over unethical practices within associations, lamenting their exploitation for political patronage and the devaluation of sports achievements.

Expressing dismay over nepotism in player selections and misuse of association funds, Deputy CM Kalyan condemned the trend of political manoeuvring in sports, which has compromised fairness and meritocracy. He assured the athletes of the government's commitment to overhaul sports governance, promising measures to restore integrity and elevate the state's sports stature.

PM 'endorses'...

Continued from page 1

G. Suresh Kumar, Vice Chairman & Managing Director of GCC, expressed immense pride in the Prime Minister's recognition of Araku Valley coffee during the 'Mann Ki Baat' program.

He underscored the critical support provided by the state government and GCC in fostering the growth of the tribal communities in the Alluri district. Kumar affirmed that PM Modi's laudatory remarks will inject excitement, enthusiasm, and motivation among tribal coffee farmers, GCC staff, government departments, and all stakeholders in coffee cultivation.

Monumental...

Continued from page 1

"The team has showcased exceptional talent, determination, and sportsmanship throughout the tournament. Congratulations to all the players, coaches, and support staff for this outstanding achievement!"

Shah also lauded the team's strong work ethics.

"This team has made us all proud with their dedication, hard work, and unyielding spirit."

LoP is strongest democratic tool for every Indian: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Leader of Opposition is the strongest democratic tool for every Indian, Rahul Gandhi said on Sunday and asserted that he will raise the voice of the people of India in Parliament.

In a post on Instagram, Gandhi who recently became the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, a post filled after a gap of 10 years, also shared a video message.

"LoP is the strongest democratic tool every Indian has. I assure you, I will raise your voice by raising your problems

and issues with full force in the Parliament," he said.

In the message, Rahul Gandhi was seen talking to youths who said reconducting the NEET examination is their demand. It then shows another clip of the Leader of Opposition raising the issue in the Lok Sabha on June 28.

It also shows clips of Rahul Gandhi's meetings with the family of Agniveer Ajay Singh (23), who was killed in a landmine explosion in the Rajouri sector in Jammu and Kashmir in January, and the victims of violence in Manipur, among others.

Cong leaders...

Continued from page 1

Speaking to the media after paying his last respects to D. Srinivas (DS) in Nizamabad on Sunday, Revanth said that as the PCC chief, DS worked hard for the Congress to bring it to power in the 2004 Assembly elections.

Under DS's leadership, the Congress came to power in the 2009 elections again, he said. The CM said that Srinivas began his political career as a student leader and carved a niche for himself. Even though DS stayed away from the party for a while, Sonia Gandhi used to greet the senior leader warmly in Parliament, he said.

Bandi asks for probe...

Continued from page 1

In a statement issued on Sunday, Sanjay thanked Prime Minister Modi and Union Urban Development Minister Manohar Lal Khattar for extending the Smart City Mission across the country. He said that chances have brightened for the full development of Karimnagar and Warangal cities.

He said that he had sent letters to the Centre seeking Smart City Mission funds.

"We also appealed to the Centre to extend the Smart City Mission as two years were wasted due to the Corona pandemic. The Centre extended the Smart City Mission responding positively to requests from BJP-ruled states. Karimnagar and Warangal cities can be

developed fully now thanks to the Centre's decision. However, the TG government has to cooperate by sanctioning matching grants without diverting Smart City Mission funds — Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs," he said.

He said that the BRS government had diverted Smart City Mission funds. "Karimnagar and Warangal cities would have glittered like mirrors if the funds released by the Centre had been properly used. However, the BRS government did not release matching funds and diverted Central funds. Central funds were deposited after I testified before the Standing Council of Parliament," he said. "The delay in Smart City

works was due to the BRS rulers' greed for commissions. Earning commissions from contractors has become the norm for some rulers. Some leaders in the Congress have reincarnated for commissions. A comprehensive investigation should be ordered immediately on the embezzlement of Smart City funds," he said.

He said the Congress government is releasing funds only for the development of constituencies represented by Congress MLAs. They are not releasing funds to BJP constituencies. He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy did not care even though BJP MLAs submitted a memorandum to him for the development of their constituencies.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Dashami: Jun 30 12:19 PM to Jul 01 10:26 AM

Ekadashi: Jul 01 10:26 AM to Jul 02 08:42 AM

Nakshatram: Ashwini: Jun 30 07:34 AM to Jul 01 06:26 AM

Bharani: Jul 01 06:26 AM to Jul 02 05:27 AM

Rahukalam: 7:27 AM to 9:04 AM

Yamagandam: 10:42 AM to 12:20 PM

Varjyam: 05:03 PM to 06:36 PM

Gulika: 1:57 PM to 3:35 PM

Amritakalam: 12:51 AM to 02:23 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:54 AM to 12:46 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

Temp: 32°

Humidity: 67%

Sunrise: 5:45 AM

Sunset: 6:55 PM

Updated: June 30, 2024 5:00 PM

Thrilled to witness rise of esports in India: Abhinav Bindra

SAMUEL JOSHUA
HYDERABAD

Seeing the huge gathering of Hyderabad fans for the Battlegrounds Mobile India Series 2024 finale, India's ace shooter and first individual Olympic gold medalist, Abhinav Bindra, said he is thrilled to witness the rise of Esports in India and Indian teams joining global tournaments.



Abhinav Bindra seen with the Krafon India members

The three-day Esports extravaganza at the Hitec Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad concluded on Sunday with the TEAM XSPARK emerging as champions on Sunday. This event marks the first-ever LAN finale of BGIS held in Hyderabad, saw the winners take home a grand prize of Rs 60 lakh from a total prize pool of Rs 2 crore.

Addressing huge crowds of fans and the gamers, Abhinav said, "I never had such a nice environment and such a great crowd when I was competing in

India." He stated that it is very impressive to see such an exciting gaming event, which is spectacular based on what he has seen so far.

Bindra said he was quite surprised when he saw a convergence of esports and conventional sports, noting that the dedication and hard work are very similar to what happens in traditional sports. He stated that his respect for gamers has

increased manifold, as there are many commonalities in the physical aspect, mental aspect, recovery between esports and conventional sports. He believes both can learn from each other and become better and stronger.

Later on, CEO of Krafon India Sean Hyunil Sohn donated Rs 25 lakh from the Elite Pass sale to the Abhinav Bindra Foundation, ensuring athletes have access to the best practices

in sports.

Bindra concluded by saying, "I'm grateful for Krafon and the esports community's support towards the Abhinav Bindra Foundation. Our foundation aims to create sporting excellence and inclusivity. We run programmes such as scholarship initiatives, surgeries for athletes and mental health support for athletes."

The three-day esports featured intense matches and passionate fans from across the city and the country, showcasing the growing prominence of esports in India.

With over 5,000 spectators in attendance, the biggest battle royale esports tournament in India showcased the fan experience to a new craze with high-end setups. The much-anticipated Battlegrounds Mobile India Pro Series (BMPS) 2024 was also announced along with Krafon India's 2024 esports roadmap.

SON OF SOIL CM praises Challa for becoming SBI chairman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed his profound delight over the appointment of Challa Srinivasulu Setty as the new chairman of the State Bank of India. The Chief Minister remarked that it is a momentous occasion that Srinivasulu, who hails from Jogulamba/Gadwal district, has ascended to the prestigious position of Chairman of the SBI.

On behalf of the State of Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu extended his heartfelt congratulations to the newly appointed Chairman of India's largest public sector bank. He conveyed his best wishes to Srinivasulu for a tenure marked by numerous achievements and accolades in his new role.

BRS working president KT Rama Rao also extended his wishes to Srinivasulu Setty through his X account.

Venkaiah Naidu is versatile person, says PM Modi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Terming former vice-president M Venkaiah Naidu as a versatile person, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Venkaiah Naidu reached a high level coming from rural areas. Modi said that no one can stand before Venkaiah Naidu's eloquence.

The Prime Minister released three books on Venkaiah Naidu named 'Venkaiah Naidu's life in service', 'Aim and message of Venkaiah Naidu as 13th vice-president', 'Great leader Venkaiah Naidu's life and journey' on Sunday virtually. The organisers conducted a programme in this regard at Anvaya Convention Centre in Gachibowli.

Speaking on this occasion, PM Modi said that the books on Venkaiah's life will remain an inspiration to the people and they will give direction to the people of the nation.

The PM said that he got an



Former vice-president M Venkaiah Naidu presenting a book to Union Minister Kishan Reddy in Hyderabad on Sunday

opportunity to work with Venkaiah Naidu for a long time. Thousands of activists learnt a lot from Venkaiah Naidu, who waged a movement during Emergency. Venkaiah Naidu stayed in the jail for 17 months during Emergency. He left his mark in the rural and urban development department. He implemented schemes like Swatcha Bharat and Amrit Yojana efficiently. Venkaiah ran the Rajya Sabha smoothly. The nation will not

forget his services. Venkaiah's role in passing the bill of abolition of Article 370 in Rajya Sabha and his experience in running the Rajya Sabha are commendable. Venkaiah should give direction by staying healthy, the PM said.

Venkaiah Naidu said that the Prime Minister should continue his services to the people. The Prime Minister has been moving forward with the slogan 'Reform, perform and transform'.

Mehdipatnam bus stop tops with passengers in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Among the city's crowded bus stops, from Mehdipatnam bus stop daily around 1.5 lakh passengers are travelling to various destinations in the city. Recent data of the TGSRTC revealed that most of the passengers are travelling from the Mehdipatnam bus stop to other places.

A source said, "Around 1,000 bus stops are there in the city. From those bus stops, every day 20 lakh passengers are travelling daily. But only in the Mehdipatnam bus stop itself, around 1.5 lakh passengers are travelling to various destinations every day".

After the Mehdipatnam bus stop, from the Secunderabad railway station bus stop, around 1.43 lakh passengers are going to various destinations, followed by Afzal Gunj with 1.20 lakh passengers, Secunderabad Gurudwara bus stop with 71,000 passengers, LB Nagar

with 70,000 passengers, Rathifile bus stop with 67,000 passengers, Dilsukhnagar with 61,000 passengers, Uppal with 58,000 passengers and Patancheru with 54,000 passengers are travelling daily to various destinations daily. Also, more than 10,000 passengers are travelling from 85 bus stops in the city.

A source said that before implementation of the Mahalakshmi scheme, around 16 lakh passengers travelled daily in the city. But after the scheme started, the number of passengers increased to 20 lakh daily. Also, to meet the passenger rush in the buses, the TGSRTC is planning to introduce 125 buses in the current academic year.

The data of the TGSRTC found that most of the woman passengers are travelling for short distances. So the corporation is making plans to introduce buses for short distances to combat the delay of the long travelling buses.

Two held for organised betting racket; Rs 25.55 L seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force (Central) zone on Sunday arrested two persons involved in an organised betting racket. The police seized Rs 25,55,000 from the accused.

The accused were identified as Mohammed Abdul Sohil (28), a businessman and resident of Srinagar Colony and Mohammed Farhatulla (55), a businessman and resident of IS Sadan. While Abdul was the main bookie, Farhatulla was the collection agent.

Abdul is addicted to betting on cricket matches. He obtained IDs of betting apps through his sources and installed the apps on his laptop. Abdul and Farhatulla contacted 20 to 25 punters who sent money via cash or payment gateways such as Google Pay. On June 29, during the T20 World Cup final between India and South Africa, the accused set up a betting racket at Marutnagar. Based on a tip-off, the Task Force arrested the accused and seized a laptop and three mobile phones from them.

Owaisi's effigy burnt over 'Jai Palestine' slogan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal on Sunday burnt the effigies of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) president and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi's effigy in New Delhi.

The incident occurred at 34 Ashoka Road, which is Owaisi's Delhi residence. Members of the two groups resorted to the step in protest of the Hyderabad MP's 'Jai Palestine' slogan in the Lok Sabha while taking oath.

On June 27, a few miscreants smeared black ink on the MP's residence over the slogan. Owaisi, while taking his oath as the Member of Parliament raised 'Jai Palestine' slogans along with 'Jai MIM, Jai BHIM, Jai Telangana and Takbeer Allah hu Akbar'.

This did not go well with the BJP and their Hindutva supporters. Many protested against Owaisi raising placards with pictures of Owaisi's face on a pig. The posters read 'Palestine ke samarthak



Palestine jao', which translates to 'Supporter of Palestine go to Palestine.'

While the perpetrators pasted a poster on his address plate with 'I stand with Israel' and 'Bharat Matha ki jai' slogans on it, there was a depiction of Owaisi in a derogatory manner on the poster, with his head placed between two hands, with one hand tri-coloured and the other coloured with Israel flag.

Reacting to a recent lynching of a Muslim youth in Gujarat, the AIMIM president asked the Gujarat police to conduct an impartial investigation into the matter.

Owaisi took to X and said, "Salman Vohra was brutally

lynched as a crowd watched and cheered the murderers. Some members of the Kshatriya community are reportedly pressuring the police to remove the name of Shakti Singh from the list of accused. He is also a relative of a BJP MLA. I spoke to Salman's father Hanifbhai on phone and assured him of all possible support. AIMIM President @SabirKabliwala also met his family in this difficult time. @GujaratPolice must take impartial action and ensure justice. Lynchings continue to happen because such murderers almost always have the sympathies of the ruling establishment."

262 arrested in a day for drunk driving

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Traffic Police (CTP) apprehended 262 people for drunk driving on Saturday. The police enforced a campaign against drunk driving, across several areas of Cyberabad.

On Sunday, the Cyberabad police mentioned that a total of 191 two-wheelers, 11 three-wheelers, 56 four-wheelers, and 4 heavy vehicle drivers were caught.

Police said that 12 offend-

ers were caught with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) ranging between 300 mg/100 ml and 550 mg/100 ml. All those caught will be produced before the court.

The police warned that if anybody indulges in driving under the influence of alcohol and cause accidents killing people, such persons will be arrested and sent to jail under Section 304 part 2 IPC (July 1, 2024 onwards Section 105 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) for which maximum punishment is 10 years of jail with fine.



Food safety officials find rotten food at restaurants



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task force teams of Telangana's Commissioner of Food Safety conducted inspections at various restaurants in Kukatpally and Balanagar areas and found rotten food and other violations on Saturday.

In the Sri Lakshmi Grand Udipi Hotel, located beside BBR hospital in Balanagar, the officials found rotten and damaged carrots and hence discarded on the spot. Cobwebs were found above the grinding area and premises found untidy. Insect-proof screen was not available to avoid entry of pests. The doors of the kitchen were not close-fitted. Food Business Operators were found operating without a valid licence.

Packed paratha (ready to cook) was found without any label on it. Some food handlers were found without wearing headgear, gloves and aprons. Medical fitness certificates for food handlers and pest control records were not available.

At the Jampanas Vaarahi Hotel in Kukatpally Y Junction, the officials found frozen chicken, which was not stored as mentioned on its label. Proper insect-proof screen was not available to avoid entry of pests. Doors of the kitchen were not closely-fitted. FBO was found operating with registration certificate though his turnover comes under the licence category. Frozen chicken was not stored according to the temperature mentioned on its label.

Food handlers were found without wearing headgear, gloves and aprons. The 2nd kitchen was found open to the outside environment without any covering sideways to avoid entry of dust or flies. Medical fitness certificates for food handlers and pest control records for premises were not available.

During the inspections at Shree Raghavendra Bhavan at Alluri Trade Centre in Kukatpally, food inspectors found two packets of packed papad, which expired on May 11, 2024 and hence discarded on the spot.

10 kgs of Maharaja Brand Chopra was found without manufacturing date and hence the stock seized. The FBO was found operating with an expired licence. Some of the food handlers were found without wearing headgear, gloves and aprons.

Kitchen premises found unhygienic. Kitchen area found with water stagnation and unhygienic conditions. Medical fitness certificates for food handlers and pest control records for premises were not available. Improper storage of food articles inside refrigerator was noticed.

Nagole Police bust drug peddling racket

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nagole Police, in coordination with Special Operations Team, LB Nagar, busted an inter-State drug racket and seized 31.2 kg ganja. One person was arrested.

The accused was identified as Boinapally Suresh, a driver and native of Andhra Pradesh.

Suresh was previously involved in an NDPS case in Bhadrachalam district. He earned his livelihood

through cab driving.

The accused reconnected with an acquaintance from Khammam, who suggested transportation of ganja for making easy money.

A drug peddler handed over a car to Suresh in order

to transport ganja to a receiver in Nizamabad.

The accused, specifically crafted a gas tank to conceal ganja packets and avoided getting caught.

On Sunday morning, the LB Nagar SOT apprehended

the car under Nagole police station limits.

The police seized a mobile phone along with the car.

The accused was produced before a court.

Three others are absconding.

10 persons nabbed for sexually assaulting minor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Naredmet Police on June 29 arrested 10 persons accused of sexually assaulting a minor girl.

The incident occurred on June 25, when the accused abducted the girl from Kacheguda. The accused were identified as Chakkolu Naresh (26), a driver and resident of Naredmet; Sripanga Vijay Kumar (23), a resident of Naredmet; Vagmare Balaji (23), a native of Maharashtra; Guddanti Krishna (22), a native of Mahabubnagar; Thomsen Kiran Kumar (26), a resident of Naredmet; Bollepogu Ajay (23), a resident of Naredmet; James Xaviour (23), a resident of Naredmet; Injamuri Madhu (30), a resident of Naredmet; Vagmare

Deepak (25), a native of Maharashtra and Sabavat Hathya Nayak (25), a native of Mahabubnagar.

Seven of the accused have previous criminal records. Naresh and Vijay are residents of Vinayaknagar; they came in contact with the victim through a common friend.

The victim is a resident of Kachiguda; while her father died three years ago, her mother works as a maid. The victim discontinued studies after class 4. The accused befriended the girl via mobile phone and lured her.

Naresh and Vijay also passed on the victim's contact to rest of the accused. Over a period of time, Naresh and others brought the victim to Vinayaknagar and sexually assaulted her.

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AP can gain a lot by immediate completion of A-P

The contentious issue of granting Special Category Status for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar has been pending for a long time. There has been no way forward, with the light of hope dimming each year over the last 10 years. The change of political alignment at the Centre and the importance that Andhra Pradesh and Bihar presently hold in the power structure has once again ignited the demand.

After all, why are Andhra Pradesh and Bihar demanding Special Category Status? Is there a need for these states to get the status? The reason cited by Andhra Pradesh is that after the bifurcation of combined Andhra Pradesh, the residual state had to forgo Hyderabad -- the fount of revenue generation. Earlier, the revenue from Hyderabad, where thousands of companies and software firms function, could meet the major

financial needs and requirements of the combined Andhra Pradesh. But by forgoing Hyderabad, the residual Andhra Pradesh has lost a major chunk of this revenue. To be compensated for the revenue loss, the state has demanded Special Category Status so that it can get 90 per cent share from the Central taxes. In other words, SCS can enable the state to stand on its own financially.

As if the loss of Hyderabad is not enough, there has been no capital city for Andhra Pradesh since bifurcation. The state has been reeling under a severe financial crisis as the revenue being generated is not enough to cater to the demands of development. With no capital and no special status, so far Andhra Pradesh has paid a heavy price in terms of everything.

As for Bihar, it seeks SCS for compensating the loss of mineral-rich Jharkhand,

As if the loss of Hyderabad is not enough, there has been no capital city for Andhra Pradesh since bifurcation. The state has been reeling under a severe financial crisis as the revenue being generated is not enough to cater to the demands of development. With no capital and no special status, so far Andhra Pradesh has paid a heavy price in terms of everything

which was carved out of the erstwhile state. By forgoing Hyderabad and losing Jharkhand both Andhra Pradesh and Bihar respectively suffered a lot. In this backdrop, their demand for Special Category Status is very much justified. Then what is the way out now? The Bharatiya Janata Party had been in power for the past 10 years with a majority on its own. So, there had been no scope for both the states to pressurise the Centre for the same.

Now as Providence would

have it, in the recently held Lok Sabha elections the Narendra Modi-led BJP could not get even a simple majority to form the government for the third time on its own and it is bound to depend on the support from the very states that had been demanding Special Category Status. Although the states have representation in the Central Cabinet, what will happen to their Special Category Status demand? Will Prime Minister Modi oblige the demand and accord SCS to AP and Bihar just because the central gov-



BUDDHAVARAPU RAJESWARA PRASAD

ernment's survival depends on the support being extended by TDP-Jenaseena and JDU (Nitish). Any decision in this regard should not be a political one as it involves so much of financial pressure on the central exchequer. Not only that, it might lead to other demands of a similar kind from various backward states.

Since the increase in the share of states from central taxes -- from 32 per cent to 42 per cent -- the concept of Special Category Status has been relegated. In this backdrop, how can the demands of AP and Bihar be fulfilled is a question that has no immediate answer. For public consumption, political parties may bring up SCS demand. But in actuality, it is not such an easy one, going by the case of bifurcated Andhra Pradesh. Without wasting time by hanging on this demand, the ruling NDA alliance in Andhra Pradesh should concentrate on realising the twin engines of development Amaravati and Polavaram, which may bring the state perhaps far more benefits than what it can accrue by getting Special Category Status. Though it may be the most opportune time for the Naidu administration, it has to take into account other

aspects that can be bagged immediately as a student attending an exam answers easy questions first and leave the harder one which requires more time to invest.

The demand for the Special Category Status can wait, given the importance of the capital city Amaravati and the major irrigation project Polavaram. Realising these two needs no involvement of other states and giving funds needed for these would be comparatively easier for the Central government. The Central government has to take into account the opinion of the Finance Commission with regard to acceding to the demands of Special Category Status. The recent statement of the Finance Commission's former head is well indicative of the present financial and political situation. It remains to be seen whether the Central government will concede the demand of Andhra

Pradesh by granting SCS or avoid unnecessary issues by giving the state a financial package that could compensate for the loss of Hyderabad. Whatever be the final decision on the SCS for the state, the issue will never die down until it is resolved.

Given the present volatile situation, the Central government may not take any decision in this regard on priority. The ruling dispensation in Andhra Pradesh also may adopt wait and see approach, as it is part of NDA coalition. With the NDA coalition partner at the Centre, the JDU has already raised the issue demanding either Special Category Status or a special package for the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision in this regard has become crucial for Andhra Pradesh also.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

Post LS elections, we have shifted our gears: Sridhar Babu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Information Technology D Sridhar Babu on Sunday said that the government would swiftly now. He said that the focus during initial months was on Parliament elections, he said.

Participating as a chief guest at a function, held on the occasion of 61st Rotary Club installation ceremony, the Minister said, "it's been seven months since we have come into power. The initial months were focused on Parliament elections, but now we have shifted gears and are working swiftly." He asked the Rotary to partner with the government for progressive initiatives so to collaborate for a better Telangana in the next five years.

The IT Minister, as a symbolic gesture, handed over six bicycles to students of ZPHS School in Wanaparthy District.



Minister for Information Technology and Industries D Sridhar Babu with students after distributing bicycles at Rotary Club in Hyderabad on Sunday

He also gave a cheque to a student, Anandeshwari, to cover her school fees for the entire year.

Sridhar said, "As politicians, we serve society as a responsibility. People vote for us, and we change according to their choice. But with a core platform being service, Clubs like Rotary and Lions serve the

in service is a great step. It inculcates the values of our nation, goodness, spirituality, and service in students. These are core values taught by our parents, but we often forget them, focusing instead on what is best for ourselves and our families, neglecting society," Sridhar added. He commended the Rotary Club for its public and social service.

Addressing the gathering as a Guest of honour, Principal Secretary of the Land Revenue and Registration Navin Mittal highlighted Hyderabad North club's commitment to polo activism, activities like vaccine distribution and awareness education. He appreciated the organisation's dedication to community, viewing it as a core pillar alongside family and work.

Several Rotarians along with student members and guests participated in the installation ceremony

3 Customs officials at Hyd airport booked for graft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The CBI has registered a case against two superintendents and one inspector of Customs posted earlier at Rajiv Gandhi international airport here over allegations of conspiracy and corruption.

A press release from the central investigating agency on Sunday said in March this year the CISF intercepted two persons belonging to different companies while exchanging foreign currency equivalent to nearly Rs 3 lakh.

It was further alleged that the foreign currency was given

to a private person by the three accused officials which they had obtained from international passengers as "undue advantage" in lieu of imposing less custom duty or sometimes less duty, the release said.

It was also alleged that three officials were adopting this modus operandi on a regular basis.

The case was registered on June 28.

The CBI conducted searches at four places (three in Hyderabad, one in Delhi) which led to the incriminating documents, it said adding investigation is on.

Outsourced staff issue fake certificates at Manchal Tahsildar Office

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

A major scam involving the issuance of fake caste and income certificates was unearthed at the Manchal Mandal Tahsildar office. The scam was committed by outsourcing employees without the knowledge of the Tahsildar, Venkata Prasad.

The scandal came to light after Tahsildar asked the police to investigate it.

Outsourcing employee Suresh Babu allegedly spearheaded the operation in collaboration with Ravi from Chintalakunta. They exploit

the system by collecting from minority and OBC students in the city amounts ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000 per certificate. These certificates were processed online at the Manchal MRO office during the absence of the officer, using the key login credentials of the Tahsildar.



The Tahsildar Venkata Prasad, upon discovering the scam, promptly initiated an investigation and filed a complaint against the three individuals at the Manchal Police Station. The police registered a case and are currently investigating the matter.

Cong govt conspiring to entrust task to Adani group: Jagdish Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister and Bharat Rashtira Samithi MLA G Jagdish Reddy on Sunday accused Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of hatching a conspiracy to entrust the task of collecting power bills to the Adani Group.

Jagdish Reddy alleged that the collection of power bills from individuals would not remain confined to Old City alone. It is only a pilot project. The entire system of collection of power bills in the State



would be privatised, he felt. The Congress government, Jagdish Reddy said, is taking steps to privatise the power sector.

The former Power Minister alleged that the power subsidies and free power supply to farmers would be withdrawn. Meters will be installed to agriculture pump sets. The BRS government led by K Chandrasekhar Rao had resisted the Central government's pressure to install meters to agriculture pump sets.

Jagdish Reddy claimed that Revanth Reddy has been working under the direction of the Central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi and Adani are dictating what

kind of policies are to be implemented, he said.

Revanth Reddy sought to justify the decision to private power bill collection on the ground that only 45 per cent of bills were being collected in the Old City. In Telangana, 95 to 97 per cent of power bills are paid. Revanth Reddy asserted.

Jagdish Reddy said that the Congress government promised to provide free electricity up to 200 units. There are more households in Old City which were using less than 200 units of power, he said.

Lack of industrial safety steps worries workers in Shadnagar constituency

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Workers at the industries in Shadnagar constituency are risking their lives in the absence of safety equipment and protective measures. The situation has become increasingly perilous by the day.

The absence of basic safety equipment and engaging of unskilled temporary and contract workers have been identified as primary reasons for the high accident rate.

One of the most significant hazards has been the reactors, which have been exploding like bombs. These incidents occur because temporary workers, lacking proper training and expertise, fail to monitor reactor pressure and prevent chemical reactions leading to explosions. Following such accidents, injured workers are often taken to hospitals, but many remain unaccounted for. With many workers being non-locals, there is minimal advocacy or support for their safety.

Reports indicate a stark negligence in providing safety

equipment and protective measures. Despite high risk environment, industry leaders show little commitment to improving safety standards. In the event of accidents, employers tend to blame the workers and escape accountability. While they may offer ex gratia to families of deceased workers, they conceal the fact that these deaths result from their negligence. Furthermore, there is a glaring absence of modern alarm systems, robust fire control mechanisms, and adequate systems to prevent electrical short circuits, which compounds the risks.

The environmental impact is equally alarming. Nearby residents suffer from illnesses caused by pollution from these industries. Companies initially promised to care for the local population but have failed to address their grievances. Workers endure harsh conditions, including the necessity to purchase filtered water due to contaminated groundwater. The prevalence of chemical and pharmaceutical industries has led to wide-



spread disease, exacerbated by government policies that prioritize industrial promotion over human and environmental safety.

Advocates are calling for the construction of a super specialty hospital in the industrial area to provide emergency medical services, including burn wards. Measures to protect workers' lives are urgently needed. There is a push for workers and local residents to

unite and demand accountability from employers regarding safety and health. Additionally, there is a demand for employment opportunities for displaced families based on educational qualifications, transparency regarding non-compliant companies, and cancellation of registrations for companies that fail to address safety defects.

The dire situation was highlighted by a tragic incident on Friday, where an explosion of an autoclave compressor at South Glass Private Limited Company resulted in the deaths of five workers and serious injuries to over fifteen others. This incident has sparked statewide outrage, with demands for justice from the families of the affected workers and calls for stricter safety regulations. Shamshabad DCP Rajesh, Collector Shashankha, MLA Veerpalshi Shankar, and Mahbubnagar MLC Naveen Kumar Reddy have inspected the site and pledged to investigate the incident thoroughly.

Comedian Daniel Fernandes' posts apology for hurting sentiments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stand-up comedian Daniel Fernandes' show, which was scheduled to be held here on Saturday, was cancelled following a threat issued by BJP MLA Raja Singh over the alleged remarks made by the former against the Jain community.

Expressing concern over the situation in a video posted on a social media platform, Fernandes said the show in Hyderabad had to be rescheduled "because of the unrest" caused by his previous show.

The video that offended "people" was taken down and an apology was posted, he said.

"However, we are still receiving calls, messages and emails threatening us with violence and vandalism. Nobody is ready to guarantee the safety of my audience, my crew and myself. I don't want to put anybody in harm because of something I

have said."

"It's ok to disagree with an artiste's work. But to say that I will inflict violence upon an artiste because I do not like their work isn't the answer," he added.

In the video, the comedian



also clarified that there was no intention to malign anybody and he understands that the Jain community is upset and angry.

"This is not what comedy is

about. Comedy is about all of us getting together, forgetting our worries and having a laugh," Fernandes said.

Raja Singh, in a video, alleged that Daniel Fernandes made atrocious comedy on the Jain community.

He asked Daniel Fernandes to cancel the event or else face the wrath of the "karyakartas" that will make him think "50 times" to visit Hyderabad or Telangana.

The BJP leader urged the police commissioner to get the programme cancelled.

History will remember "what we will do to those who make fun of Jain community or Hindu dharma," Raja Singh, MLA from Goshamahal here, said.

Recalling his opposition to a show by Munawar Faruqi in the past, he said Daniel Fernandes' show should be cancelled to prevent such an atmosphere being created.

Water level in Krishna River basin projects touch rock-bottom

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

Water level in Krishna River basin has touched rock bottom. The water level in all irrigation projects in Krishna River basin right from Almatti in Karnataka to Nagarjuna sagar in Telangana reached dead storage level. Water stored in these projects is just suffice to drinking water needs.

If there are no rains, by July-end the danger of drinking water shortage is looming large. The months of July and August should experience heavy rains so that the existing water level in these projects would rise to provide canal irrigation facility to ayacut lands.

Under the catchment area of irrigation projects on River Krishna, 36 lakh acres are under cultivation. Of all the crops cultivated in the ayacut

lands, cultivation of the paddy occupies the lion's share.

An undeclared crop holiday was declared in the last Rabi for want of adequate rains in the state and inflows into the irrigation projects.

It was predicted that the state is going to experience bountiful rains from June, but there were no signs of any rains even as the month of June is drawing to a near.

The farmers are in a dilemma whether they get irrigation facility through canals or not or whether they should raise paddy saplings in beds or not.

For want of rains in Karnataka and Telangana, the Krishna Basin irrigation projects of Almatti, Narayanapur, Ujjaini, Tunga Bhadra (TB Dam), Jurala, Srisaillam, Nagarjunasagar have been sporting an empty look.

CPM demands govt to provide input subsidy to farmers promptly

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) district secretary Mudireddy Sudhakar Reddy demanded that the government immediately credit the farmers input subsidy under Rythu Bharosa into their accounts as promised in the Congress election manifesto.

On Sunday, a meeting of the party's constituency-level mandal secretaries and district committees was held at the local CPI-M party office.

Speaking on the occasion, Sudhakar Reddy said that before the elections, the Congress party had promised to increase the farmer's input subsidy from Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,500 per acre. With the onset of the agricultural season, farmers are facing difficulties in getting money for seeds, fertilizers, labourers, ploughing and other agricultural work and they may be forced to approach private money-



CPM district secretary Mudireddy Sudhakar Reddy speaking at a party meeting in Nalgonda on Sunday

lenders.

He said that as the sowing season has started, the farmers are not getting seeds and fertilizers on time. He demanded that the government waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh.

He warned that if the central government was conspiring to auction coal mines to facilitate corporate plunder the country's wealth.

CPI-M district secretary K Nagi Reddy and Ch Lakshminarayana said politi-

cal training classes would held for party members at the constituency level at Nidamanur mandal centre on July 8.

Party district committee members Kondeti Srinu, Awadu Saidaiah, mandal secretaries Dubba Rama chandriah, Daida Srinu mandal leaders Kathi Srinivas Reddy, Vemulakonda Pullaiah, J Ravi Naik, P Venkanna and others participated in this programme.

INDIA CORNER

Maharashtra gets first woman chief secretary; Sujata Saunik takes charge

Senior IAS officer Sujata Saunik on Sunday took over as Maharashtra's Chief Secretary, becoming the first woman in the state's 64-year-old history to occupy the top post. Saunik, an IAS officer of the 1987 batch, succeeds Nitin Kareer who retired as the chief secretary on Sunday. She will have a year's tenure before retiring in June next year, an official said. Kareer handed over the charge to Saunik at a ceremony held at Mantralaya, the state secretariat in south Mumbai Monday evening. Before her elevation as the chief secretary, Saunik, whose husband Manoj Saunik is also a former state chief secretary, was the additional chief secretary in the state home department. Sujata Saunik has three decades of public policy and governance experience in healthcare, finance, education, disaster management, and peacekeeping at the district, state, and federal levels and in international organisations as part of the IAS and the United Nations.



Delhi govt panel issues notices to officials on felling of trees in Ridge

A three-member fact-finding committee of Delhi ministers has issued notices to senior officers of the DDA, forest department and Delhi Police over the felling of 1,100 trees in the Ridge area, allegedly without permission. The committee comprising ministers Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Imran Hussain was formed on Saturday and will submit its report to the forest minister. The fact-finding committee has directed the principal secretary (environment and forest), Delhi Development Authority (DDA) vice-chairman, principal commissioner (LD and LM), DDA, along with the commissioner (housing), DDA, deputy commissioner of police (South Delhi) and the station house officer (SHO) of the area concerned and other senior officials, to be present at a meeting scheduled on July 1. The committee will submit a factual report to the Supreme Court by July 11.



First-year students at DU's management school allege harassment by seniors

Several first-year students at the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) of Delhi University have filed complaints against their seniors alleging harassment by them, prompting the institute administration to launch an investigation into the matter. FMS Dean Venkat Raman said the matter is currently being investigated and action will be taken if the allegations are found to be true. According to a complaint sent to the grievance redressal cell of the institute, students have alleged they were assigned tasks with "odd deadlines" like 2.30 am and called for interactions at "odd hours" at 5 am on campus falling which they were forced to sign off their summer placement support. The placement cell of the FMS is run by seniors. Two emails, one dated June 22 and the other June 23, show students were given assignments at late night at 10 pm and were asked to submit by "2.29.59 am".



EAM Jaishankar meets Qatar's PM; reviews bilateral relationship

PNS ■ DOHA

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday met Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani in Doha and reviewed bilateral relationship, with a focus on political, trade, investment, energy, technology, culture and people-to-people ties.



Jaishankar, who arrived here on a day-long visit, also exchanged views on regional and global issues with Sheikh Mohammed, who also holds the portfolio as Foreign Minister

Jaishankar, who arrived here on a day-long visit, also exchanged views on regional and global issues with Sheikh Mohammed, who also holds the portfolio as Foreign Minister. "Delighted to meet PM and FM of Qatar @MBA_AlThani in Doha this afternoon. Conveyed the greetings and warm wishes of PM @narendramodi to H.H. The Amir and him," Jaishankar said in a post in X.

Reviewed our bilateral relationship focusing on political, trade, investment, energy, technology, culture and people-to-people ties. Exchanged views on regional and global issues. Appreciate his sharing insights on the Gaza situation," he said. "Look forward to the further enhancement of India-Qatar relations and continued dialogue on issues of mutual interest," he added.

Jaishankar's visit comes four-and-a-half months after Qatar released eight former Indian Navy personnel, who were sentenced to death after being arrested in August 2022. Earlier in the day, Jaishankar was received at the airport by Chief of Protocol Ibrahim Fakhroo. The visit would "enable both sides to review various aspects of bilateral relations, including political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural and people-to-people as well as the regional and international issues of mutual interest," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in New Delhi on Saturday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Qatar from February 14 to 15 and held discussions with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. "India and Qatar share historic and friendly relations which are marked by regular exchange of high-level visits," the MEA said.

Massive avalanche hits Gandhi Sarovar near Kedarnath Dham

PNS ■ RUDRAPRAYAG

A massive avalanche hit the Gandhi Sarovar located four kilometres above the Kedarnath Dham here early Sunday morning. This avalanche that occurred near the Chorabari glacier fell into the valley in the same area but there was no loss of life or property. Devotees who went to visit the Kedarnath temple this morning captured the natural phenomenon, which occurred around 5 am, on their mobile phones. A huge cloud of snow was seen sliding down with speed and stopped after falling into a deep ravine. The avalanche occurred in the upper region of the Gandhi Sarovar in Chorabari glacier, below the snow-covered Meru-Sumeru mountain range located at the upper end of Kedarnath valley. Rudraprayag District Disaster Management Officer Nandan Singh Rajwar said there was no loss of life or property due to the avalanche.

Indian culture earning glory world over: PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that Indian culture is earning glory around the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday cited a host of developments to highlight increasing acceptance abroad of practices and products linked to the country. In his monthly Mann Ki Baat, Modi played a clip of a Hindi programme broadcast on Kuwait Radio. "The Kuwait government has started a special programme on its national radio. And that too in Hindi. It is broadcast every Sunday for half an hour on Kuwait Radio. It includes myriad shades of Indian culture. Our films and discussions related to the art world are very popular among the Indian community there," he said. He added that the local population in Kuwait was also taking a lot of interest and thanked its government and people for taking this "wonderful initiative". "Which Indian will not be happy with the way our culture



is earning glory all over the world today! For example, in Turkmenistan, the 300th birth anniversary of its national poet was celebrated in May this year. On this occasion, the president of Turkmenistan unveiled the statues of 24 famous poets of the world. One of these statues is also that of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore," Modi said. This is an honour for Gurudev and an honour for India, he added. Similarly, in June, two Caribbean countries -- Suriname and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines -- celebrat-



Centre to launch special campaign for redressal of family pensioners' grievances today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh will launch a special campaign for the effective redressal of family pensioners' grievances here on Monday. Presently, around 90,000 cases are being registered on an online Centralised Pension Grievance and Redress System (CPENGRAMS) in a year, a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry said on Sunday. Of the total grievances, family pension grievance cases account for about 20-25 per cent, it said. A major segment of family pensioners' grievances is constituted by women pensioners, the statement said. The majority of the grievances pertain to defence pensioners, railway pensioners and CAPFs pensioners under the Union home ministry, it said, adding that "Bank-related issues also constitute a sizeable number".

The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DOPPW), as part of its 100 days action plan will be undertaking a month-long special campaign for effective redressal of family pensioners' grievances during the period July 1-31, 2024 in which 46 ministries/departments will be participating, the statement said. This special campaign seeks a substantial reduction in the pendency of family pension grievances. Secretaries of Departments of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare, Ex-Servicemen's Welfare, Director General, Border Security Force, Controller General of Accounts, Deputy Managing Director of State Bank of India along with nodal public grievance officers of 46 ministries/departments, representatives from all pension disbursing banks and representatives of pensioners' welfare associations will participate in this event, it said.

Activists of farmers' outfit close gates of toll plaza

PNS ■ LUDHIANA

The activists of a farmers' organisation on Sunday closed gates of all the cabins at the Ladhawal toll plaza after nearly a fortnight of protests to demand a reduction in toll rates at the plaza. The protest at the site had started under the banner of the Bharatiya Kisan Mazdoor Union on June 16 and had also got support from some taxi unions and other farmers' organisations. The farmers had been protesting and sitting on a dharna at the Ladhawal toll barrier here on the banks of the Satluj river on the national highway. Dilbag Singh, president of the union said, "Today, we have closed the gates of all the cabins of the toll plaza by tying a piece of cloth there as a seal." After the start of the dharna about two weeks ago, all vehicles were passing through the toll plaza without paying any fee, he said, adding they will continue to do so even now. Addressing a gathering on Sunday, Singh claimed commuters need to pay Rs 220 for a single journey and Rs 330 for multiple journeys in a four-wheeler, putting a financial burden on common commuters.

Min cautions against extensive use of natural resources

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday emphasised on the need to conserve flora and fauna and cautioned against indiscriminate use of natural resources for development. Addressing a programme organised here on the occasion of the 109th foundation day of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Yadav said the surveyor has been doing a pioneering job in the field of taxonomy, recording and scientific evaluation of faunal species to create awareness among people. He also said the environment ministry has worked to conserve the rich biodiversity of sensitive zones like Bhitarkanika in Odisha, Flower Valley in Uttarakhand, the desert landscape in Rajasthan, the unique mangrove belt in the Sundarbans in West Bengal and described them as 'Nature's best gift'. "If plundering of our natural resources continues, there will be a day in this world when only humans will be around - not animals, avian species and plants. Just think about what will happen to our future if such a situation arises. We must work towards saving the planet," Yadav said. He rued that people are not mindful of their responsibilities to save the environment.



India prepares 1st comprehensive list of fauna

India has prepared a checklist of its entire fauna, covering 1,04,561 species, becoming the first country in the world to do so. Launching the "Fauna of India Checklist Portal" on the occasion of the 109th Foundation Day of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) in Kolkata on Sunday, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said the first comprehensive document on the faunal species in India will position the country as a global leader in biodiversity documentation. He said the faunal checklist will be an invaluable reference for taxonomists, researchers, academicians, conservation managers and policymakers. The document comprises 121 checklists of all known taxa, covering 36 phyla. The minister said India is a global champion in biodiversity conservation, as reflected by 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' was the first major programme undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

PM has time for everything but Manipur: Jairam Ramesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress Sunday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "not finding time" yet to visit conflict-torn Manipur, with party general secretary Jairam Ramesh recalling the "drama" around Chief Minister N Biren Singh's resignation last year. "Exactly a year ago, a big resignation drama was staged in Imphal," Ramesh said in a post on X, sharing a photograph of Singh's torn resignation letter. "The agony and anguish of Manipur continue. The non-biological PM has time for everything else but visiting the troubled state or even talking to its elected representatives face-to-face," he said. Manipur has been on the



boil since May last year as ethnic violence broke out after a march by Kuki tribals in the hill districts to protest against the valley-dominant Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribes status. At the peak of ethnic clashes in Manipur last year, Singh had come close to resignation in June, but was stopped by his supporters from quitting. Hundreds of women had formed a human chain and stopped him from going to the Governor's House to tender his resignation. The resignation letter was also torn by them.

Soren declares 'rebellion' to drive out 'feudal forces'

PNS ■ BHOGNADISH (SAHIBGANJ)

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday declared a "rebellion" against "feudal forces", asserting that the opposition INDIA bloc will drive out the BJP from across the country. Soren, addressing a rally here on the occasion of 'Hul Diwas', also claimed that the saffron party has turned "jittery" after his release from jail and its leaders are "conspiring" against him again. "I have stepped out of my home for the first time post my release to address you on 'Hul Diwas'. It is a day of inspiration for all of us. Like the Santhal uprising against the British, we declare 'Hul rebellion' to drive out feudal forces not only from Jharkhand but across the country," he said. The day marks the 1855 Santhal rebellion against the British. "I was implicated in false cases... The Centre unleashes its

probe agencies to harass those who raise their voice against it. It is only two days that I am out of jail, but the BJP is jittery. Top party leaders are frequenting Jharkhand and conspiring against me again," he said. "The JMM executive president also asserted that Jharkhand is known as a land of revolutionaries and "we are not afraid of jail, lathi or execution". "It has come to my knowledge that they (BJP) are making plans to prepone assembly elections (in Jharkhand)... I dare them to conduct the elections any day they wish to... We are prepared. They will face a crushing defeat," he said, urging people to be ready to face "testing times ahead". Soren, who began his speech with 'Hul Johar' - a salutation in Santhal language meaning 'revolutionary solution', claimed that when he started demanding the rights of tribals, including Rs 1.36 lakh crore from the Centre in lieu of coal resources, he was sent behind bars.



INTERNATIONAL ASTEROID DAY

Asteroids fly-by Earth in serendipitous celebration

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two asteroids, one of them discovered earlier in June, passed by the Earth this week, a rare occurrence with serendipitous timing to commemorate the International Asteroid Day, according to space agencies around the world. None of the asteroids posed any threat to the planet, they said. Explaining the footage taken by The Virtual Telescope Project, astrophysicist Gianluca Masi said that asteroid 2024 MK, with a diameter of around 200 metres, was at a distance of

about three lakh kilometres when closest to the Earth -- 77 per cent of the planet's distance from the Moon. Masi, founder and director of the crowd-funded service provided by the Bellatrix Astronomical Observatory, Italy, was the commentator of a YouTube feed, streamed live at about 2:30 am June 30, IST. The asteroid was the closest to Earth about 10 hours before the feed went live, according to the commentator. "It is a huge asteroid coming significantly close (to Earth) this time, but luckily for us, with no risks at all for our plan-



et," Masi could be heard saying. "But being so close and so large, this object has been very bright at the time of the close approach, so that if you were in the right part of the world, like the South-Western Americas, you could (see) this with a modest binoculars, my friends," Masi continued, deeming the asteroid fly-by as an "exceptional" one. Further, hurtling at an average speed of nine metres per

second, Masi said the celestial object was "peculiar", in that it was moving "pretty fast" against the stars. The fly-by is perfectly timed to coincide with International Asteroid Day on June 30. The day, also supported by the United Nations, marks the anniversary of the largest observed asteroid strike in recorded history in 1908, when an airburst above Tunguska in Siberia flattened more than 80 million trees. Remnants from when the Solar System was formed, asteroids are often called 'minor planets'. There are thought to be about a billion of these irreg-

ular-shaped rocky objects orbiting the Sun. The asteroid 2024 MK, which was discovered on June 16, 2024, highlights the need to continue improving our ability to detect potentially hazardous objects in our cosmic neighbourhood, said the ESA in a statement. The second asteroid, named (415029) 2011 UL21, is the bigger of the two which approached Earth this week. Measuring 2.3 kilometres across, it is larger than 99 per cent of all known near-Earth objects (NEOs), according to the ESA.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Grit and glory

India's T20 World Cup win after a 13-year hiatus is a story of resilience, brilliance and sheer determination

Team India has done it again. It has once again etched its name in the annals of cricketing history by winning the T20 World Cup, ending a 13-year-long wait since their last title in 2011. Like any victory, it doesn't come cheap. A lot of hard work and dedication of the players along with the efforts of the coach and supporting staff must be felicitated for this triumph. The journey to this momentous victory has been a roller-coaster ride, filled with trials, tribulations, and moments of sheer brilliance. This win not only brings immense joy to millions of cricket fans in India who have been at discomfort due to scorching heat. Finally, the monsoon shower and cool breeze of victory brings them joy and something to cherish for years to come. Indeed, the path to this historic win was anything but easy. The final itself was also a heroic effort as team India was under pressure till 15th over when the data analysis showed that India had only eight per cent chance to win. India's campaign in the T20 World Cup saw a mix of thrilling victories and nail-biting finishes. Led by a dynamic captain, Rohit Sharma, (described by Shoaib Akhtar as a 'selfless captain') India showcased a blend of experienced stalwarts and young talents, creating a balanced and formidable team. The group stages witnessed India dominating their opponents with a series of comprehensive wins. A standout performance came against arch-rivals Pakistan, when India came back in the game to win the match. The bowlers, led by a fiery pace attack and wily spinners, ensured that opposition teams struggled to find momentum. Several players stood out for their exceptional performances throughout the tournament. The captain's leadership was instrumental, his tactical acumen and ability to inspire the team played a crucial role in India's success. The bowling unit, led by a veteran pacer, Jasprit Bumrah was indeed impressive. His ability to swing the ball both ways and deliver crucial wickets when Team India needed it most. His over was a turning point of the match. As the celebrations continued after India's historic triumph over South Africa for the T20 World Cup title, it marked a poignant moment as two stalwarts of Indian cricket, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, announced their retirements from T20 internationals. The victory has indeed lifted the spirits of the people who celebrated in their own style taking to the streets, bursting crackers, and waving the tricolour. The triumph is not just a cricketing success but a moment of national pride, uniting the country in joy and celebration. It is a testament to the hard work, perseverance, and never-say-die attitude of the Indian team. India's T20 World Cup win after a 13-year hiatus is a story of resilience, brilliance and sheer determination. It is a moment that will be cherished for generations and a reminder of the magic that cricket can bring to the hearts of millions. Well done team India. Keep it up!



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Devotees wade through a waterlogged area at Dharm Path in Ayodhya

PICTALK



Devotees wade through a waterlogged area at Dharm Path in Ayodhya

Modi's tumultuous new innings

Like a cricket team facing tough opponents, Team Modi relies on aggressive posturing and self-confidence to maintain its stance



DEEPAK SINHA

The performance of the Modi team in its new innings can be best described using a cricketing analogy.

The new team is woefully short of bench strength and faces a serious quality issue, with some members lacking commitment and motivation to the cause. Despite this, they have come out, much like the Aussies always do in any competition, riding their luck on abrasive aggression, hype and self-belief. It is certainly a technique that has worked well for them against most oppositions, forcing them on the back foot from which they seldom recover. But as we have just witnessed in the ongoing T-20 World Championships with their unexpected departure, bluster doesn't cut much ice with teams that are determined to win and unafraid of battle. Perhaps Team Modi would do well to keep this in mind. The truth is Team Modi is on a very sticky wicket, not unlike those in the Caribbean, with uneven bounce and unpredictable turns. Not surprisingly, they are already three down with not much to show on the board. Amit Shah opened the innings but was LBW on the second ball he faced, the Kashmiri looser, followed by the Manipuri yorker that beat him all up.

On a more serious note, while issues of terror attacks in Kashmir can and will be tackled with relative ease, Manipur is at the opposite end of the spectrum. Not since the Punjab and Kashmir insurgencies initially erupted, with terrible consequences, has the Indian State been found so wanting. The tragedy is that responsibility for this state of affairs rests squarely with Modi 2.0 and its rather incongruous decision not to interfere as things went from bad to worse with the Chief Minister having been rendered hors de combat. Manipur today has fallen off the cliff and is in need of urgent surgery. If we are to save this patient, and the integrity and health of the North East hinges on that, then the Army has to be pulled out of the cold storage where it sits and



allowed to do its job, once again. The second wicket to have fallen was to a railway googly, that of the relatively experienced and administratively skilled Ashwini Vaishnav. Sadly, for him, he's got out to a very similar delivery in his last innings as well and just hasn't been able to discern the googly. One can feel sorry for him because it is a tough position that he plays, with stress levels that can only be described as gargantuan. That is also the term that one describes our railways as well, and despite whatever the opposition may say, it is in the ICU and needs urgent attention. Not unlike the Air India story, substantive change is unlikely under the umbrella of one ginormous government-controlled public entity. Before 1950, we had around 55 companies operating railways over 55000kms of track until they were all amalgamated into the Indian Railways. At present with over double that kilometrage of track to expect one single entity to manage operations, nominally in six divisions, is a herculean task that will lead to repeated systems or human



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failure with dire consequences. Change is inevitable, the sooner the better if lives matter as all politicians insist, be it complete privatisation or a mix of synchronised public and private enterprise. The third wicket down, that of Dharmendra Pradhan, to a vicious NEET bouncer, has been the most devastating for him and the team as well. He's taken a nasty blow on his helmet that seems to have incapacitated him and has the team teetering on the edge of disaster. Whether he can continue to find a place in the playing eleven or if the team can recover and succeed only time will tell. Whatever the result in the long term, there is no getting away from the fact that the NEET scandal has been a body blow to Team Modi and its emphasis on loyalty to the cause above all else. The fact of the matter is that the problem of leaked question papers has been around forever and rumours are doing the rounds of how influential persons have been able to help their children succeed in such centralised exams, such as the CLAT, through means that

were perceived to be unfair. The numbers involved tended to be insignificant, but all that changed with the centralisation of admissions under the NTA, leading to cheating at an industrial scale, for want of a better word. The damage this has caused to the body politic, especially the upcoming generations, is enormously difficult to fully comprehend. The winners and losers are not divided by ideology, ethnicity, religion or any such measure but by those who have the money and those who don't, and in this game of snakes and ladders the don'ts have no ladders to climb. The impact of what all of this means for the ruling coalition, which cannot avoid responsibility, is not difficult to gauge and we may well see some of that fallout in the forthcoming state elections, which can then only further add to Mr. Modi's troubles. (The columnist, a military veteran and former paratrooper, is presently a Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A WAKE-UP CALL

Madam — India has been witnessing a series of tragic infrastructural failures, the most recent being the collapse of the roof at Terminal 1 in Delhi, which resulted in one death and injured five others. Such incidents are unfortunately common, with the country experiencing multiple train accidents and bridge collapses. Data from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways reveals that 32 bridges have collapsed nationwide between 2020 and 2023. Despite substantial investment in construction, the problem persists. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) reported a record expenditure of ₹2,07,000 crore on national highway construction for the fiscal year 2023-24, marking a 20% increase from ₹1,73,000 crore in 2022-23 and ₹1,72,000 crore in 2021-22. These figures point to a worrying trend of inadequate construction standards and corruption, leading to significant losses and the need for repeated investments. It is imperative that the government implements stringent measures to tackle these issues, ensuring accountability among contractors and relevant authorities to prevent corruption and guarantee the safety and durability of infrastructure.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

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IMPROVE BASIC CIVIC AMENITIES

Madam — The citizens of Delhi recently endured severe heat, followed by heavy monsoon rains that resulted in significant damage and chaos. On June 28, the canopy over the forecourt at Terminal 1 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport collapsed on parked vehicles, leading to one death and six injuries. The intense weather changes left Delhiites in a difficult situation, highlighting the need for better infrastructure and planning. This issue is not isolated to Delhi; cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and others have also suffered during the rainy sea-

Bridge gender inequality



In response to the news report "25% of new hires are married women, nearly 70% of the workforce are women: Foxconn," published on

June 28, I would like to express my views. As India strives to replace China in the global supply chain, incidents like the alleged discrimination against married women at Foxconn's manufacturing plant are highly concerning. Although Foxconn has denied these allegations and stated that 70% of its workforce comprises women, a thorough and impartial investigation is necessary to dispel any doubts. There is a significant disparity in the ratio of men to women in the workforce, and companies like Foxconn can set a positive example by employing more women. This should be encouraged as we work to close this gap. Apple has consistently enforced strict policies with its manufacturing suppliers, and Foxconn should not be an exception. Ensuring gender equality in the workforce is crucial for our progress and competitiveness on the global stage.

Bal Govind | Noida

son due to poor planning and inadequate drainage systems. While substantial funds are often spent on constructing statues and other non-essential projects, basic civic amenities remain neglected. It is crucial for the authorities to prioritize improving these facilities to safeguard the well-being of citizens.

GOVT HOSPITALS IN A DISARRAY

Madam — The Indian Public Health Standard' report, produced by the National Health Mission (NHM), reveals a concerning state of government hospitals in India. According to the report, 80 percent of these hospitals lack even basic facilities. This alarming assessment comes from a survey conducted by the government itself, highlighting a severe scarcity of doctors, nurses, and essential equipment in these institutions. The report sheds light on the conditions of government hospitals under the 'National Health Mission' (NHM), a critical initiative encompassing district

hospitals, community health centers, primary health centers, and Ayushman health facilities across the country. The 'Indian Public Health Standard' (IPHS) is a digital platform developed by the government to collect hospital statistics. Among the 40,451 hospitals that participated in the survey, only 8,089 met the IPHS criteria. This indicates that 42% of hospitals scored less than 50% on the IPHS scale, while 15,172 hospitals received ratings ranging from 50% to 80%. The report aims to identify and address the deficiencies in these hospitals, with the central government planning to establish 70,000 government hospitals meeting the IPHS standards within 100 days of the new administration's inception. The goal is to ensure that all government hospitals are equipped with basic infrastructure, equipment, and medical staff, thereby improving patient care.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Trespassing in the lives of others: The uninvited interference

Human curiosity often leads us into the lives of others, crossing boundaries and delving into matters that are not our own



SANJAY CHANDRA

We have an insatiable appetite to interfere in the lives of others. The desire to take a bite of even the tiniest morsel from another's life also makes us, trespass on conversations of strangers at best, more often gossip about others, and make inappropriate remarks at the worst. We were a batch of seven railway officials from across the globe on training in Japan in 1991. Our program was coordinated by a young Japanese lady, maybe a couple of years older than me.

A few weeks together had made the eight of us share an easy relationship — easy enough for me to ask the lady one day if she was married. She had been married for almost a decade. I was already the father of two little daughters; thus, my next query if she had any children was probably not entirely baseless. I should have stopped once she had replied in the negative. My thirst to trespass into the private life of another individual kicked in as I asked her the reason. She was quiet for so long, a myriad of emotions flitting across her face, that I was afraid that this one time I had



crossed the line. As I was about to apologise for my impertinence, she responded, "Thank you for an insightful query, which set me thinking. The reason is that both I and my husband are so busy in our daily lives, that we barely spend our waking hours together. There is just no time for making a baby!" It was a lesson learnt about the price of progress on human relations in the more developed countries. We were yet to witness this back home, at least in smaller cities and towns. I also witness incidents in the lives of others in public places. I am certain even others may be looking at my daily life under the microscope. We don't need to be celebrities for

our lives to be trespassed upon. This also sometimes leads to overhearing interesting snatches of conversations. Recently, waiting at the airport for my flight, I observed a father handing over cash to his young daughter to get tea for the family, even before she had had time to put down the bags. The girl good-naturedly asked him to wait. I smiled and commented with an attempt at humour, "All fathers are like that." The family was not amused. I was in a cabin in the COVID ward of a hospital. The cabin was shared by two more patients. One morning, I overheard the lady on the adjoining bed talking to her husband on the phone rather loudly, "I am much better. You

must see the uncle on the next bed. He does not do any exercises, just lying there all the time." The shoe pinched. I was not amused at this blatant trespassing in my life. I have observed that the supposedly well-meaning interference is more prominent during a visit to a convalescing acquaintance and dispensing advice from own morbid experiences.

We cannot forget one such well-meaning advice from a neighbour who did not hesitate to tell us that his father had passed away at my age due to a similar affliction that had kept me bedridden for a rather long time. He may have only been trying to caution us to be more careful. We love to dissect the lives of our friends, and even acquaintances, particularly when they are not around. We usually try to pass off the blatant gossip as honest criticism or well-meaning advice. If only we keep in mind what Wentworth Dillon said, "Words spoken can never be recalled."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN OLDER EMPLOYEES THRIVE UNDER WORK PRESSURE

Younger employees cow down to work pressure while elders manage well



SAKSHI SETHI

As per recent research and studies, younger employees are reporting more struggles at work while older ones are doing better. Also, around 85% of the working parents in the creative, marketing and related industries feel pressure to prioritize work over parenting duties while a greater proportion also feels they must sacrifice family life to achieve their career goals. An individual at the workplace often comes across situations where they have too many tasks that need to be completed within a limited timeframe without adequate breaks or rest periods. Moreover, not receiving sufficient recognition or rewards for hard work or perceived unfair treatment or favoritism creates a stressful and demoralizing work environment making it difficult to make decisions and remember tasks which can lead to anxiety and cause stress due to a variety of psychological, physiological and situational factors. When an individual experiences work pressure, it triggers the body's stress response, known as the fight or flight response which releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which prepare the body to deal with perceived threats. While this response can be beneficial in short bursts, prolonged activation can have negative effects on both physical and mental health resulting in increased heart rates, headaches and fatigue. Also, constant pressure can impair cognitive functions, making it difficult to concentrate, make decisions and remember tasks, which further increases stress.

There is no denying the fact that work pressure is a natural part of most jobs and can sometimes act as a motivator (such as when prompting a student to study before an important exam), helping individuals stay focused and productive but when the pressure becomes excessive or prolonged, it leads to stress, strain, nervous tension or anxiety. Maintaining a healthy balance between pressure and stress at the workplace is crucial for both productivity as well as employee well-being. Organizations must work towards setting clear communication and expectations by ensuring that job roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated; an environment where managers are approachable and available to support their teams are well created and the distribution of the



tasks and responsibilities are even to avoid overburdening of any single employee. Introducing wellness programs such as yoga, meditation or fitness classes along with access to counseling and support services for employees dealing with stress, regularly acknowledging and rewarding employees for their hard work and contributions, and promoting teamwork and collaboration to create a supportive and cohesive work environment, creating a feedback loop where employees can voice concerns about their workload and suggest improvements, implementing strict anti-harassment policies and ensure they are enforced are a few strategies that can help organizations create a work environment where pressure serves as a motivator rather than a stressor.

Apart from organizations working towards employee well-being, it becomes crucial for the individual working at any level to maintain a balance between work pressure and family stress as it can be challenging to maintain overall well-being. Prioritizing what is most important both at work and at home, defining clear boundaries between work and family time focusing on high-priority tasks and letting go of less critical ones, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, engaging in hobbies and activities that are outside of work and staying updated on stress management techniques are a few strategies that can help an individual build resilience and manage work stress more effectively. Remember, when stressed, individuals have a more difficult time creating short-term memories and turning those short-term memories into long-term memories. By understanding the causes of work pressure and implementing effective strategies to manage it, individuals and organizations can reduce stress and create a healthier, more productive work environment.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Venkaiah Garu: Life in service of Bharat



NARENDRA MODI

From his early days in politics to his tenure as Vice-President, Venkaiah Garu's career exemplifies his ability to navigate the complexities with ease and humility



Today, India's former Vice-President and respected statesman M Venkaiah Naidu Garu turns 75. I wish him a long and healthy life and also extend my greetings to all his well-wishers and supporters. This is an occasion to celebrate a leader whose life journey showcases dedication, adaptability and an unwavering commitment to public service. From his early days in the political arena to his tenure as Vice-President, Venkaiah Garu's career exemplifies his unique ability to navigate the complexities of Indian politics with ease and humility. His eloquence, wit and steadfast focus on developmental issues have earned him respect across party lines.

Venkaiah Garu and I have been associated for decades. We have worked together and I have learnt a lot from him. If there is one thing that has remained common in his life, it is the love for people. His brush with activism and politics began in Andhra Pradesh with student politics as a student leader. Considering his talent, oratory and organisational skills, he would have been welcomed in any political party but he preferred to work with the Sangh Parivar. He was associated with the RSS, ABVP and then strengthened the Jana Sangh and the BJP. Almost 50 years ago, a young Venkaiah Garu immersed himself in the anti-Emergency movement. He was imprisoned and, that too, for inviting Loknayak JP to Andhra Pradesh. This commitment to democracy would be seen time and again in his political career. In the mid-1980s, when the great NTR's Government was unceremoniously dismissed by the Congress, he was again at the forefront of the movement to protect democratic principles.

Venkaiah Garu has always been comfortable swimming even against the most formidable tides. In 1978, Andhra Pradesh voted for the Congress but he beat the trend and was elected as a young MLA. Five years later, when the NTR

tsunami swept the State, he got elected as a BJP MLA, thus paving the way for the BJP's growth across the State.

All those who have heard Venkaiah Garu speak will vouch for his oratory skills. He is certainly a wordsmith but he is as much a worksmith. Since his days as a young MLA, he began to be respected for the rigour he put into legislative affairs and speaking for people of his constituency. No less than a stalwart like NTR noted his talent and even wanted him to join his party but Venkaiah Garu refused to deviate from his core ideology. He went on to play a big role in strengthening the BJP in Andhra Pradesh and even became the AP BJP president.

It was in the 1990s that the BJP central leadership took note of Venkaiah Garu's efforts and thus in 1993 began his stint in national politics when he was appointed the party's all-India general secretary. It was truly a remarkable moment for a man, who as a teenager would go around announcing the visits of Atal Ji and Advani Ji, to be working directly with them. As the general secretary, he was focused on how to bring our party to power and ensure that the nation get their first ever BJP Prime Minister. After the move to Delhi, there was no looking back and he rose to become the party's national president.

In 2000, when Atal Ji was keen to induct Venkaiah Garu in the Government, Venkaiah Garu instantly conveyed his preference for the Rural Development Ministry. This left everyone, including Atal Ji, puzzled. After all, here was a leader who was

being asked which portfolio he wanted and his first choice was Rural Development. But Venkaiah Garu was clear - he was a Kisan Putra. As Minister, he was closely associated with the conception and rolling out of the 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana'. Years later, when the NDA Government of 2014 assumed office, he handled the crucial portfolios of Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. It was during his tenure that we launched the important Swachh Bharat Mission and important urban development-related schemes. Perhaps, he is one of the only leaders to have worked for both rural and urban development for such an extensive period.

When I came to Delhi in 2014, I was an outsider to the national Capital, having worked in Gujarat for the previous decade and a half. In such times, Venkaiah Garu's insights were very handy. He was an effective Parliamentary Affairs Minister - he knew the essence of bipartisanship but at the same time he drew a line when it came to parliamentary norms and rules.

In 2017, our alliance nominated him as our vice-presidential candidate. I can never forget one of the speeches he gave when he resigned as Minister and MP. He could not control his tears when he recalled his association with the party and efforts to build it. It gave a glimpse of his deep-rooted commitment and passion. Upon becoming the Vice-President, he undertook various steps that also enhanced the dignity of the office. He was an outstanding Chairperson of the

Rajya Sabha, ensuring that young MPs, women MPs and first-time MPs get the opportunity to speak.

When the decision to remove Articles 370 and 35(A) were placed before the Rajya Sabha, Venkaiah Garu was in the Chair. I am sure it was such an emotional moment for him - the young boy who was drawn to Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee's dream of a united India!

Apart from work and politics, Venkaiah Garu is a voracious reader and writer. For the people in Delhi, he is known as the person who brought the glorious Telugu culture to the city. His Ugadi and Sankranti programmes are clearly among the most cherished gatherings in town. I have always known Venkaiah Garu as someone who loves food and also hosting people. But, of late, his self-control has also been visible to everyone. His commitment to fitness is seen in how he still plays badminton and enjoys his brisk walk.

Even after the vice-presidency, Venkaiah Garu has led an active public life. On the issues that he is passionate about, he calls me and asks me about them. I met him most recently when our Government returned to office for the third term. He was delighted and conveyed his best wishes to me and our team. I wish him again on this milestone. I hope young karyakartas, elected representatives and all those who have a passion to serve, learn from his life and imbibe those values. It is people like him who make our nation better and more vibrant.

(The writer is the Prime Minister of India.)



ALL THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD VENKAI AH GARU SPEAK WILL VOUCH FOR HIS ORATORY SKILLS. HE IS CERTAINLY A WORDSMITH BUT HE IS AS MUCH A WORKSMITH

A reflective moment on India's democratic values and political integrity

From displays of loyalty to controversial gestures, this year's oath-taking ceremony reveals a transformed landscape in Indian politics

Newly elected members of the Lok Sabha taking oath to adhere to the Constitution of India is a solemn occasion. "I, X, having been elected a member of the House of the People do swear in the name of God (solemnly affirm) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India and that I will faithfully discharge the duty upon which I am about to enter", is what they have to tell while taking the oath. It is not known what is the role of the presidents of the parties under whose label they enter the precincts of the House. Agreed, these members were either hand-picked by the bosses of their parties, or they themselves could have kept a



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

gun on the forehead of the proprietors of the parties demanding the latter to nominate them as candidates for the Lok Sabha election. While watching some of these newly elected members taking the oath of office, one was flabbergasted by the fall in the quality of politics and the standard of our parliamentary system. Previously we had titans as members of political and social life but now, the only titans that

we come across are the wrist-watches and clocks made by the House of Tatas. The Dravidian politicians from Tamil Nadu were the butt of jokes as they took the oath of office. After taking the customary oath specified in the Third Schedule of the Constitution, the DMK members sang paeans to their Gods in Chennai. All DMK members except T R Balu raised slogans eulogizing the DMK supremo and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, the future chief minister Udhayanidhi (son of Stalin) and late M Karunanidhi (former chief minister and one of the founders of the DMK) seeking their blessings to serve Tamil Nadu! Sycophancy and servility were at their peak while they were

swearing in as members. There has been criticism against members of the DMK and the AIADMK for their servile nature and lassitude to their leaders which make them laughing stocks. Most DMK members wore Vibhuti and holy Kumkum on their foreheads. It is not uncommon to see MPs and MLAs belonging to the DMK and the AIADMK doing Danda Namaskar, an obeisance to the presiding deity of the party. Though they do not believe in pilgrimage to temples, politicians have made it a point to fall down on the floor once they come face to face with the party head. But whether the sycophancy they exhibit in public is real or not is a major question. One of the elected MPs from Tamil Nadu



who took the oath of office last day was going around astrologers and sorcerers in Kerala to ascertain whether the Karunanidhi clan had performed black magic either on him or his family members. Since his father is a bigwig in the party hierarchy, it was the mother who accompanied the son to liberate him from the evil spirits. That is the rationalism and atheism practised by the followers of Ramasamy

Naicker. While the DMK MPs were happily extolling the K-Clan members, there were reservations in the minds of a section of people about what Thol Thirumavalavan of the VCK, whose antipathy for north Indians is infamous, would do. He is the one who frequently declares that north Indians are not welcome to stay in Tamil Nadu though he has demanded that Rohingya refugees

should be given a place of residence in the State. Thank God Thirumavalavan did not raise the slogan 'Jai Prabhakaran'. Many DMK politicians in Chennai were heard asking why the newly elected MPs did not say 'Jai to Inbanidhi and Tanmaya (Udhayanidhi's son and daughter)'. The most disgusting of the lot was made by AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi who shouted "Jai Palestine" while taking oath as a member of the House. This is a cardinal sin capable of throwing shadow over India-Israel ties. People like Owaisi are a blot on this nation as he had the audacity to describe the infamous criminal Mukhtar Ansari as a Shaheed. Owaisi is a living example that one could not

have civility by attending Lincoln's Inn. The day is not far when he or others of his ilk would shout "Jai Pakistan" from the temple of Indian democracy. Organizations like Hamas have no place in the comity of nations and the civilized world. What happened in October 2023 should be condemned in the strongest of words. India has given enough support to the Palestinians and what it got back was just brickbats. The general public should know the truth. Shouting slogans in support of the party president's wife and children from the Speaker's podium while taking the oath of office is not secularism or pluralism.

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Punjab agri dept to provide subsidy on kharif maize seeds

Punjab Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department has decided to provide subsidies on hybrid seeds of kharif maize and cover over 4,700 hectares of area under maize demonstrations. Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian on Sunday said farmers can avail Rs 100 as a subsidy on the purchase of every 1 kg of hybrid maize seeds certified and recommended by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana. The subsidy for hybrid kharif maize seeds will be provided for a maximum of 5 acres of the area or 40 kg per farmer, an official statement quoted the minister as saying. A total of 2,300 quintal seeds will be made available to the state farmers at a subsidised price, Khudian said. Under maize demonstrations, he said, a total area of 4,700 hectares will be covered for which farmers will receive financial support of Rs 6,000 per hectare for various inputs, including fertilisers and insecticides.



Tobacco farmers ask govt to include sector under duty refund scheme

Tobacco exporters have asked the government to extend the duty refund scheme RoDTEP to the sector to boost outbound shipments. In a meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in Hyderabad on June 29, traders submitted that tobacco exporters are not covered under any scheme that provides export incentives. They requested to extend support to tobacco exporters by including them under the RoDTEP scheme, the ministry said in a statement. They also requested the government help in curtailing the unauthorized production and use of chewing tobacco in India due to which there is a huge loss to the government exchequer, it added. They also informed that there is an increase in illicit cigarette sales. The scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) provides for refund of taxes, duties and levies that are incurred by exporters in the process of manufacturing and distribution of goods and are not being reimbursed under any other mechanism at the centre, state, or local level.



EPFO gross new members addition dips 4% to 1.09 crore

Retirement fund body EPFO's gross new subscribers addition declined by over 4 per cent to 1.09 crore in 2023-24 compared to a year ago, as per a report by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI). According to the report 'Payroll Reporting in India: An Employment Perspective - January to April, 2024', the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) recorded 1,09,93,119 gross addition of new members in 2023-24 compared to 1,14,98,453 in 2022-23. The gross addition of new members was affected due to the pandemic and declined from 1,10,40,683 in 2019-20 to 85,48,898 in 2020-21. It bounced back to 1,08,65,063 in 2021-22. The Centre as well as states had imposed lockdown restriction in 2020 and 2021 to curb the spread of deadly coronavirus in the country, which had hit economic activities as well as employment. The data shows that in the last five fiscal years till 2023-24, the gross new members addition by EPFO had not recovered to pre-covid level of 2018-19.



'India most important market for Skoda'

PNS ■ PRAGUE

Czech car maker Skoda is lining up new models, expanding sales network and also looking to forge partnerships to scale up business in India, the most important market for the brand outside Europe, according to global CEO Klaus Zellmer. The company, which currently sells models like Kushaq and Slavia in the country, aims to drive in an all-new compact SUV early next year hoping to almost double its sales volume in the market. Skoda Auto India sold around 49,000 units last year. India is the world's third-largest passenger vehicle market with annual dispatches surging to 42 lakh units in FY24.

'Indian economy poised for stable high growth phase'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is poised for potentially a stable high growth phase and it is also in a strong position in the context of significant risks that the country is facing, RBI's monetary policy committee member Shashanka Bhide said on Sunday. Bhide further said with the growth of income that would support domestic demand and additions to production or supply capacity reflected by high levels of investment spending in the last couple of years, domestic economic activity is expected to sustain its momentum. In terms of growth momentum and inflation trajectories Indian economy is poised for potentially a stable high growth phase. "It is also in a strong position in the context of significant risks that are also facing us," he said.



The current official estimate of GDP growth in 2023-24 is 8.2 per cent, accelerating from 7 per cent in the preceding year. Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India pegged the GDP growth rate for FY25 at 7.2 per cent. Bhide noted that the monsoon rainfall, which is expected to be normal this year, is a significant positive factor for growth as well as bringing down food inflation. While noting that improvement in global demand condi-

tions are necessary to spur external demand for goods and services, he said sizable capital inflows supporting investment, reflect both the supply side efficiencies and high growth potential of the economy both in terms of domestic demand as well as India's exports. Responding to a question on inflation, Bhide said the concerns are mainly in terms of the impact of risks from any adverse weather and climate events, disruptions in global supply chains due to interna-

tional conflicts and the slow recovery of the global economy from the recent high inflation period. "Our own overall CPI inflation is marked by high levels of food inflation and a decline in this component of the overall inflation is crucial going forward," he opined. Bhide said while food inflation is at a high level, averaging about 8 per cent during Jan-May 2024, the overall CPI-based inflation has moderated to below 5 per cent during March-May 2024.

GST simplified compliance, improved tax buoyancy

Fake ITC generation still a challenge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Introduced seven years ago, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has simplified compliance, improved tax buoyancy and increased states' revenues, but fake invoices and fraudulent registration remain a big challenge for policymakers trying to curb tax evasion. Rolled out on July 1, 2017, Goods and Services Tax (GST) streamlined 17 taxes and 13 cesses into a 5-tier structure, simplifying the tax regime. The turnover threshold for registration rose to Rs 40 lakh for goods and Rs 20 lakh for services (up from Rs 5 lakh on average under VAT). GST also reduced 495 different submissions (challan, forms, declarations, etc) across states to just 12. In seven years, the number of registered taxpayers has risen to 1.46 crore from 65 lakh in 2017. Average monthly GST revenues, soared from around Rs 90,000 crore in 2017-18, to about Rs

1.90 lakh crore in 2024-25. According to the government data, GST has improved tax buoyancy from 0.72 (pre-GST) to 1.22 (2018-23). Despite compensation ending, state revenues remain buoyant at 1.15.



Without GST, states' revenue from subsumed taxes from fiscal 2018-19 to 2023-24 would have been Rs 37.5 lakh crore. With GST, states' actual revenue amounted to Rs 46.56 lakh crore. The effective weighted average GST rate has consistently fallen since 2017 and GST lowered taxes on many essential items compared to pre-GST rates. Common items like hair oil

and soaps saw tax cut from 28 per cent to 18 per cent. Tax on electrical appliances was lowered to 12 per cent as against 31.5 per cent before. GST has exempted many essential items and services, such as unbranded food items, certain life-saving drugs, healthcare, education, public transport, sanitary napkins, hearing aid parts, agricultural services, etc. As evaders find newer modus operandi to defraud the exchequer, tax officers have been grappling with generation of fake invoices and fraudulent GST registrations. In 2023, the Directorate of GST Intelligence (DGGI) detected tax evasion of more than Rs 1.98 lakh crore and arrested 140 masterminds who were involved in defrauding the exchequer. Significant GST evasion was detected in diverse sectors like online gaming, casinos, insurance and second-hand (import of manpower services).

SPECTRUM AUCTION

DoT to issue demand note to telcos for payment



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The telecom department is expected to issue a demand note to telcos this week for payment of spectrum they bought in the just-concluded auction, according to a source. The auction -- lasted for two days spanning seven rounds this time around -- witnessed the sale of 141.4 MHz of radio waves for Rs 11,340.78 crore. In all, 10,500 MHz of radio waves used for mobile services worth over Rs 96,238 crore were placed on the block during the auction started on June 25. Sunil Mittal's Airtel emerged as the biggest bidder for radio waves, cornering about 60 per cent of the Rs

11,341 crore worth of spectrum sold in this auction. Airtel bid and won airwaves worth Rs 6,856.76 crore, and rival Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio - the market leader - got Rs 973.62 crore worth of spectrum - the least in the three-way contest. Vodafone Idea's (VIL) bid for spectrum was valued at about Rs 3510.4 crore. As per sources, the demand note would outline both options - upfront payment or payment via instalments and is expected to be sent out early this week to various telecom companies. As per the terms of the bid document, the payments have to be made within ten days of the issue of the demand note.

Haryana to get waste-to-charcoal plants

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana will soon get waste-to-charcoal plants, also known as green coal plants, said an official statement here on Sunday. An MoU for this plant will be signed between NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd (NVVNL) and the Haryana Government. After setting up the plants in Gurugram-Manesar and Faridabad, this initiative will be expanded to other cities in

Haryana. NVVNL officers will soon visit a few sites for establishing green coal plants. "Due to the strenuous efforts of Union Power and Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, Haryana will soon get waste-to-charcoal plants, also known as green coal plants," the statement said. A meeting in this regard was held on Friday evening at Shram Shakti Bhawan in New Delhi, chaired by Khattar, it said.

Macroeconomic data, global trends to drive markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic macroeconomic data announcements, global trends and trading activity of foreign investors would guide market sentiments this week, analysts said. After a record rally, markets may face volatile trends this week amid elevated valuations and investors would also keep a track of global oil benchmark Brent crude and rupee-dollar movement for further cues. "Potential volatility in the stock market is anticipated this

week. Elevated valuations remain a concern, with investors now focusing on monsoon progress and its impact on the rural economy. The upcoming Union Budget in July has become the next focal point, with high expectations for growth-oriented policies," said Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Market sentiment will be gauged by closely monitoring foreign and domestic institutional investors' activity (FII and DII) and crude oil prices, he said. On the global front, the US market has experienced some profit-booking from high-

er levels. Key economic data, such as the US job openings report, will be released on July 2, 2024, followed by the US ISM Services PMI data on July 3, 2024, he noted. Additionally, the US Federal Reserve Chairperson Powell's speech is scheduled for July 2, 2024, and the US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) minutes will be released on July 3, 2024. The movement of dollar index and US bond yields will also be crucial factors to watch," Gour added.

Centre should have state-specific financial approach for development, says Kerala FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking more funds to tide over the state's financial woes, Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal on Sunday said the Centre should have a state-specific rather than a uniform financial approach towards states as each of them has different kinds of developmental activities. Balagopal, part of the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) which is in power for the second consecutive



term in the southern state, emphasised that monolithic thinking about overall development is not practical and also called for flexibility in utilisation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) depending on the requirements of the state. Flagging serious concerns about reduced central fund trans-

fers and borrowing restrictions, Kerala has demanded a special package of Rs 24,000 crore in the upcoming Union Budget to tackle the liquidity stress. "A monolithic thinking about the total development and administration of the country is not practical in India because different states should be considered differently, keeping in mind the country's whole development and unity..." he said in an interview in the national capital.

'Rule changes can help onboard customers from anywhere in India'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

German lender Deutsche Bank will be focussing on the digital channel over the branch model to grow its business in the country, a top official said. Changes in rules by the RBI mandating geographical location restrictions while onboarding customers will be of help, Kaushik Shaparia, chief executive of Deutsche Bank Group, India, told PTI. "If the regulator were to permit digital access over and above the geographical restrictions, I am convinced we can

do more. "Currently, there are restrictions as to where you can onboard clients, where your locations are, and the customer has to have an office near one of your locations etc," he said on the sidelines of a bank event here. When asked about the branch strategy in the country, Shaparia quipped that "geography is history", and added that the bank's aim will be to focus more on digital. "Maybe in the past, having a robust branch strategy was critical but with digitisation, geography has become history."

'AI to be gamechanger in citizen services'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AI's cross-border nature will require a 'Global Compact' to ensure its benefits reach all of humanity and to safeguard against any potential misuse, Arundhati Bhattacharya, the top boss of Salesforce India has said exuding confidence that for India, Artificial Intelligence will be a "gamechanger" in delivery of public services. Bhattacharya, the CEO and Chairperson of Salesforce India and former Chairperson of the SBI, said that AI is poised to bring about a transformation in every sphere - from healthcare to diagnostics, and education to skilling. The advent of this futuristic technology will benefit India in a big way, firing the engines of public service delivery, at scale and lower cost, she observed. In an interview, Bhattacharya also highlighted the need for a

'Global Compact' on AI, given the cross-border nature of technology and its impact. Bhattacharya said she is convinced that AI would benefit society, but in the wrong hands it can be prove to be "quite harmful" and advocated "caution".



ful about what we do with AI, and how we do it," she said. Just like climate issues, AI too goes beyond country borders, and hence requires Global Compact, consensus, and international efforts, according to her. "I think there need to be a

"AI is like any other tool, you can use it for good purposes, or you can use it for bad. So one needs to be careful. I am not scared but I would definitely recommend caution...I would recommend that we are careful about what we do with AI, and how we do it," Arundhati Bhattacharya said.

Global Compact on this as well. This is not something that is going to remain enclosed within borders of a country, it will impact people globally...AI is not going to be a respecter of borders of a country," he said.

AI, at this point, is largely self-regulated, she noted. "AI will need a global compact, it will need people to agree that there are possible ways that AI can be used that would be harmful to mankind...They would need to come together

and have some kind of understanding to ensure that we use this tool for betterment of mankind..." Bhattacharya said. Bhattacharya smashed the glass ceiling in 2013 when she became the first woman to lead

State Bank of India (SBI) in the bank's over 200-year history. She retired from SBI in 2017 and went on to reinvent herself with a brand new career innings at the helm of cloud-based service provider Salesforce India in 2020, as Chairperson and CEO - a position she has held since. Describing the advent of AI as a "gamechanger" and "blessing" for India, Bhattacharya said she is convinced that the technology will bring transformation all across, benefiting society. "India does not have paucity of manpower, what it needs is technology for us to enable each of those people to reach optimum potential. To do that through brick-and mortar is difficult in terms of bandwidth and costs...if AI can deliver the first layer of it, and offer us insights to determine what exactly is needed, it will ensure fair distribution...it will be a great step forward," she said.

FPIs invest Rs 26,565 crore in Indian equities in Jun

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After two months of net outflow, foreign investors turned buyers in June, infusing Rs 26,565 crore in Indian equities, driven by political stability and a sharp rebound in markets. Looking ahead, attention will gradually shift towards the budget and Q1 FY25 earnings, which could determine the sustainability of FPI flows, Vipul Bhowar, Director, Listed Investments, Waterfield Advisors, said. According to the data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net infusion of Rs 26,565 crore in equities this month. This came following a net

outflow of Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. Before that, FPIs made a net



investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February, while they took out Rs 25,743 crore in January. The net outflow now stood at Rs 3,200 crore in the month, data with the depositories

showed. Geojit Financial Services Chief Investment Strategist V K Vijayakumar said political stability, despite the BJP not getting a majority on its own, and the sharp rebound in markets aided by steady domestic institutional investors (DIIs) buying and aggressive retail buying, has forced the FPIs to turn buyers in India. However, the FPI buying has been focused on a few specific stocks rather than being widespread across the market or sectors. This is because Indian equities are still considered overvalued by FPIs, Waterfield Advisors' Bhowar said. They are favouring the financial, auto, capital goods, real estate, and select consumer sectors.

Rajpal Yadav on arranged marriage v/s love!

The comedic powerhouse of Indian cinema, Rajpal Yadav, who was recently seen in Zee5's *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage*, shares some exclusive insights on working with the cast and his take on marriage.

Rajpal Yadav, the comedic powerhouse of Indian cinema, brings his signature wit to the new film *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage*.

But beyond the laughs, the film explores the complexities of love and marriage, a topic Yadav offers a unique perspective on.

Working alongside rising stars Sunny Singh and Avneet Kaur was a delight for Yadav. He calls Sunny Singh a "kind and close friend," while he also praised Avneet Kaur's organised, dedicated and straightforward nature. The camaraderie extended to the entire cast, including veterans like Annu Kapoor and Supriya Pathak. "Working with all of them was enjoyable," Yadav says, reflecting on the fun atmosphere on set.

The film explores the long-standing question: love or arranged marriage? As a parent himself, Yadav emphasises that these are decisions best left to the younger generation, free from parental pressure. He references a cherished Indian saying, 'Marriages are made in heaven.' "I don't consider myself worthy of giving advice, but I feel that marriage is a bond between two families filled with freedom and a bond between two souls. Regardless of the setup you choose—arrange marriage or love marriage—I believe that matches are made by a higher power," he added.

Yadav's comedic genius has been a cornerstone of many successful films throughout his career. From his hilarious turn as "Chhote Pandit" in the horror comedy *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* to his portrayal of the bumbling astrologer in the blockbuster *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi*, Yadav has a knack for leaving his audience with his rib-ticking humour.

With his heartwarming perspective and signature humour, the *Chup Chup Ke* actor reminds us that love and laughter are essential ingredients for a happy marriage. He continues to entertain audiences with his comedic brilliance, ensuring *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage* adds another chapter to his long list of cinematic successes.



Lip-syncing her way to global stage

TEJAL SINHA

With her expertise in *Abhinaya* (expressions) and *Nritya* (pure dance), Sonali Mohapatra has been an accomplished Odissi dancer and a global performer. At an early age of 5, due to an unfortunate incident, she lost a major portion of her hearing, a loss that later proved to be irreparable. Despite having lost 100% of her hearing in her left ear and 87% in her right ear, she found a calling in dance. With the help of her father, Nirmal Kumar Mohapatra, a renowned vocalist, she became trained in "taal" and "layakariyan," hence mastering the rhythm and flow of the dance.

She began her early training with Guru Tripti Mayee Mohanty and later found guidance under Guru Durga Charan Ranbir. "At the age of 5, I would accompany my father, a trained vocalist himself, for his Odissi shows," recalls the choreophile in this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*. "I used to adore the performances and how my dad used to give taal. During that time, I realised, maybe I couldn't dance like them, but there's of course something within me when it comes to dancing. Every time that I used to sit and watch, it always felt like I was in heaven and used to feel like the *apsaras* were dancing." However, it did take her some time to convince her father to accept the notion of his daughter taking up dance, knowing how important music and sound are in a dancer's journey.

The doctor's suggestion was that, with the exposure to loud music, there could be a much bigger impact on her hearing issue! But as she got a little emotional in this chat with us, she recalled how, being a father, he knew there was something within his daughter. In fact, even the headmistress of the school knew that Sonali had that potential. "I got enrolled under the guidance of Guru Tripti Mayee Mohanty and within no span, my father also took a hiatus from his career for me to memorise the rhythms of popular songs. The training was tough. I couldn't afford to miss a beat! There was no room for errors. During this, my mother had always been a shadow," says the connoisseur, who also recalls how her father sat down for 7 days continuously and used to help her out with the taal and rhythm. The reality of practice and platform used to turn out to be a challenge for her. "I used to also face challenges when performing a pre-recorded song, especially if the device wasn't working properly. Due to these glitches, I used to, at times, even lose the rhythm. However, now I have adjusted to it." Basically, to our surprise, she revealed how her device helps her to listen to at least 13 percent of it. However, without it, the percent of her hearing goes down to zero. But she never let this affect her confidence and here she is, being an inspiration to many more.

During her journey, her first guru, Tripti Mayee Mohanty, played a very important role in shaping her prowess in dance. Recalling her

learnings, she shares, "My guru used to spend a lot of time for me to get my hands on the hand gestures and other movements. The taal, of course, was taught by my father. Later, when she got confidence in me that, I could do it, she herself sent me to Guru Durga Charan Ranbir, who is also my current guru."

She is married to renowned flutist Abhiram Nanda, who is a disciple of Guru Padmavibhusan Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. And after her father, who has had a major influence in her life, has been her husband. There was a time when, during the live concerts, her father used to sing and her better half, used to give the flute music. He used to help her out with information on the current music. Today, he has become a major root of all her choreographies!

When choreographing her own dance performances, she makes sure that she does thorough research before hand on the topic that she has decided to perform on. She later used to share her idea with her father and husband for her to help with the taal and rhythm. The music and composition are further prepared based on her thoughts.

Speaking of her balance between the approach towards *Abhinaya* (expressions) and *Nritya* (pure dance) in her performances, she gleefully enthuses on a concluding note, "*Abhinaya* is based on more challenging rhythms and change of taals, which needs a lot of stamina. Meanwhile, when we say *nritya* (pure dance), it is more of high energy, stamina and based on the sculptures of the *Nartakis* that we see in temples. Pure dance is

nothing but practice. When it comes to *Abhinaya*, it is more deeply rooted and you feel and understand the characters. Failing to do so, you'll not be able to give the right expressions. Expressions are not just your smile and eye movements; they are the deep-rooted understanding of each and every character. Again, it's not just about characters but also the situation."

Odissi danseuse Sonali Mohapatra has created a niche for herself, irrespective of her auditory disability. *The Pioneer* got an opportunity to have an exclusive meet chat with her to learn and know more about her art form.



Demystifying the role of 'chromosomal polymorphism' in recurrent pregnancy loss

A recent study conducted by Redcliffe Labs in India has revealed a significant link between chromosomal abnormalities and recurrent miscarriages. The research found that infertile couples experiencing repeated miscarriages exhibited a notably higher frequency of chromosomal polymorphisms (CPM), reaching up to 33.7%. Traditionally, chromosome polymorphisms have been considered normal variations with little practical significance. However, this study is the first to identify a much higher prevalence—approximately 33.7%—of these polymorphisms among couples facing recurrent pregnancy loss and infertility. As a result, CPM has been identified as a major contributing factor to repeated miscarriages.

Chromosomal polymorphism refers to the innate differences in chromosome number and structure among a population. Chromosome segment inversions, translocations, deletions and duplications are examples of these changes. Even though these polymorphisms are frequently benign and do not directly affect health, they may influence genetic processes during reproduction. They may contribute to disorders like recurrent miscarriages, congenital defects and other reproductive difficulties by causing genetic imbalances in the progeny.



Changes brought about by cell division and spontaneous genetic recombination are the causes of CPMs.

- **Meiotic errors:** Chromosomes recombine during the development of eggs and sperm. Inaccuracies in this procedure may cause segments to be moved or changed, giving rise to polymorphisms.
- **Chromosome mutations:** If either parent carries these mutations, then CPMs can be inherited from them. Many CPMs are benign and don't harm people, but depending on how they pair together during fertilisation, they may cause complications in the progeny.
- **Mutations:** Chromosome structural alterations can result from random mutations that happen in DNA.

LINK BETWEEN CHROMOSOMAL POLYMORPHISM AND RECURRENT PREGNANCY LOSS

CPMs can interfere with normal chromosomal activity during reproduction, which can result in genetic imbalances in the developing embryo. This may result in various difficulties with reproduction:

- **Miscarriages:** CPMs can result in the development of embryos with chromosomal abnormalities, which frequently cause early pregnancy loss. Significant genetic imbalances usually result in non-viable embryos.

- **Impaired implantation:** One of the main causes of miscarriage is the existence of CPMs, which can obstruct the embryo's proper implantation in the uterus.
- **Genetic imbalances:** CPMs can result in genetic imbalances that can lead to congenital abnormalities or disorders that are incompatible with life, even if a pregnancy goes on.

IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT DIAGNOSIS

Genetic testing is frequently recommended for couples experiencing recurrent pregnancy loss in order to detect any chromosomal abnormalities, including CPMs. These polymorphisms can be found using karyotyping techniques or more advanced approaches like array comparative genomic hybridisation (aCGH) and next-generation sequencing.

MANAGEMENT

Genetic counselling is essential if CPMs are found. Counsellors can assist couples in considering their reproductive options and comprehending the consequences of their findings. Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), one of the assisted reproductive technology (ART) methods, may be suggested to choose embryos free of major genetic abnormalities.

what's brewing?

With its opening in Hyderabad, Enza Furnitures has ushered in a new age for opulent home furnishings. Situated next to Biodiversity Park in Gachibowli, they provide an unmatched shopping experience in a gorgeous four-story showroom that is 12,000 square feet in size. This magnificent four-story furniture experience center raises the bar for exceptional design.

● Rashi ● Momit and Akshay ● Anusha

● Rina Hindocha ● Aslihan Orkan ● Dhaaraa ● Vibhuti Jain

The annual Sparsa event, held at T-Hub in Hyderabad, marked the 10-year anniversary of the Touch a Life Foundation.

● Katre Orkan

The premiere of *Manyam Veerudu - Alluri Sitaramaraju*, a dance theatre piece choreographed by Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, was held in Hyderabad. The Ministry of Culture, the Government of India and Shankarananda Kalakshetra produced this honouring the man who dared the British as part of the Ministry's Centenary and Anniversary celebrations initiative.

The highly anticipated **BATTLEROUNDS MOBILE INDIA SERIES 2024 (BGIS)** finale got underway in spectacular fashion at the HITEX Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad. The biggest battle royale Esports tournament in India was organised by KRAFTON. Day 1 of India began with a magnificent display of gaming prowess and talent from the country's top Esports teams.

The second flagship store of Qbik, the renowned Indo-fusion fashion designer label created by Gurinder Singh and Vrinda Sachdev in 2011, was opened in a spectacular celebration of luxury and style in Hyderabad's famed Banjara Hills.

The defending Andhra Premier League champion **Rayalaseema Kings**, presented uniform for the upcoming season. The game against Coastal Riders on June 30, 2024, at the Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Stadium in Vizag, began at 6:30 PM IST.

Haier India introduces Kinouchi

Haier Appliances India announced the launch of the new Kinouchi Dark Edition Air Conditioner – the perfect combination of innovative technology and premium aesthetics. Curated to provide the best-in-class customer experience, the new air conditioner boasts advanced technologies like Supersonic Cooling in 10 seconds, Frost Self-Clean Technology, HEXA Inverter Technology, Intelli Convertible 7-in-1 and much more. Available in 1.6 tons and 1.0 tons, it will be available across all retail channels. Haier Kinouchi Dark Edition air conditioner will be available across India at a starting price INR 46,990.

Introducing Loca Loka

Loca Loka has officially entered the international alcohol market, debuting with its initial offering: Tequila Blanco and Reposado. Crafted from 100% Agave in the renowned Jalisco region, this innovative tequila is inspired by the blend of two vibrant cultures, India and Mexico. Loca Loka is backed by two cultural icons and brand co-creators, leading Indian film actor Rana Daggubati and renowned musician and composer Anirudh Ravichander, along with seasoned entrepreneur Harsha Vadlamudi – Managing Partner – Iron hill India.

Shiv Nadar School of Law

Shiv Nadar University Chennai, an initiative by Shiv Nadar Foundation, unveils the Shiv Nadar School of Law. Starting in August 2024, the school will offer a five-year BA.LL.B program. Approved by the Bar Council of India, the law school features faculty trained at top universities worldwide and world-class infrastructure. In addition, twenty percent of the faculty will be active legal practitioners and the placement team will have industry experience. The intake of the inaugural batch is expected up to 60 students.

Global conclave on plastics recycling and sustainability

The Global Conclave on Plastics Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS), organised by the All India Plastic Manufacturers' Association (AIPMA) and the Chemicals and Petrochemicals Association (CPMA), is set to take place from July 4 to 7, 2024, at Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan, Delhi. The Conclave will largely address the critical issues surrounding plastic use and the plastic recycling industry which is expected to reach \$6.9 billion by 2033. Several ministries, including Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals – Ministry of Chemicals and fertilizers, Government of India, Ministry of Environment, forest and climate changes, Government of India, Department of Commerce – Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt of India, Ministry of Micro, Small and medium enterprises, Government of India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and various ministries of the Government of India have pledged their support for GCPRS, highlighting its significance in India's sustainable development agenda.

FGILI to pay 12% higher bonus to policyholders

Future Generali India Life Insurance Company Limited has recently declared its highest-ever bonus of Rs. 59.80 crore for the FY2023-24, benefiting more than 101,000 policyholders who have made investments in the company's participating products. The bonus for FY24 reflects a notable increase of 12% compared to the bonus awarded in FY23. The cash bonus has seen a significant 43% increase, reaching Rs. 14.60 crore, while the terminal bonus has also witnessed a substantial 49% increase, totalling Rs. 4.54 crore.

FUN

ARCHIE

WHAT'S WRONG? I NEVER SHOULD HAVE TALKED BACK! NOW IT'S GOING ON MY PERMANENT RECORD!

I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT WAS AN OFFENSE THAT COULD GO ON THE SCHOOL'S PERMANENT RECORD!

NOT THE SCHOOL'S... VERONICA'S!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

THIS BOOK SAYS TIGERS ARE TERRITORIAL AND WON'T SHARE THEIR GROUND WITH OTHER TIGERS.

I GUESS WE'D BETTER DIVIDE UP THE WOODS THEN. THIS WILL BE MY TERRITORY, AND THAT WILL BE YOURS.

THIS ROCK WILL SEPARATE OUR TWO SIDES. AS ANOTHER TIGER, YOU ARE HEREBY BANISHED FROM THIS SIDE OF THE ROCK.

HA HA HA! LOOK WHAT I'VE DONEGGG!

YOU CUT THAT OUT!

GARFIELD

ARLENE, YOUR EYES ARE LIKE LIMPID POOLS OF WATER. HOW SWEET!

WITH GOLDFISH SWIMMING AROUND IN THEM... UH...

TENDER, SUCCULENT GOLDFISH. OKAY, NOW YOU'RE CREEPING ME OUT

REALITY CHECK

Warning: You've been looking for love in all the wrong places. Are you sure you want to continue this search?

SPEED BUMP

YOUR BODY INITIALLY REJECTED THE NEW KIDNEY, BUT AFTER WE PUMPED YOU FULL OF LIQUOR, YOUR BODY FOUND THE NEW KIDNEY KIND OF ATTRACTIVE.

WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS IN THE MORNING, THOUGH.

CROSSWORD

NANCY

HOROSCOPE: "TODAY YOU MAY REACH GREAT HEIGHTS"

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- The group of people who are in charge of a country
- Correct
- A black and white animal
- Coming nearer to
- Before second
- Bad smell
- A popular jam flavour
- Cows and goats have these
- Throbbled painfully
- A month
- Uncommon
- A place with houses, shops, schools
- Bad smell
- Flowers pull on these

DOWN

- Measuring a lot from one end to the other
- A compass direction
- Break suddenly
- Stitched
- People who are unknown to you
- A meal

SOLUTION

A	P	R	T	I	C	A	T	I	O
S	A	L	E	S	A	N	C	E	S
N	I	G	H	A	N	T	A	N	T
C	O	R	R	E	C	T	E	R	S
K	E	N	T	I	N	G	Y		
A	R	G	E	N	T	E	R		
P	L	A	C	E	S	E			
S	A	L	T	E	R				
S	A	L	T	E	R				
S	A	L	T	E	R				

'I am very proud of my daughters'

Since its much-anticipated release, *Kalki 2898 AD* has been making headlines for all the right reasons. The film, helmed by director Nag Ashwin and backed by Vyjayanthi Movies, has not only captivated audiences but has also shattered box office records with its staggering collections. We got the opportunity to converse with the man behind Vyjayanthi Movies, producer Ashwini Dutt, who shared insights into the making of this ambitious project and its future endeavours.

K. RAMYA SREE

Q: Congratulations on the massive success of *Kalki 2898 AD*! Did you expect such an overwhelming response?

Ashwini Dutt: Thank you! Yes, we anticipated this level of success, but it's always heartening to see the audience embrace the film across all regions.

Q: Nag Ashwin's previous works were known for their depth. When did you realise he could handle such a grand narrative?

Ashwini Dutt: We've known Nag Ashwin since his debut. From the beginning, I saw his potential to handle ambitious projects. He has a unique vision and I've always trusted his creative instincts.

Q: Amitabh Bachchan's portrayal in the film has garnered much praise. How did you feel seeing him in such a significant role?

Ashwini Dutt: Amitabh Bachchan is a legend and his performance was outstanding. It was a surreal experience to see him bring his character to life on screen.

Q: The concept of the bujji (car) in the film was quite innovative. How did that idea come about?

Ashwini Dutt: That was entirely Nag Ashwin's vision. When he presented the concept to me, I was fascinated by how well it was integrated into the narrative. It added a unique flavour to the film.

Q: With such success, can we expect a sequel to *Kalki 2898 AD*?

Ashwini Dutt: Absolutely! The decision for a sequel was finalised

after Kamal Haasan joined the project. His character opens up exciting possibilities for the next installment.

Q: When can audiences expect *Kalki 2898 AD Part 2* to hit the screens?

Ashwini Dutt: We are looking at a release sometime next year around this time for Part 2.

Q: Prabhas played a crucial role in the original film. How was his cooperation during the production?

Ashwini Dutt: Prabhas was pivotal to the film's success. His dedication and support were instrumental in bringing the original vision to life.

Q: Your daughters have been instrumental in the success of Vyjayanthi Movies. How does it feel as a father to see them achieve such heights?

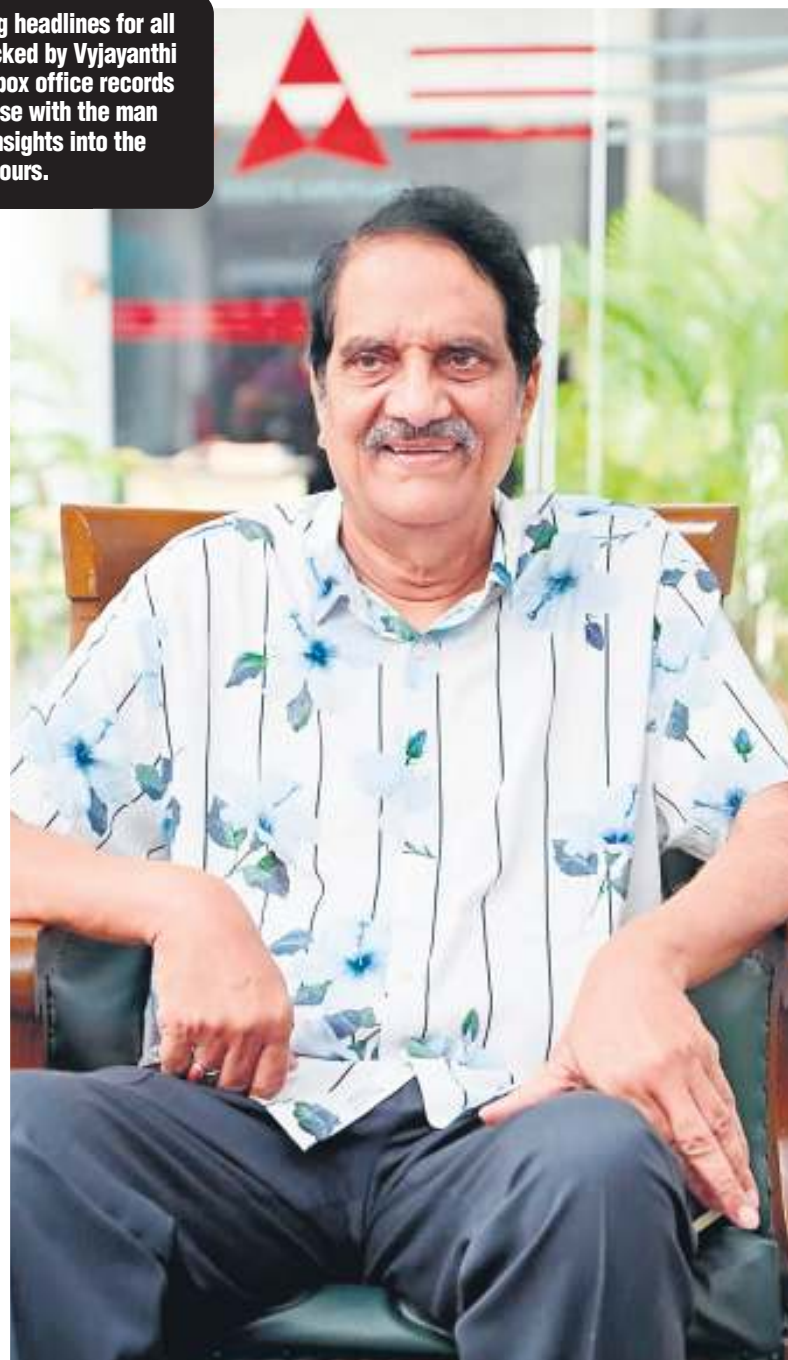
Ashwini Dutt: I am incredibly proud and fortunate. They have taken our production company to new heights and it's a joy to witness their achievements.

Q: Can we expect more films in the *Kalki Cinematic Universe* after Part 2?

Ashwini Dutt: Let's see how the story unfolds after Part 2. If the script demands it and the audience desires more, we might explore further expansions.

Q: What are the upcoming projects from Vyjayanthi Movies that audiences should watch out for?

Ashwini Dutt: We have exciting projects lined up, including a film with Srikanth's son and another one featuring Dulquer Salmaan.



Allari Naresh's birthday surprise with his next two projects

Allari Naresh, renowned for his comedy and family entertainers, also established himself as a great performer in unique and different concept films. He is now starring in another unique concept film produced by one of the Telugu Cinema production houses, Sithara Entertainments.

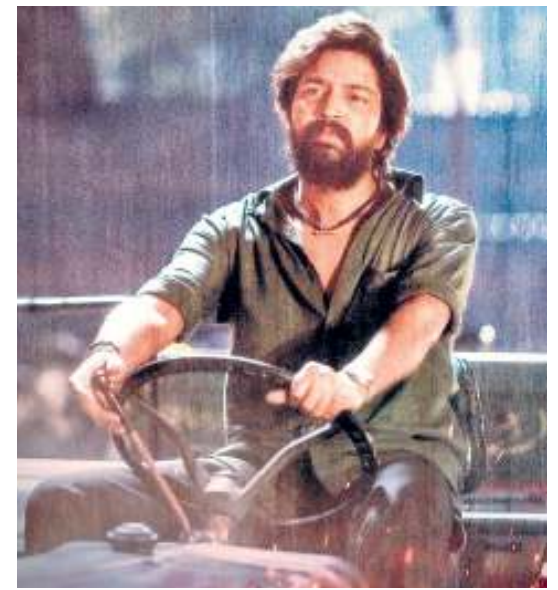
On the occasion of his birthday, the production house officially announced the project, tentatively titled *#AN63*, or *Production No. 29*.

The poster showcases interesting symbols in sign language. This creative poster has raised great intrigue among movie-lovers and Allari Naresh fans. They are trying to decode the hidden message in sign language symbols. Writer-director Meher Tej, known for the highly appreciated movie *Family Drama*, is writing and directing the film, with a highly distinctive and create concept. Makers have expressed with great belief and huge confidence that the movie will be entertaining and delivers a unique experience to audiences in theatres.

Meanwhile, celebrating his birthday, the actor also received a special gift from the makers of his upcoming film, *Bachhala Malli*. Directed by Subbu Mangadevi, known for *Solo Brathuke So Better* and produced under the banner of Hasya Movies by Ramesh Danda and Balaji Gutta, the film promises to be a mass entertainer with a captivating storyline and powerful performances.

The recently unveiled glimpse introduces viewers to the intense character portrayed by Allari Naresh. The teaser opens with a striking scene where the protagonist fiercely removes the Bhagavad Gita playing on a loud-speaker near his house, disturbed by its intrusion on his sleep. The narrative swiftly moves to a local bar, where he displays his swagger while confronting goons, delivering the impactful dialogue, "*Eyy Evadi Kosam Thaggali... Enduku Thaggali... (Whom should I keep low... Why should I stay humble...)*" This sets the tone for his adamant and robust persona in the film.

Director Subbu Mangadevi has presented Allari Naresh in a never-before-seen avatar, marking a departure from his usual roles. The actor underwent a notable transformation for this character and his performance exudes raw intensity-cum-conviction. The glimpse has already garnered attention for its mass appeal, offering fans a perfect birthday treat and



showcasing Naresh's power-packed acting chops! Joining Allari Naresh is Amritha Aiyer as the lead actress, supported by a stellar ensemble cast including Rohini, Rao Ramesh, Achyuth Kumar, Balagam Jayaram, Hari Teja, Praveen and Viva Harsha in pivotal roles.

Bachhala Malli is being crafted on a grand scale with a team of acclaimed technicians at the helm.

Anticipation for *Bachhala Malli* is high, fuelled further by the announcement of its theatrical release scheduled for September this year. With its promising storyline, stellar cast and a dedicated team of technicians, the film is poised to captivate audiences and add another feather to Allari Naresh's illustrious career.



Sandeep Reddy Vanga to release audio glimpse of *Spirit* on Prabhas' B'day

Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga, renowned for his distinctive cinematic style, is set to treat fans with an exclusive audio glimpse of his upcoming film *Spirit* on October 23, 2024, says the sources. This date marks the birthday of superstar Prabhas, adding to the excitement surrounding the project. *Spirit* promises to be a captivating venture, with the talented Rashmika Mandanna confirmed to play the female lead role. Known for her versatile performances, Rashmika's inclusion has already piqued curiosity among cinephiles.

Scheduled to commence later this year, the filming of *#Spirit* is eagerly anticipated by fans and industry insiders alike. Sandeep Reddy Vanga, known for his previous blockbuster *Arjun Reddy* and *Kabir Singh*, aims to create another memorable cinematic experience with *Spirit*.

As anticipation builds, fans eagerly await the audio glimpse release on Prabhas' birthday, setting the stage for what promises to be a significant cinematic event in the making of *Spirit*.

AVIKA GOR AS SARA IN SHANMUKHA

Telugu audiences have always embraced diverse films and unique stories. Taking a unique shape in that queue is the devotional thriller *Shanmukha*. With a powerful title, this film stars Aadi Saikumar in the lead role. Director Shanmugam depicts this film as a creator. Being the second film, this is being produced by SAP Brothers Production, a well-known organisation known for its *Indian Parliament* film. The makers announced on Sunday that Avika Gor has joined the film's cast as its leading lady.

Speaking on the occasion, the director of the film said, "This is a devotional thriller that is being made with an amazing point that no one has touched till now and the director is talking on this occasion. As a visual wonder, we are projecting this film with amazing graphics. In this film, the heroine Avika will be seen in the role of Sara, an energetic girl who does daring deeds. A character who supports Aadi's character and stands by his side. Undoubtedly, this role and movie will remain unforgettable films in her career. Avika will touch everyone's hearts with her acting in this film. We recently completed the final schedule of a very rich set for this film in Hyderabad."

Ravi Basoor, who gave life to the films *KGF* and *Salaar* with his music, is providing stunning music for this film. Post-production work is about to start with top technical experts.



DHANUSH SETS STAGE FOR PACKED SLATE OF FILMS

Celebrated actor Dhanush, known for his versatility and powerful performances, is gearing up for an exciting lineup of projects, solidifying his status as one of Indian cinema's most bankable stars. Currently immersed in the filming of *Kubera*, Dhanush's calendar is set to overflow with diverse roles and challenging projects. Post-*Kubera*, he is all set to step into the shoes of legendary music composer Ilaiyaraaja in a biopic helmed by Arun Matheswaran. This venture promises to delve into the life and legacy of the iconic musician, adding another dimension to Dhanush's already illustrious career.

Adding to the anticipation, Dhanush is slated to collaborate with director Vignesh Raja, known for his distinct narrative style showcased in *Por Thozhil*. Produced under the banner of VELS company, this upcoming project holds promise for cinephiles eagerly awaiting Dhanush's next cinematic outing.

In a testament to his stature in the industry, reports indicate that Dhanush's remuneration for the Vignesh Raja-directed film stands at a staggering 45 crores, underscoring his box-office draw and acting prowess. With each project promising a unique narrative and Dhanush's ability to inhabit diverse characters with finesse, fans and critics alike await the unfolding of these cinematic gems. As Dhanush prepares to bring his A-game to each role, the anticipation surrounding his upcoming releases continues to soar, setting the stage for yet another chapter in his stellar career.



Kalavedika NTR Film Awards concludes in a glittering event

The grand "Kalavedika NTR Film Awards" ceremony, organised by Kalavedika and Raghavi Media, unfolded at Hyderabad's Daspalla Hotel, paying tribute to distinguished personalities across various sectors of the film industry in honor of the legendary actor Dr. Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao.

The event commenced with a heartfelt prayer to Lord Ganesha, followed by the ceremonial lamp lighting and soulful renditions of NTR's iconic songs.

Among the guests were Nandamuri Mohan Krishna, Nandamuri Mohan Roopa, veteran actor Murali Mohan, K.L. Damodar Prasad (President of the Telugu Film Producers Council), T. Prasanna Kumar (Secretary), MAA Vice President Madala Ravi and other luminaries from the film fraternity. Murali Mohan, expressed his joy at the awards being named after NTR. He

fondly recalled his personal association with NTR, reflecting on how their collaboration in the film *Annadammula Anubandham* established him as NTR's on-screen brother, which resonated deeply with audiences. Murali Mohan lauded

NTR's profound impact in politics, reminiscing on his swift rise, founding a political party and implementing pioneering welfare schemes. He also praised NTR's courage in standing up against formidable odds, concluding with gratitude for receiving the prestigious NTR Lifetime Achievement Award.

The ceremony included the presentation of several awards, each bestowed by Murali Mohan and Nandamuri Mohan Krishna. Congratulations were extended to all organisers for orchestrating a successful and memorable event dedicated to honouring the timeless contributions of Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao.



Ajith Kumar's fierce look from *VidaaMuyarchi* out now

In the past several days, Ajith has treated his followers with updates. The first-look poster for the Magizh Thirumeni-directed *VidaaMuyarchi*, his 62nd film, was released by the filmmakers on Sunday. Ajith is shown in the image taking on new challenges since, in addition to his style and grace, he also has a commanding presence on an Azerbaijani highway. The image takes us back to his *Billa 2007* days, when he is pictured walking with Yog Japee while wearing a white suit. The scenario had the audience in stitches. With the actor in the foreground and the abandoned roadway in the background, the poster appears to have been carefully thought out by the team. Thus far, we have caught a few views of the action occurring on the highway, which includes the stunt



scenes. Although the posters don't reveal much, it's clear that the road is one of the main characters in the multi-star film, which also stars Arjun Sarja, Trisha Krishnan, Regina Cassandra and Arav in significant parts.

We have news from the camp that Ajith has adapted to Magizh Thirumeni's style of filmmaking with ease, and this will be seen on screen when *VidaaMuyarchi* is released. "The filming of *VidaaMuyarchi* is nearing its conclusion and is scheduled to conclude in July." A source close to the film unit stated that the filming, which is now taking place in Azerbaijan, will shortly relocate to India. Anirudh Ravichander is in charge of the music, Lyca is producing, while Om Prakash is in charge of the photography.

FROM DHONI, TENDULKAR TO GAVASKAR ALL HAIL INDIA'S T20 WORLD CUP TRIUMPH

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The who's who of Indian cricket fraternity, including Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar, hailed the title triumph in the T20 World Cup, saying it will inspire the country's "starry-eyed children to move one step closer to their dreams". India's first T20 world champion skipper Dhoni led the chorus of former and current cricketers, hailing Rohit Sharma's men for regaining the trophy after 17 long years after beating South Africa by seven runs in a pulsating final in Barbados on Saturday.

Former skipper Dhoni, who led India to their maiden title win in 2007 in South Africa, praised the team for maintaining their calm during the adverse situations in the game.

"WORLD CUP CHAMPIONS 2024. My heart rate was up, well done on being calm, having the self belief and doing what u guys did," (sic) Dhoni wrote on Instagram.

"From all the Indians back home and everywhere in the world a big thank you for bringing the World Cup Home. CONGRATULATIONS. Arre eee thanks for the priceless birthday gift," said Dhoni, who will turn 43 early next month.

The legendary Tendulkar took to social media to express his delight on India's achievement, saying the



country has now got a 'fourth star', following two 50-over World Cup wins in 1983 and 2011 as well as the historic triumph in the inaugural 2007 World T20.

"Every star added to the Team India jersey inspires our nation's starry-eyed children to move one step closer to their dreams. India gets the 4th star, our second in

T20WC," he wrote on 'X'. Tendulkar, who was a member of the Indian team which suffered a first-round exit in the 2007 50-overs World Cup, said life has come a full circle.

"Life comes full circle for Indian cricket in the West Indies. From our lows in the 2007 ODI World Cup to becoming a cricketing

powerhouse and winning the T20WC in 2024," he said. "Very happy for my friend Rahul Dravid, who missed out on the 2011 World Cup win but his contribution to this T20 World Cup victory has been immense. I am so happy for him."

Hailing Rohit's captaincy and the contributions of the other squad members, Tendulkar

said, "What can one say about Rohit Sharma? Superb captaincy! To put the 2023 ODI World Cup loss behind and to keep all our players motivated towards the T20 World Cup is commendable." "Jasprit Bumrah's Player of the Tournament award as well as Virat Kohli's Player of the Match award are both well-deserved. They were just

superb when it mattered," he added. "Along with Rahul, Paras Mhambrey and Vikram Rathour also made their international debuts in 1996. It was wonderful to see Team India excel under the guidance of this class of '96." "A total team effort. Hearty congratulations to all the players, coaches, support

staff, and BCCI," Tendulkar continued. Gavaskar said that winning the trophy is like finally scoring a hundred. "It is a great win after such a long time. Earlier, I kept saying that India was getting 90s but not getting centuries because they were reaching semi-finals and finals. Now, they have got a century and what a wonderful century this is," the former India captain told PTI.

From VVS Laxman to Anil Kumble, Sourav Ganguly to Gautam Gambhir, everyone praised the stupendous achievement in unison. "Congratulations Team India on becoming the T20 World Champions. Been the best team in the tournament remaining unbeaten throughout," VVS Laxman, current head of the National Cricket Academy wrote on X. "Great composure and character shown by the team to win this from the situation we were in with 5 overs remaining. Every player deserves credit for giving it their all and rising to the occasion and wonderfully led by Rohit," he added. "We are champions!" rejoiced ace spinner and 2011 World Cup winner Ravichandran Ashwin.

Former India captain and head coach Anil Kumble wrote, "Congratulations team India! Wonderful victory." "YEH MERA INDIA. WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS. SO PROUD OF YOU GUYS. (This is my India. We are the champions, so proud of you guys.)," wrote former spinner

Harbhajan Singh. An ambassador for the T20 World Cup in the Americas, Yuvraj Singh individually praised all the key members of the side. "You did it boys! @hardikpandya7 your a hero! @Jaspritbunrah93 what an over to bring India back in the game! Extremely ecstatic for @ImRo45 great captaincy under pressure! @imVkohli #Rahul Dravid and the whole team india #ICCT20WorldCup2024," he wrote. "Well played @akshar2026 @IamShivamDube. Koi reh to nahi gaya! Oh @surya_14kumar what a catch under pressure," Yuvraj added, wondering if he mistakenly did not leave out anyone.

Hero of two T20 World Cup finals and India's would be coach Gautam Gambhir wrote, "CHAMPIONS!" Having earlier explained his standout moments of the game when it was under progress, legendary Sachin Tendulkar wrote, "Chak De India!!!" Former India captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly also congratulated the side. "Heartiest congratulations to Rohit sharma and his team .. What a game to win .. May be a World Cup in 11 (13) yrs but the talent the country has ,they will win many more .." (sic) "Bumrah is absolutely magic .. Well done Virat,axar ,Hardik and every one .. Rahul Dravid and the support staff .. What a proud moment," (sic) Ganguly added.

Toni Kroos retirement delayed amid Germany's adventure at Euro 2024



AP ■ DORTMUND

Just like another Real Madrid great, Zinedine Zidane in 2006, Kroos is ending his storied career at a major tournament in Germany. He came out of international retirement in February for one last tournament. Each game Germany plays in the knockout stage could be the last of his career. Germany weathered a thunderstorm, hail and stubborn Danish resistance Saturday to ensure the 34-year-old midfielder will play again. Germany faces either Spain or Georgia in the quarterfinals July 5. Zidane reached the 2006 World Cup final with France, only to headbutt an opponent, get a red card and lose to Italy. Kroos and Germany can still dream of a win on home soil and a first major trophy since Kroos and his teammates lifted the 2014 World Cup. Until the Denmark game, Germany had not won a major tournament knockout game since Euro 2016. The win continues the sense that Germany is finally turning things around under coach Julian Nagelsmann after years of disappointment. He took over last year with a mission to deliver a host-nation success story at Euro 2024, and has already signed an extension for the 2026 World Cup.

devastated South African skipper Aiden Markram is hopeful that at some point he would be able to see the good in his team's T20 World Cup campaign but for now, all he feels is a "sting" which, he hopes, will ensure a "fire in the belly for next time". South Africa needed 30 off 30 balls in a chase of 176 against India but fell short by seven runs despite Heinrich Klaasen's awe-inspiring 27-ball 52 in the see-saw summit clash here on Saturday. India had Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya's death bowling and a blinder of a catch by Suryakumar Yadav to thank for the close win after the peerless Virat Kohli set up the match for them with a brilliant 76-run knock. "It's not the first game of cricket that's been lost with a team needing 30 of 30 - it's more that India was allowed to bowl well, they're allowed to field well, they're allowed to go from that position to a position of strength," the 29-year-old Markram said in the post-match press conference. "...Right now to pinpoint something is quite tough but we'll reflect over the next few days, over the next few weeks, try and find areas that we could have maybe improved in during today's game, but also to highlight the things that went really well for us," he added. The pain aside, Markram is proud of his teammates, who

For now, it stings, just gut-wrenching: SA skipper Markram on World Cup heartbreak

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN



managed to get rid of the chokers' tag to an extent by making their first World Cup final. "I think one thing that I will definitely say is how proud we are. Not just of today, the game itself, but the competition as a whole, the build-up to get here. "So, in hindsight, the things will still feel really good about this competition. But like I mentioned, just for the time being, it stings a bit, but it's good for it to sting. It gives you that little bit of fire in the belly

for next time that you're here," he said. Markram admitted that Klaasen will find it tough to make peace with the result after such a "special effort." "We've seen him do it many, many times around the world and to deliver it in a stage like this is a really special effort. So, it's going to be tough for him, that's what I say when I mean we reflect back. "There's going to be lots of things to be happy about," he said.

While the Indian players had happy tears in their eyes, the Proteas broke down in the realisation that another major title had slipped through their hands, only this time at the final hurdle. "It's just gut wrenching, that's really what it is. Each player has been on a different individual journey to get to this first final. Ultimately you become really tight as a group and you want good things to happen to this group because you know they're great people," he said. "...When you get really close like that, especially the nature of how the game went, obviously adds to the emotions and it's one of those things but yeah, we can channel it moving forward but I think next couple of days you let it be. "...You let yourself feel the way you want to feel and then really start reflecting in a positive manner." Despite the disappointment and heartbreak, Markram did not forget to applaud India's brilliance and composure in the final. "It's tournament cricket, it's tough cricket, it's not easy to win trophies and you've got to take your hats off to a team like India for lifting the trophy. A lot of hard work goes into it. "But yeah, we'd like to think we're one step closer and hopefully moving forward we can get that first win and it can be a snowball effect of quite a few to come," he said.

Told crowd to behave because Hardik is big-stage player: Sanjay Manjrekar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



When Sanjay Manjrekar schooled the Wankhede crowd to "behave" after they booed the newly-appointed Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya, all he wanted the public to realise that their boorish behaviour targeting a "big stage player", was unfair. Pandya was jeered at every venue after he was handed captaincy by MI, signalling a controversial end to the successful and popular Rohit Sharma's tenure at the helm. The whole episode had a deep-level impact on Pandya. Manjrekar, while conducting the toss at the Wankhede during a home match of MI, did interject but it only led to a meme-fest by the insensitive social media trolls. Pandya played a major part in India's second T20 World Cup trophy with 144 runs and 11 wickets, and Manjrekar now stands vindicated. "What a turnaround for Hardik Pandya. In IPL, there were people jeering him and booing him and I told them to behave because this is a big-stage player," Manjrekar told 'ESPNCricinfo'. The former India player and noted pundit always knew that Pandya would hold his nerve in pressure situations as he brought his team back in the game with the wicket of the dangerous Heinrich Klaasen and then closed out

the game with a mindblowing final over. "We have seen that umpteenth times, wickets of Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller and right at the end, Rabada, so he was a champion and no surprise, to see him flourish on the big stage," Manjrekar said. Manjrekar reminded Indian fans that even in their humiliating defeat against England in Adelaide, back in the 2022 edition, the colourful Baroda man was a face-saver and a calm presence under pressure. "Even in that semifinal against England, he came in and gave India some hope with 60 off 33. So that's what he is all about. "You felt safe when he came to bowl in the last over, he was not going to lose his nerves, he was going to bowl sensibly," he concluded.

Sindhu focussed on perfecting her skills to bag third Olympic medal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-time Olympic medalist P V Sindhu is physically and mentally in best shape but realises she needs to be "much more smarter" in her pursuit of a third medal at the Games. Sindhu had claimed a silver and bronze medal at the last two Olympics at Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo and will be heading into Paris with the aim of becoming the first Indian to win three Olympic medals. "It is challenging, it's not easy but, at the same time, it's not impossible," Sindhu said during an interaction conducted by Sports Authority of India, the Indian Olympic Association and the Badminton Association of India. "Going into the third Olympics, I need to be smarter. I have a lot of

experience on my side and I need to be much more smarter and I hope I can change the colour, and of course, get another medal for the country." Sindhu is currently training at the Hermann-Neuberger Sportschule in Saarbrücken, Germany after her proposal was cleared by the sports ministry. She will be heading to Paris directly from there when the Games begin on July 26. "... Physically and mentally I am right there, I just have to be smarter and my coach Agus (Dwi Santoso) has been taking care of that, my trainer has been taking care of my physical part. "I am working on all the strokes, whether it is defense, or attack or netplay, it is important to be perfect in all things. "So I'm not focussing on just one stroke or technique,

because you never know what it is going to be, there are players who are smart enough to change and move to plan B. "So you need to be prepared for it and I am focusing on practicing each and everything to make everything perfect -- each stroke, all techniques." Asked why she picked Germany as her training base ahead of the Games, Sindhu said: "Prakash (Padukone) sir, and we all discussed and thought, it will be a good place, it is near to Paris, it is in between nowhere, so I am much more focussed. "I have taken few sparring partners and have a team and currently training here has been very peaceful. I can focus even more before the Olympics." Sindhu has spent most time on the court in the run-up to the Olympics but she hasn't been consistent enough or



beating the top players. The Indian, though, did manage a runner-up finish at Malaysia Masters super 500. "It took me some time to come back (from injury) and I feel that now I'm doing well. Coming to the finals is not an easy thing. And, finishing

matches, not finishing matches, it depends on how we play. "Sometimes nothing might work out," she said referring to the loss in Malaysian Masters final. "I feel that there's been a lot of improvement and I know that

I can do much better and I'm confident that I'm getting there. I need to keep believing in myself and keep working much harder. "I feel the Olympics is something where it will be very different. I don't want to compare with others but

looking at my form, I'm in great shape and it's just that you have to play very differently with every player. "It's a different style of play. I think the strategy will be very different whether it is Chen Yu Fei or An Seyoung. It also depends on the draws, with whom I play. Looking forward to going to the Olympics. So, yeah, hoping for the best." Sindhu, who trained under Pulella Gopichand for many years, moved from Hyderabad to Bengaluru after trying out four different coaches in 12 months. The ace shuttler feels the level of competition now is very high. "I've played two Olympics and this will be my third and every time the game keeps changing, every Olympics there are different players. "So it is going to be very challenging and really hard because one is we know each

other's game and two is the game has completely changed and I think there are a lot of players who would be looking at your game, how you're playing, what are they doing, what needs to be done. "So there are a lot of tactics and techniques which will go into this and also physically and mentally you need to be much more stronger, much smarter." Talking about her mentor Padukone, Sindhu said he has been helping her out by pointing out flaws. "Prakash sir has been seeing my matches and he's been telling me a few things if I'm making mistakes. He observes a lot. "When he sat behind me in the last All England and French Open, his inputs were quite simple. He just always told me that you know just play freely and just give your best."