

BRS MP Keshava Rao resigned from the RS after joining the Congress. We welcome his decision. What about the BRS MLA who defected and contested to the Lok Sabha on a Congress ticket? What about the half a dozen other BRS MLAs who defected to the Congress? Rahul, is this how you are going to uphold the Constitution? If you can't make the BRS MLAs resign, how can the nation trust that you are committed to scheduling the 10th amendment as per the Congress manifesto? Yeh Kaisa Nyay Patra Hain.

-KT Rama Rao, BRS MLA

P2

PM Modi to visit Russia, Austria from July 8 to 10

OOMPHING UP HER GLAM WITH SUNKISSED VIBES IN MAURITIUS

Niharika NM set for Tollywood DEBUT!

DON'T MISS...

GHMC approves GIS-based survey...

City Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi chaired the third Standing Committee meeting on Thursday at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) headquarters. The Mayor said that the members approved eight items and one table item in the committee meeting. Most of the items approved in the meeting are related to the development of roads and junctions. The standing committee approved the allotting agency to Neo Geo Info Technologies Pvt Ltd for execution of GIS-based survey and mapping...

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Battles of Toling, Tiger Hill proved...

Barely four months into his service, a young Lieutenant Balwan Singh led the Indian Army's Ghatok Platoon in a strategic assault on Pakistani intruders during the Kargil war and was among the brave soldiers who captured Tiger Hill on July 4, 1999. "There was no looking back from there. It was victory after the capture of the Tiger Hill," recalls Singh, now a colonel with the famed 18 Grenadiers, who was injured while fighting the enemy but continued to fight. He was honoured with...

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Cement sector sees marginal growth...

The cement sector has witnessed a muted growth of 2-3 per cent in the first quarter of current fiscal on account of a slowdown in construction activity because of the Lok Sabha polls, according to a report from rating agency Ica. However, the overall volumes for the FY2024-25 are likely to expand by 7-8 per cent driven by a healthy demand from the infrastructure and housing sectors. "Nevertheless, the government's focus on infrastructure projects, sanction of additional houses under the Pradhan...

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Bopanna-Ebden move to second...

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden moved into the second round of the Wimbledon men's doubles event with a smooth win over Robin Haas and Sander Arends here. Bopanna and Ebden sailed past their Dutch opponents 7-5, 6-4 in an hour and 11 minutes in a rain-interrupted match on Wednesday. The second seeds, who are the current Australian Open champions, will face Germany's Hendrik Jebens and Constantin Frantzen in the second round...

-SPORTS



CM Revanth Reddy met Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence in New Delhi on Thursday along with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka

TG seeks more IPS officers, adequate funds

CM meets Shah, requests for Rs 88 cr for TG NAB, Rs 90 cr for TG CSB

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah to allocate adequate funds for the modernization of the state's Intelligence wings, the Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TG NAB) and the Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TG CSB).

The Chief Minister met the Union Home Minister at his residence in New Delhi on Thursday along with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka.

During the hour-long meeting, the Chief Minister requested Rs 88 crore for TG NAB and Rs 90 crore for TG CSB to procure modern equipment to curb drug and cyber-

crimes. He also emphasized the necessity to review IPS cadre strength every five years and urged the Home Minister to conduct the review for Telangana which was last done in 2016.

At the time of bifurcation Telangana was allotted 61 IPS posts which are now inadequate for the state. The Chief Minister requested an additional 29 IPS posts for Telangana. The Chief Minister also highlighted the need for establishing security camps in Adilabad, Mancherial and Komaram Bheem Asifabad districts like in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra to counter Left extremism.

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Fulfil Telangana's long-pending demands

CM Revanth discusses critical issues with PM, presents wish list

- Remove Shraavanapalli coal block from the auction list and its allocation along with the Koyagudem and Sattupalli Block 3 to SCLL
- Telangana needs support in IT infrastructure
- Allocate 2,450 acres of Defence land to the state for infrastructure projects
- Sanction of 2.5 million houses for Telangana in the upcoming phase of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy met Prime Minister Modi on Thursday and discussed many critical issues regarding the state. The meeting during which Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka was also present lasted approximately an hour, during which issues were discussed in detail. The Chief Minister urged the removal of the Shraavanapalli coal block from the auction list and its allocation along with the Koyagudem and Sattupalli Block 3 to SCLL.



CM Revanth Reddy along with Deputy CM Bhatti presenting a replica of Nandi to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting held in New Delhi on Thursday

'KK to become Special Advisor to TG govt'

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he wants to give Cabinet rank to senior Congress leader Keshava Rao who has been appointed as a Special Advisor to the Telangana Government. The CM said the entire Congress party decided the resignation of Keshava Rao. After meeting Prime Minister Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Ministers during his visit to

New Delhi, he visited KK's residence in New Delhi. The Chief Minister said that from now on KK will decide what is good for the Congress and the state and clarified that the state government will run according to his advice. The CM said that they focused on the development of the Musi River and the Regional Ring Road.

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Keshava Rao greeting Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhad

Keshava Rao quits Rajya Sabha

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS's Rajya Sabha MP, K. Keshava Rao, resigned his Rajya Sabha membership on Thursday. Keshava Rao submitted his resignation letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhad.

It may be recalled that K. Keshava Rao had joined the Congress on Wednesday in the presence of AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, AICC General Secretaries KC Venugopal and Deepa Das Munshi at Kharge's residence.

On the very next day after joining the Congress, Keshava Rao resigned his Rajya Sabha membership that he had got from the BRS. He had two more years left as a Rajya Sabha Member.



TG's electoral mandate disheartened farmers of other states, says KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The electoral mandate of the Telangana people has disheartened farmers in other states, BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao said.

BRS activists who gathered at KCR's Erravelli residence on Thursday reiterated their support for his leadership by chanting slogans like "Jai CM, Jai KCR, Jai Telangana." They came from

Khammam, Mahbubabad, Vemulawada and Ibrahimpatnam to meet KCR.

During the meeting, KCR addressed the crowd, highlighting that the BRS's governance in Telangana had become a model for the nation. He pointed out that BRS's initiatives in power supply, irrigation, drinking water and agriculture were "unprecedented" in Indian history. He said the agricultural advance-

ments in Telangana had led neighbouring states like Maharashtra to aspire for similar governance. KCR recalled the peaceful protests by farmers against the BJP government's black laws, which had resulted in the deaths of 700 farmers due to police action.

He emphasised the BRS's commitment to resolving farmers' issues, explaining how the 'Kisan Sarkar' slogan resonated in Maharashtra.

Continued on Page 2

TG taught KCR a lesson: CLP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress Legislature Party (CLP) said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao ruled the State for 10 years like a monarch and so the people taught him and his BRS a fitting lesson in the Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking to the media at the CLP Media Hall on Thursday along with Peddapalli MLA Vijayaramana Rao, Government Whip Adhuri Laxman criticised BRS leaders for stating that they will topple the Congress government.

2

RS 8,000 CR PARKED IN BANKS

CMs of Telugu states to discuss sharing of funds

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Due to the stubborn attitude of two Telugu states, thousands of crores of rupees are parked in the various banks since the last 10 years. The institutions listed in the 9th and 10th schedule of AP Reorganisation Act have not been bifurcated between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states since the last 10 years.

As a result, Rs 8,000 crore belonging to these institutions are parked in the banks and the State government can neither use these funds. Both

Telugu states are starved of funds for development and for welfare activities. There are 91 institutions in the 9th schedule and 142 in the 10th schedule, including government departments, universities and others listed in the Act by the Central government at the time of the State's bifurcation. Both governments resolved the bifurcation of some institutions which are not controversial. But both the governments are not ready to compromise or come to a consensus regarding big institutions which have a lot of funds.

Continued on Page 2

Six BRS MLCs to join Congress?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu visited the Kakatiya Software Technology Park in Hanamkonda which currently houses six software companies and said that talks are going on to bring in eight more IT companies in the next two months.

The IT park has 64 plug-and-play seats with half of them already leased out to software and animation companies. The Minister called on NRIs and major IT companies to establish

TPCC CHIEF, CABINET EXPANSION Decision now pending with Cong brass: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the ball is now in the AICC's court regarding the selection of the TPCC President and Cabinet expansion. He said the AICC should explain why there is a delay regarding these two issues.

Speaking to the media on Thursday in New Delhi, the CM said that he had raised cabinet expansion and appointment of the new TPCC president with the AICC President. However, a decision on the matter is pending with the high command, he said.

"The media expanded the cabinet and later postponed the expansion. I never mentioned a particular date on which the cabinet would be expanded. I had only raised cabinet expansion and appointment of the TPCC chief with the AICC President.

The issue is now with the high command. Before that, the media expanded the cabinet, allocated ministries and later postponed it. I told the high command that my tenure as TPCC President would end on July 7 and asked the high command to appoint a new TPCC chief before that.

'8 more IT firms likely in Warangal soon'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu visited the Kakatiya Software Technology Park in Hanamkonda which currently houses six software companies and said that talks are going on to bring in eight more IT companies in the next two months.

The IT park has 64 plug-and-play seats with half of them already leased out to software and animation companies. The Minister called on NRIs and major IT companies to establish



regional offices in TG districts. He reiterated the government's commitment to establishing IT parks in tier II and tier III cities which would improve employment

opportunities. Sridhar asked officials to protect the lands of the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIIC) from encroachments. He said that strong action should be taken against those who have grabbed the corporation's lands.

He said that individuals who acquired lands for industrial purposes and are now using them for commercial purposes should be detected and penalties must be collected from them.

2

OPPOSING BID TO CANCEL EXAM...

Successful NEET-UG candidates move SC for direction to Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 50 successful Gujarat-based NEET-UG candidates, including several who have been ranked first, have moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to restrain the Centre and the National Testing Agency from cancelling the controversy-ridden exam.

They have sought a direction from the top court to the Union Education Ministry to probe, identify and take strict action against students and others who indulged in unfair practices like paper leak and impersonation in the NEET-UG exam conducted on May 5 this year. The fresh plea by 56 students



has been filed days before a top court bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud is scheduled to hear as many as 26 petitions seeking reliefs like re-test and probe into the conduct of the examination plagued by allegations of malpractices.

2

PHONE-TAPPING

'SIB hard disks data can't be retrieved'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad city police, in their counter filed a 40 pages affidavit in the High Court over suo motu case of phone-tapping and said that during their investigation that the material evidences seized from the Musi river have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory, but the experts said that the data cannot be extracted from the hard disks which were obtained from the river bed.

Interestingly, these hard disks have not been submitted to the Nampally court while the police had submitted their chargesheet. Later on, after the court found out mistakes in the chargesheet and evidence, the police submitted the evidence to the court.

The police have not received the remaining computer systems and



mobile phones and other electronic gadgets data from the FSL.

The police arrested four accused in this case, but two accused fled to the USA. In the affidavit, the police said that they have sent the proposals to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for issuing Blue Notice against T Prabhakar Rao (A1), and Sharavan Kumar Rao (A6) through the Interpol, which is under process with the CBI. The police

The police have not received the remaining computer systems and mobile phones and other electronic gadgets data from the FSL.

requested the Regional Passport Authority to impound the passports of both the accused.

The police said that based on the investigation done so far, Prabhakar Rao was the mastermind behind creating special teams for benefitting the then ruling party.

In the affidavit the police said that Prabhakar Rao chose trusted officers along with those belonging to his community. Some of them are D Praneeth Rao, Venugopal Rao, Bhujanga Rao, Thirupathanna and Venkat Rao.

Govt focussed on development of Warangal, says Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government is paying special attention to the development of the historic Warangal city, said Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy who is also the Warangal district in-charge.

He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy made several promises in line with the hopes of local people during his recent visit to Warangal. Officials have been asked to undertake development projects in Warangal city on a war footing.

On Thursday, the Minister conducted a six-hour-long review meet-

ing with Warangal district ministers, Konda Surekha and Danasari Anasuya Sitakka, Chief Minister's Principal Advisor Vem Narendra Reddy and other officials at his office in the Secretariat.

The meeting focused on the development of the united Warangal district, IRR land acquisition, ORR alignment, the Warangal Master Plan, the underground drainage system, the KUDA Master Plan, the Kalojiki Kalakshetram, the construction of retaining walls within GWMC limits, flood prevention measures, construction of water tanks and the Narsampet Medical College.

2

BRS MLA KTR POSER TO RAHUL GANDHI

Ask's BRS MLAs who joined Cong to quit Assembly

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the lines of Jeevan's statement, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao also posted on X a comment welcoming the act of Keshava Rao and demanding that BRS MLAs who joined the Congress should resign their posts.

"BRS MP Keshava Rao submitted his resignation after joining the Congress. I wel-

come his decision. What about the BRS MLAs who defected and contested the Lok Sabha on a Congress ticket? What about the half a dozen BRS MLAs who defected to the Congress? @RahulGandhi is this how you are going to uphold the Constitution? If you can't make BRS MLAs resign, how would the nation believe you are committed to scheduling the 10th Amendment as



per the Congress manifesto? Yeh Kaisa Nyay Patra Hain?"

'Resigned from RS to uphold moral values'

Former BRS Rajya Sabha Member K. Keshava Rao said that he had resigned his Rajya Sabha Membership as he had joined the Congress after quitting BRS. He said that he was elected on a BRS symbol and so he had quit his Rajya Sabha Membership given to him by the BRS. "I resigned to uphold moral values and to obey the law. I had two more years but decided to quit," he said. KK quit the BRS party in March and joined the Congress on July 3 in New Delhi in the presence of top Congress leaders. On Thursday, KK resigned his Rajya Sabha Membership.



Jeevan's statement on KK embarrasses BRS MLAs who joined Cong

Congress MLC T. Jeevan Reddy said that he is happy with BRS Rajya Sabha Member K. Keshava Rao quitting his Rajya Sabha Membership on the very next day after joining the Congress. He said that Keshava Rao submitted his resignation upholding moral values and following

Parliamentary traditions. Keshava Rao's resignation will 'strengthen' Rahul Gandhi's leadership and national integrity and unity, he said. Although Jeevan's letter appreciated Keshava Rao quitting the RS, it embarrassed BRS MLAs who joined the Congress recently. His statement indirectly



indicates that BRS MLAs joining the Congress must resign from their MLA posts.

Deepadas Munshi an extra constitutional force in TG: NVSS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that the AICC in-charge general secretary Deepa Das Munshi has become an extra constitutional force, Telangana BJP vice-president NVSS Prabhakar slammed Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for becoming a captive in the hands of Delhi. NVSS Prabhakar alleged that former CM K Chandrashekar Rao and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy have been playing the role of 'Saindava' result-

ing in Telangana being crushed in between these four persons.

Speaking to the media at State BJP office on Thursday, NVSS Prabhakar found fault with the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi saying that even though the Chief Minister has special powers as per the constitution in the matter of cabinet formation in the state, however, what is the necessary to CM Revanth Reddy to request Delhi so many times for the expansion

of the cabinet. NVSS Prabhakar said that it is a proof of their double standards that the leaders of the Congress party who are talking about protecting the Constitution and giving an impression that they are protectors of the Constitution are not allowing the Chief Minister to perform his powers given by the constitution.

The Congress party came to power on its own strength... After the oath taking of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, all the

key departments in the cabinet are left with him, but the administration is limping, but the expansion of the cabinet is not going ahead, NVSS Prabhakar ridiculed.

NVSS Prabhakar alleged that CM Revanth Reddy is trying hard to please the Delhi leadership. It is true that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has no freedom in implementing administrative decisions no matter how much he wants to please the leadership while in the state.

AICC panel visiting TG to study party's failures in LS polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The AICC has set up fact-finding committees in many states to study the failure of the Congress in the LS elections. The AICC has constituted fact-finding committees in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. In this context, the Kurien Committee will come to Telangana on July 10. The Kurien Committee has been appointed by the AICC to conduct enquiries in Telangana. Rakhibul Hussain and Pargat Singh are the other members of the Telangana committee. The committee which will come to the state on July 10 will collect information from Congress leaders in Telangana. There is a possibility of them staying in Telangana for two or three days and visiting many constituencies. It is reported that top Congress leaders are thinking of allotting corporation chief posts only after the Kurien Committee's report.

'Selfishness of AP leaders hit TG farmers hard'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 'selfishness' of the Andhra leadership in United AP and the 'negligence' of the Telangana leadership resulted in Telangana losing its rightful share of river waters resulting in decades of losses to Telangana farmers, BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao said.

He emphasized that the lack of awareness among the Telangana leadership to recognise the deliberate betrayals in the power and agricultural sectors turned into an irreversible curse for TG farmers.

KCR said that understanding the complexities of the Telangana issue, poets, artists and intellectuals played a crucial role in the cultural and literary processes while the BRS propagated the ideology, educating people and leading the struggle to achieve statehood for Telangana.



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awardee, MLC Goreti Venkanna, paid a courtesy visit to KCR at his residence in Erravalli. During the visit, Venkanna presented his poetry books to KCR. During the informal meeting, they discussed Telangana literature, culture and politics.

Venkanna praised KCR's peaceful movement and 10 years of rule and said it was a model for the country.

On the same occasion, senior journalist Vardelli Venkanna presented his book 'Pitta Valina Chettu' to KCR, who commended Vardelli for his work. MLCs Madhusudhanachari, Seri Subhash Reddy, former MLA Jeevan Reddy and Vishnuvardhan Reddy were also present at the meeting.

Six BRS MLCs to join Congress?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant political development, six BRS MLCs are likely to join the Congress party. Late on Thursday night, they checked in at a prominent hotel, while their vehicles were parked outside Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's residence. They reportedly reached the residence of Revanth Reddy to formalize their switch to Congress, considering the following day is amavasya. Those believed to be switching sides



are Dande Vital, Bhanu Prasad, Guggaparu Dayanand, Prabhakar Rao, Ege Mallesh, and Basava Raju Saraiya.

TG seeks more IPS officers...

Continued from page 1

He requested that these three districts which were earlier affected by Left extremism but were later removed from the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme be reinstated under it. Given Telangana's extensive border with neighbouring states, the Chief Minister stressed the importance of focusing on security.

The Chief Minister requested the establishment of CRPF JTF camps in the Kondavai village of Charla Mandal, Bhadradi Kothagudem district and the Alubaka village of Venkatapuram Mandal in Mulugu district.

He informed Amit Shah that the CPI Maoist Committee is trying to expand its influence by using the favourable terrain in the forested hills along the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border. JTF camps can help to eliminate this Maoist unit, he said. He also requested the release of Rs 18.31 crore pending for

the last four years which constitutes 60% of the Central share for Special Police Officers (SPOs).

The Chief Minister highlighted the difficulty in adhering to the rule of recruiting only ex-service-men and former police personnel as SPOs in Maoist areas as they are not readily available.

The Chief Minister also requested the Union Home Minister's cooperation to resolve long-pending issues connected to the Andhra Pradesh - Telangana Reorganization Act.

He urged a harmonious resolution of disputes regarding the distribution of government buildings and corporations listed under Schedule 9 (as per Sections 53, 68, and 71 of the Act) and institutions under Schedule 10 (as per Section 75 of the Act).

He emphasized the need to deliver justice to Telangana regarding claims made by Andhra Pradesh over assets and institutions not mentioned in the Reorganization Act.

'KK to become...'

Continued from page 1

"The Congress is my home. I am a party man. Telangana came due to Congress MPs. I am happy to have joined the party. Governance in the state is democratic now. No one can predict it in six months. I have seen every development programme in six months. Family publicity is a thing of the past and those in the government did it. I resigned to uphold moral values.

CMs of Telugu...

Continued from page 1

Unless these institutions are bifurcated between both the states they cannot utilise the funds which are parked in the banks.

In the Reorganisation Act, the Central government has laid down rules regarding bifurcation of assets, liabilities and the employees of these institutions. But both the State governments aver that these rules are

contradictory and are using them to their advantage. According to sources, APGenco is worth Rs 2,448 crore in the top 10 institutions of the 9th schedule. APGenco has the highest amount and AP Marketing Federation has the lowest amount. In the top 10 institutions of the 10th schedule there are funds to the tune of Rs 2,994 crore. Around Rs 1,559 crore was divided between the two states.

Fulfil Telangana's long...

Continued from page 1

This is vital to meet the state's power generation needs, he said.

Emphasizing the need to boost IT infrastructure, the Chief Minister sought the revival of the Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR) in Hyderabad to encourage the growth of new IT companies. The project, initially approved in

2010, is stalled since 2014. A request was made for the allocation of 2,450 acres of Defence land to the state for infrastructure projects including elevated corridors on the Hyderabad-Karimnagar and Hyderabad-Nagpur highways (NH-44). The Chief Minister offered alternative land in Raviryal. The Chief Minister reiterated the need to fulfil the promises made during the state's reorganization, includ-

ing the establishment of a steel plant in Bayaram and a rail coach factory in Kazipet.

Highlighting the lower allocation in the initial phase, the Chief Minister requested the sanction of 2.5 million houses for Telangana in the upcoming phase of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

The state is prepared to align its guidelines with those of PMAY.

EVMs kept in reserve can be tampered with: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that there is a chance of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) being tampered with and that there is a possibility of the 15 per cent EVMs kept as reserve on polling day getting tampered. He said that if some of these reserve EVMs (15 per

cent) are tampered with, there is no chance of anyone detecting it.

Speaking to the media after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Ministers on Thursday, Revanth said that he was confident that the Congress will be in power till 2029 in TG. He said that there is a convention of power changing every five years in Andhra Pradesh, however, it is 10 years in Telangana.

The CM said that beautification of the Musi River area and completing the Regional Ring Road are the priorities of the Congress government. He said the government is planning to lay a road and railway track for 55 km on the Musi River.

The government will allocate double-bedroom houses to 1,00,000 people who become homeless.

The CM expressed the hope that he would be able to complete these projects and make a mark as Chief Minister. He said the BRS could not win a single seat in the Lok Sabha elections and that people do not care about the BRS and the BJP.

TG's electoral mandate...

Continued from page 1

Despite recent election results, KCR urged BRS cadres not to lose hope, reminding them that democracy is about the people's decision.

He asserted that both power and opposition roles are temporary and that true political leadership involves continuous work for public welfare unaffected by electoral outcomes. KCR expressed concern over

the Congress government's discontinuation of many schemes launched by the BRS government in irrigation, drinking water supply, uninterrupted power supply and fee reimbursement. He reiterated that the ultimate goal of BRS is the complete development of Telangana and called for unwavering efforts from party workers for that. Former Armur MLA Jeevan Reddy and others attended the meeting. KCR

made a special request to the public to inform or seek permission before visiting him to avoid inconvenience. He also said that the party would announce constituency names in advance coordinating local leadership meetings to streamline the process. BRS workers from various regions told their complaints to KCR, lamenting the loss of the party's government and subsequent hardships.

'8 more IT firms likely in...

Continued from page 1

Sridhar ordered the preparation of an action plan to safeguard vacant lands of the corporation in all districts.

On Thursday, the minister conducted a surprise inspection of the Industrial Infrastructure Corporation office in the erstwhile Warangal district. He expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of chairs for the staff

and asked Zonal Manager Swami to modernize the office and provide basic facilities within a month.

He expressed anger over commercial activities being conducted in industrial areas allotted at concessional rates in the Rampur and Madikonda industrial estates of Warangal district.

He ordered an immediate survey to identify lands that have been converted to com-

mercial use and to collect penalties of 20% to 50% based on road width as per regulations from the allottees.

Sridhar said the government is committed to setting up IT parks in all districts and not just concentrating software companies in Hyderabad.

Warangal West MLA Naini Rajender Reddy accompanied Sridhar Babu during the inspection.

Govt focussed on development...

Continued from page 1

Ponguleti said that Warangal is the second-largest city in Telangana after Hyderabad and that the government is taking steps to develop it on par with Hyderabad.

He directed officials to prepare a Master Plan to meet the city's needs until 2050, considering population growth. This Master Plan should include things like the Pharma City, IT services, manufacturing units, ecotourism, educational institutions, stadiums, airport, logistics park, tourism and the establishment of dumping yards along the Khammam-Warangal and Karimnagar-Warangal roads.

The Minister also asked officials to speed up the preparation of DPRs for all

proposed projects and warned that action would be taken against officials failing to meet deadlines.

The construction of a ring road in Warangal should ensure connectivity with National Highways and land acquisition for this project should be undertaken on a war footing, he said.

The Kaloji Kalakshetram should be completed by September 9, Kaloji's birth anniversary and inaugurated by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

Health Secretary Dr Christina Chongtu was asked to explore the feasibility of starting operations at the Narsampet Medical College this year.

officials. Expressing dissatisfaction over the delay in the Kazipet Ayodhyapuram ROB construction work, the Minister questioned about the delay in completing it.

The Minister called for the expansion of drainage canals and a special drive to protect Warangal city from floods.

He also highlighted the need for a beefed-up Disaster Response Force (DRF) with staff from the Revenue Department. The Minister noted that encroachments of canals and tanks are causing frequent flood threats in Warangal city. Immediate steps should be taken to relocate those living in encroached areas to other places, ensuring no inconvenience to the poor. Additionally, measures should be in place to prevent new encroachments, he said.

TG taught...

Continued from page 1

Laxman warned that no one will stay in the BRS if the Congress opens its gates and that KCR has been making provocative statements sitting in his farmhouse.

Vijayaramana said the Congress government is trying to implement the farm loan waiver scheme.

"KCR is not able to digest the fact that the Congress government is going to implement the loan waiver scheme. KCR's mind is not working and so KCR is saying that the government will fall. Is the government a farmhouse to fall as KCR said? No one in the state has the guts to topple the Congress admin. The Congress is not a party that says one word in the morning and another in the evening," he said.

Successful NEET-UG...

Continued from page 1

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admission to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. NEET-UG, 2024 was held across 4,750 centres on May 5 and around 24 lakh candidates appeared in the exam. Allegations of irregularities, including paper leaks, have led to protests in several cities and sparring between rival political parties.

The pleas seeking cancellation of the exam, re-test and high-level probe are listed for hearing on July 8 in the SC. The fresh plea of Sidharth Komal Singla and 55 other students was filed

through lawyer Devendra Singh.

It said "The Hon'ble court may further direct the respondents (Centre and the NTA) not to re-conduct NEET-UG ... as that would not only be unreasonable and harsh for the honest and hardworking students but also would lead to the infringement of the Right to Education and therefore violative of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution."

The plea sought a direction to the Centre and the NTA to identify and punish the examinees who adopted unfair means, identify the centres and take appropriate action where any compromise to the established guidelines for NEET-UG 2024 examinations has been done."

THIRD STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

GHMC approves GIS-based survey, mapping of properties

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi chaired the third Standing Committee meeting on Thursday at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) headquarters. The Mayor said that the members approved eight items and one table item in the committee meeting. Most of the items approved in the meeting are related to the development of roads and junctions.

The standing committee approved the allotting agency to Neo Geo Info Technologies Pvt Ltd for execution of GIS-based survey and mapping of properties and utilities.

The committee recommended to the government for sanction of administrative expenditure of additional two years. It also approved proposed 18 meter and 9 meter road width from Pipe Line Road to Qutubullapur Main Road via Vennela Gadda Cheruvu, 18 meter road width from Pipe Line Road to

Gajanan enclave, proposed 12 meter road from Vennela Gadda Cheruvu embankment to Godavari Homes, Gayatri Nagar. It also directed the officials to include RDPs in the proposed master plan for 105 properties affected by widening and send it to the government.

Increase in the proposed master plan road width from 24 meters to 30 meters for the acquisition of 418 properties affected by the proposed 30 meter road width from Kishanbagh Junction, Indiana Hotel to Pillar No. 202 via Chintalmet.

The committee also approved to include 153 properties affected by the proposed 18 meter road width from Barkas division Masjid-e-Noor Ismail Nagar to Bismilla Kirana Store, Ahmed Nagar, Bandlaguda in the master plan and sent it to the government for approval.

It approved the acquisition of 35 properties affected by construction of a high-level bridge over Moosi river at

Chaderghat for proposed 12.4 m, 21 m, 36 m road width from Jail Garden to Sri Renuka Yellamma temple, increased road width and changed alignment in the master plan.

It was approved for administrative sanction and ratification of the GHMC for the expenditure of Rs 4.50 crore for the development and widening of Johra Be Dargah Junction with a width of 60 feet as part of major road development upgradation under the SRDP scheme.

In regards to table items, it gave allotment of 711 square yards of land at Banjara Hills Road No. 14 to Santoshi, wife of Col.

Santosh Babu, who was immortalised in the Indo-China War.

Commissioner Amrapali Kata, standing committee members Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, Mohammed Qadeer, Nimdu Archana, Mohammed Naziruddin and Ghausuddin Mohammed were present in the meeting.

New feature added to facial recognition app

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) implemented the facial recognition attendance system in the place of former Aadhaar biometric attendance system due to its efficient, fool-proof and cost-effective mechanism. It also added a new feature - mid punch attendance on Thursday in the facial recognition app (FRS). The officials stated that this new feature will take attendance everyday of any two randomly selected sanitation workers who were present in morning from each group by the app and to avoid non-availability of workers on field between In punch and Out punch. Enhanced dashboards with analytics are made available for better reporting, monitoring and quick decision-making.

BHARAT BANDH

Mixed response from educational institutions

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Student and youth organisations collaborated and organised Bharat bandh on Thursday. Despite the student organisations calling upon the educational institutions to cooperate with them via WhatsApp messages to close their schools and colleges, a majority of educational institutions, especially private institutions in the city held regular classes thereby evoking mixed response to the bandh.

Student unions such as NSUI, AISEF, PYL, AIPSU and others called for the bandh to abolish the National Testing Agency (NTA) for failing to conduct the NEET smoothly. They also demanded the government to give compensation to students impacted by the question paper leak, besides the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the issue.

Shreya, a student of a private engineering college, said, "Our college management asked us to attend the classes just like



Student unions such as NSUI, AISEF, PYL, AIPSU and others called for the bandh to abolish the National Testing Agency (NTA) for failing to conduct the NEET smoothly

other days despite the bandh. At first, we were confused whether it is official or not, but later our college students attended the classes after confirming with our college authorities." Apart from colleges, many

private schools operated as usual. Lalitha, a parent said, "Students studying in government schools are given holiday or leave for the bandh but those in private schools, especially my children, were asked to attend classes."

IR fast-tracks production of 10,000 coaches

The Indian Railways (IR) has planned for the production of about 10,000 non-AC coaches for the next two years.

According to officials, during FY 2024-25 & 2025-26, around 10,000 coaches are being finalised with a record number of over 5,300 general coaches.

In FY 2024-25, Indian Railways plan to manufacture 2,605 general coaches, including Amrit Bharat general coaches, 1,470 non-AC sleeper coaches, including Amrit Bharat sleeper coaches, 323 SLR coaches, including Amrit Bharat sitting-cum-luggage rake (SLR) coaches, 32 high-capacity parcel van and 55 pantry cars.

In FY 2025-26, the department plans to manufacture 2,710 general coaches, including Amrit Bharat general coaches, 1,910 non-AC sleeper coaches, including Amrit Bharat sleeper coaches, 514 SLR coaches, including Amrit Bharat SLR coaches, 200 high-capacity parcel vans and 110 pantry cars.

EESL ties up with woman entrepreneur to boost energy efficiency tech in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of public sector undertakings under the Ministry of Power (GoI), has signed an agreement with woman entrepreneur Padma Vadthya from Telangana to accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency solutions in the State.

The agreement aims to establish retail franchises and make energy-efficient technologies more accessible to Telangana residents. This will help India conserve energy and reduce its carbon footprint, contributing to the nation's climate goals.

According to EESL, it plans to create a network of retail stores with Padma Vadthya to distribute and promote energy-efficient products and services, such as lighting, appliances and buildings. This partnership empowers women entrepreneurs and opens new avenues for the adoption of these technologies.

The CGM (Sales & PRCC) at EESL, Animesh Mishra said,



EESL members, along with woman entrepreneur Padma Vadthya, seen with the signed agreements

"By providing these opportunities, we enhance the economic landscape and champion gender equality. This partnership is a significant step in EESL's mission to transform India into an energy-efficient economy." The agreement was signed by Ravi Bhukiyia (State Head for Telangana) in the presence of Animesh Mishra, Adesh Saxena (Retail Head, EESL), and Nikheesh Kataria (Cluster Head, EESL).

EESL is committed to promoting women's empowerment through various initiatives, and this partnership with Padma

Vadthya is a testament to this commitment. Additionally, EESL has partnered with SK Electricals to further enhance energy efficiency adoption in the State.

Padma Vadthya is a well-known entrepreneur from Telangana, leads a Self-Help Group (SHG) that empowers 50-100 women who help maintain lighting infrastructure in Hyderabad.

Her business also includes vehicle hiring services for State government offices. She is the first woman entrepreneur to partner with EESL in India.

MOTHER SEEKS MEA INTERVENTION

Hyd woman tortured by hubby in Saudi Arabia

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident of torture, the mother of Ayesha Rumana, a Hyderabad woman based in Saudi Arabia, has sought help from the Ministry of External Affairs.

In an appeal to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Rehana Begum stated that her daughter and five grandchildren are being prevented from travelling to India by her son-in-law Khazi Saifullah Khalid.

Majlis Bachao Tehreek (MBT) spokesperson Amjedullah Khan took to X and highlighted the issue. "My daughter, Shaikh Ayesha Rumana, resident of H.No. 18-1-514/C/21, Naseeb Nagar, Phool Bagh, Hyderabad, Telangana State, was married to Khazi Saifullah Khalid, holder of Indian passport No. U3159006, in January 2013, as my son-in-law was studying some Islamic studies in Madina, Saudi Arabia,"

Rehana stated in the letter. After six months of marriage, the victim moved to Saudi Arabia and has been tortured since. Rehana further said, "Sometimes he behaved like a psychopath. My daughter was not allowed to come back home for five years. When my daughter came back to Hyderabad, she disclosed how she was tortured there, so we didn't allow her to go back, but after the involvement of the heads of both families and her husband's promise not to torture her, he started visiting her here in Hyderabad and had two more children."

Rehana further states that her daughter was not allowed to visit Hyderabad for her father Shaik Khamruddin's funeral, when he died on June 17, this year.

She requested the authorities concerned to rescue her daughter and five grandchildren and send them back to India at the earliest.

Focus on vulnerable points for garbage removal: GHMC chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Surprise inspections on sanitation facilities across the city were conducted by GHMC Commissioner Amrapali Kata, who emphasised the need for daily field-level visits by officials.

Amrapali inspected Rythu Bazar areas in Kukatpally, JNTU and Moosapet Bharat Nagar and directed the officials to ensure streets are free of garbage for a cleaner environment. She advised officials to focus on vulnerable points for garbage removal.

Zonal Commissioners Anurag Jayanthi, Hemant Keshav Patil and Ravi Kiran also conducted surprise inspections in Khairatabad, LB Nagar and Secunderabad zones. In a meeting with the zonal commissioners, Amrapali instructed them, along with deputy commissioners, to visit field sites daily and submit reports with



relevant photos. She stressed the importance of addressing issues directly with the public and using media platforms whenever necessary. Kata highlighted the need for speedy IEC programmes to prevent dengue and instructed entomology staff to conduct door-to-door mosquito preven-

tion measures. Additionally, she proposed implementing dry days every Friday and ensuring timely tax collection to allocate funds for sanitation and C&D activities.

Zonal Commissioners Anurag Jayanthi, Ravi Kumar, Vender Reddy, Pankaja Venkanna, and others participated in the meeting.

Special buses for Golconda Bonalu fete

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, along with Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) have made elaborate arrangements for operation of special buses for the convenience of devotees for Golconda Jagadambika Bonalu which will be held on July 7.

In all, 75 special buses were arranged across the city for Golconda, out of which 10 special buses from Secunderabad railway station, five special buses from Kacheguda railway station, five special buses from CBS, 5 buses from Patancheru, four buses from Eeil X roads, eight buses from Mehidipatanam, 4 buses from Dilrukhanagar, four buses from Rajen dranager, 6 buses from Charminar, 4 buses from Uppal and four buses from KPHB Colony have been arranged.

Minister briefs Sri Lankan scribes about govt's initiatives

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government is working with the sole aim of uplifting the poor, stated Revenue, Housing, Information, and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy. He mentioned that it has been seven months since the Congress government came to power in the State and that all the promises made during the elections are being implemented without fail. He also emphasised that the government is giving significant importance to the welfare of journalists. A high-level delegation of media experts from Sri Lanka met with Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy on Thursday at the Secretariat.

The delegation is in Telangana to participate in a two-week training programme on media management organised by the Dr MCRHRD Institute. The visit of the delegation is sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs,

Government of India. Welcoming the delegation to the State, Minister Srinivas Reddy spoke about Telangana's rich cultural history and natural resources. He also highlighted the State's advancements in emerging technologies. The Minister elaborated on various programmes undertaken by the government for the welfare of journalists in the State. He stated that the government prioritises the welfare of the poor and farmers. He mentioned the recent government decisions such as the simultaneous waiver of Rs 2 lakh loans for farmers, the construction of free Indiramma houses for the poor, free bus travel for women, free electricity up to 200 units and the provision of cylinders for Rs 500. Director General of MCRHRD Shashank Goel spoke about training on new developments in media technology such as artificial intelligence and the challenges posed by these emerging technologies.

Accused arrested; 16.1 kg ganja seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Excise Enforcement department, along with STF police apprehended a person and seized 16.1 kg of ganja worth Rs 3 lakh which was being transported to Hyderabad from Orissa by bus on Thursday.

According to the officials, the accused Jayadev Nellore brought 16.1 kg of ganja from Orissa to Hyderabad in order to sell it to Ashok Singh in Dhooplet. They have apprehended the accused but Ashok Singh escaped. In the past, a person named Milandevnath (source) used to sell cannabis to Orissa from Hyderabad at the centre.

Excise Superintendent Anji Reddy said that since many cases have been registered against him, he is going to Orissa and sending ganja through his men.

India's AI and digital reality startup ecosystem showcased

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

T-Hub, India's leading startup incubator, announced the winners of Cohort 12 of its LAB32 programme on Thursday, which is conducted with Hexagon, a global leader in sensor, software, and autonomous solutions. The programme received over 230 applications, showcasing India's strong AI and digital reality startup ecosystem.

According to T-Hub, three startups emerged as winners from 12 finalists after a 100-day programme with LAB32's and Hexagon's mentorship. The winners are Indika AI, SwitchON and Xeed IO. Indika AI developed a PoC for real-time multilingual communication, transforming operations in finance, medicine, and law. SwitchON showcased a PoC for 3D visual inspection of engine block defects. Xeed



T-Hub and Hexagon team members

IO created a PoC with an advanced equipment status dashboard integrated with HXGN EAM and Hexagon Immersal AR.

With India's AI market growing at a CAGR of 25-35% and projected to reach \$17 billion by 2027, these startups represent a significant step toward utilising this growth potential.

T-Hub's LAB32 programme is designed as Market Readiness Programme for MVP stage startups, address-

ing challenges identified by Hexagon, including digital twins for EV manufacturing and real-time language detection.

T-Hub CEO, Srinivas Rao Mahankali, said, "T-Hub is proud to recognise Indika AI, SwitchON, and Xeed IO. These startups show the innovative spirit driving India's AI sector forward. We are dedicated to nurturing such visionary initiatives and providing them with the resources to enter international markets."

ACB nabs 2 govt officials over bribe of Rs 1 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested two government officials in Karimnagar for accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh.

The accused was identified as Ragulapati Venkateswar Rao, manager District Cooperative Marketing Society (DCMS), Karimnagar. The bribe was accepted as an instalment out of Rs 15 lakh from Sudhagano Kumaraswamy, a cashier at the DCMS.

Complainant, Kavati Raju from Peddipalli district, stated that the accused demanded the bribe for clearing a commission amount of Rs 69,25,152 pertaining to paddy collection centres organised in 2018-19 to 2023-24.

The ACB recovered the amount from the accused and they were arrested. Rao and Kumaraswamy were produced before the ACB court.

Birthcare practitioner course organised

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The University of Hyderabad, in collaboration with Fernandez Foundation, organised a Birthcare Practitioner-Birth Doula accredited certificate course on Thursday.

This non-medical course has been designed to equip aspiring birth professionals with the skills necessary to support mothers before, during and after childbirth. The self-paced online training of six months must be completed within two years from admission and is structured into three sequential parts: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Courses, each span-

ning one, two and three months respectively.

During the course, the candidates will be trained and certified to offer additional support services to pregnant couples, such as prenatal yoga, childbirth education, lactation counseling and hypnobirthing, helping the candidate serve a pregnant couple through pregnancy, labour, childbirth and postpartum.

Prof BJ Rao, Vice-Chancellor of UoH, stressed the importance of such programmes in the context of the National Educational Policy and its positioning to be a skill development initiative. He urged the



team to find an Indian equivalent nomenclature for a doula as well as look at the scale in the next course learning from this experience.

Dean, School of Medical Sciences, Prof. Geeta said, "It was a long time coming and I was impressed that such pro-

grammes along with other socially relevant ones are very integral to the mandate of the school."

Dr Evita Fernandez, Chairperson and Managing Director of Fernandez Foundation, motivated the participants to be the trendsetters

for others in this journey of becoming a Doula.

Prof. Jeelani, Director CDVL, UoH and Prof. Nagendra Kumar S, Associate Director, E-learning Centre (CDLTR), UoH, provided the academic and technical administration details while Dr Pooja and Celestina of the Fernandez Foundation and Prof. BR Shamanna, Coordinators of FF and UoH respectively gave the details of the course and what leads to the certification.

In all, 16 students from various regions such as Hyderabad, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Dehradun enrolled in this course.

Tamil writer Sivashankari bags Viswambhara award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tamil writer Sivashankari won the 'Viswambhara' Dr C Narayana Reddy National Literary Award 2024.

According to Sushila Narayana Reddy Trust president C Ganga and general secretary Dr J Chennaiah, Sivashankari, known for her extensive contributions to Tamil literature, will be honoured with a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh, a memento and a shawl for her literary achievements. Recipient of the prestigious



Saraswati Samman Award, Sivashankari will be presented with the 'Viswambhara' award during the 93rd birth anniversary celebrations of Dr C Narayana Reddy at Ravindra Bharati on July 29, 6 pm.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy will be the chief guest, while Tourism and Culture Minister Jupalli Krishna Rao and Government Whip Adi Srinivas will be the guests.

Dr Chennaiah said that Chennai-based Sivashankari has authored 36 novels, 48 mini-novels (navalikas), 150 stories, 15 travelogues, 7 volumes of essays, 4 research papers, and two biographies in Tamil. Dr C Narayana Reddy's collection of poems 'Saman vitham' will also be launched on the same day.

Harmony key for growth: Uttam

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday made it very clear that divisive forces have no place in the country and emphasised the importance of living in perfect harmony.

Uttam Kumar Reddy made these remarks on Thursday while participating in various development programmes in Huzurnagar and Kodad constituencies.

During a meeting at Kodad Municipality, he reviewed the status of several developmental projects.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that India's strength lies in its unity in diversity and that prosperity can only be achieved through communal harmony. "Today, I laid the foundation stones for various projects in Mellacheruvu, including the Rajagopuram in Shivalayam and a Muslim community hall. I also reviewed the ongoing works at the Christian burial ground. This demonstrates



Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy laying foundation stone for several development works in Kodad on Thursday

that the Congress Government works for all communities," he said.

He mentioned that the Rajagopuram of the Shiva Temple would be one of the best and is being constructed according to the people's wishes. Similarly, the poor minorities in Mellacheruvu will benefit from the community hall being built for Rs 1.5 crore, with completion

expected within 3-4 months. He emphasised that no other leader or party has done as much for the region as he has.

Uttam Kumar Reddy affirmed that the Congress government in Telangana has empowered local bodies by granting them the necessary powers to design, execute, and implement developmental programmes within their jurisdictions. He also stated

that the Congress government is building substantial infrastructure across Telangana to ensure proper governance and bring administration closer to the common people.

He criticised the previous BRS government for failing to create the necessary infrastructure for administration, noting that Tahsildars, MPDOs, and police stations

had no permanent buildings. The current Congress government, he said, is focusing on micro-development to ensure that the administration is equipped with the necessary infrastructure and funds.

The Minister urged local bodies to exercise their powers in planning and executing development programmes without interference, allowing them to function independently with full authority to achieve the desired results. He vowed to make Kodad a model constituency in the State. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the government was committed to the welfare of the people.

District Collector Tejas Nandlal Pawar, along with former MLA Chander Rao participated in the review meeting held under the aegis of Kodad Municipal Department on Thursday.

Additional SP Nageswara Rao, RDO Suryanarayana Tahsildar, MPDO, representatives of local people and others participated in this meeting.

Ramagundam Railway Station modernisation at brisk pace

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

Railway officials have speeded up Ramagundam railway station development and beautification works under the AMRUT scheme. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate all 21 beautified railway stations in the first phase next month through the virtual mode.

The development works have been initiated at a cost of Rs 26.49 crore. Besides developing the railway platform, passenger amenities would be improved. Attractive elevation would be provided to the façade of the railway station, special parking lot would be allotted to park the vehicles. Lift facility will be provided to go to relevant platforms besides providing a pedestrian path for the passengers to reach the platforms.

In the first phase, 21 railway stations, including Ramagundam and Karimnagar railway station



would be developed. The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, will inaugurate the first phase of the facelifted platforms under AMRUT scheme next month through virtual mode. Therefore, the officials have stepped on the gas.

Besides providing sprawling seating facility for commuters on the railway station, ticket booking center is being groomed specially. South

Central Railway General Manager visited the railway station recently and asked the authorities to speed up the execution of works.

On Kazipet-Balarsha section, Ramagundam railway station is one of the highest revenue spinners. Many travel to other states from this station. Accordingly, the railway station has been implementing works to modernise the railway station.

'SETTLING' LAND DISPUTE Constable allegedly slaps, abuses farmer

PNS ■ SIDDIPEET

On the one hand the police claim to have adopted people-friendly policing and on the other a constable allegedly abused a young farmer calling him in unprintable language and slapped him. He thus made a mockery of the claims of people-friendly policing.

The unfortunate incident took place at Narsaihpalli village under Cheryala mandal of Siddipet district, according to reports reaching here said on Thursday. A land dispute case led to the unsavory incident.

In a land dispute, a police constable called Karunakar asked 24-year-old farmer Chintala Chandu of

Narsaihpalli village under Cheryala mandal of Siddipet district to visit the police station for inquiry. Apparently the farmer refused to go there. An irate constable caught hold of the young farmer and abused him in unprintable language for not coming to the police station when called and reportedly threatened him with dire consequences. He allegedly even slapped the young farmer.

When his mother came to the farmer's rescue, Karunakar allegedly abused the woman in unparliamentary language.

Apprehending threat to his life from the police constable, Chandu complained to the sub-inspector against the police constable.



Cong govt is committed to welfare of all sections of people: Komatireddy

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkata Reddy has said that the government will waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh by August 15.

He was the chief guest at the farewell meeting for local body representatives at the Yadagirigutta Mandal Praja Parishad office on Thursday. Earlier, he paid floral tributes to the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, the first martyr of Telangana struggle Daddi Komaraiah and Swami Vivekananda and Alluri Sitarama Raju.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister congratulated the members of MPP, ZPTC, MPTC and Sarpanches for their good work as public representatives during their five-year tenure. He said that Rs 40 crore would be spent on development works in the district. The people's representative should stand by people and serve them.

He said that the problems faced by auto-rickshaw dri-



Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy participating as chief guest at a farewell meeting for local bodies' people's representatives in Yadadri on Thursday

vers in Yadagirigutta had been solved and they were granted a living allowance. Now, the auto-rickshaws are allowed to ply to hillock.

He said that the Chief Minister's attention was brought to the drinking water supply through Mission Bhagiratha for Bhuvanagiri and Alair constituencies and Godavari water would be provided to

every village through Mission Bhagiratha at a cost of Rs 210 crore by the end of September.

Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ayilaiah praised the representatives of the local bodies.

MPP Shishailam, ZPTC Anuradha, MPTCs, public representatives and officials participated in the programme.

AICC fact-finding committee to visit State on July 10

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Congress Committee (AICC) constituted fact-finding committees to assess performance party's performance in various states. Against this background, the Kurien Committee will visit Telangana on July 10.

The fact-finding committee has been constituted to assess the party's performance in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. Kurien Committee has been formed to assess party's performance in Telangana.

The committee comprised Rakhbil Hussain and Pargat Singh apart from Kurien. The committee which will come to the state on July 10 will collect information from several Congress leaders in Telangana. The committee members may stay for two or three days and visit many constituencies. Corporation posts may be announced after the committee gives its report.

1,91,850 liters of illicit liquor seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the recent increase of drug usage, the excise department has kept a close watch on the use, manufacture and transportation of illicit liquor, especially in rural areas so that youth in Hyderabad and other cities don't go astray for drugs. In order to make Telangana a drug-free State, the department organised a special drive to eliminate illicit liquor from the State.

It has found that there is a lot of manufacturing, sales and transportation of illicit liquor and other drugs within the 26 excise police stations in the six districts of Telangana. In 2023, 1,182 cases were registered on illicit liquor manufacturing and usage while this year, 1,901 cases were registered in a single month. About 8,716 liters of gudumba was seized and 20,158 kg of jaggery wash was seized in June. About 77 kilns were destroyed and 215 vehicles were seized. Around 1,91,850 liters of jaggery wash, along with 3,307 kgs of



alum used for illicit liquor was seized.

Director of Excise Enforcement, VB Kamalasan Reddy said, "Illicit liquor will be completely finished by August 31. Keeping an iron foot on drugs, we have kept a strict vigil on the movement and consumption of drugs. We have formed special enforcement teams for better results.

We are conducting raids with the aim of completely eliminating ID liquor and drugs. We are also giving special training to the excise machinery to punish the accused in the cases caught."

CPM slams Centre for dilly-dallying in implementing bifurcation Act promises

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) district secretary Mudireddy Sudhakar Reddy on Thursday slammed the Central government for delaying to implement promises incorporated in Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. The CPI-M would launch agitation against the Centre demanding that it address the problems.

Addressing the 78th death anniversary of Daddi Komaraiah at the Daddi Komaraiah Bhavan here on Thursday, Sudhakar Reddy called upon the people to unitedly wage a fight against the Centre. The BJP government at the Centre should implement all the promises made to the people in Telangana. He expressed concern that the central government would curtail funds to the states unless pressure is exerted on it. He said that the previous government did not allocate adequate funds for the completion of irrigation and drinking water projects in Nalgonda district in the upcoming budget session.

Kaleshwaram-type corpn sought for Mahbubnagar irrigation projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A high-level review meeting chaired by district in-charge Medical and Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha commenced on Thursday to discuss irrigation projects in the erstwhile Mahbubnagar district. Legislators urged Rajanarasimha to prepare an action plan to speed up irrigation projects in the erstwhile Mahbubnagar district. They said that like in the case of the Kaleshwaram project a corporation should be set up to speed up lift irrigation works.

The minister discussed proposals for the completion of projects at a preparatory meeting ahead of the Chief Minister's review meeting on projects in the district.

The Minister directed officials to submit detailed reports on pending projects. They emphasised creating an



Medical and Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha holding a review meeting with officials in Mahabubnagar on Thursday

action plan to speed up work on Kalwakurthi, Nettempadu, Bheema, Sangambanda, Jurala, Tummilla, RDS and Relampadu projects.

The Minister asked officials to prepare proposals to set up four or five TMC reservoirs in each constituency under the Kalwakurthi lift irrigation scheme. The legislators asked Minister to immediately release the funds required for acquiring land and directed officials to speed up land acquisition.

The Minister asked engi-

neering officials to create a capacity of 2 TMC of the Palamuru-Rangareddy lift irrigation scheme including the Lakshmidivi Palli reservoir works and ordered immediate land acquisition.

The Minister directed the drawing of water for the Dindi lift scheme from Srisaillam instead of the Yedula reservoir.

The Minister asked officials to complete land acquisition for projects within three months. Canal desilting and removal of weeds should be

completed on a war footing, they said.

The Minister directed officials to prepare a report on estimated funds and issues faced in completing projects in the erstwhile Mahbubnagar district. Discussions were held on the construction of Karivena and Lakshmidivi Palli reservoirs.

The legislators said 20 TMC water must be pumped from the Jurala irrigation project to Koilkonda and urged the ministers to take up the matter with the CM.

Government will respect farmers' opinions: MLA Shankar

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar on Thursday said that the Congress government would respect farmers' opinions. The government is committed to waive crop loans to help farmers.

Speaking at a meeting, organised by the Basic Agriculture Cooperative Credit Union at Kondurgu under Shadnagar constituency, MLA Shankar highlighted the government's commitment in waiving farm loans and providing input subsidy under Rythu Bharosa. He criticised the previous government's lack of transparency in implementing schemes meant for farmers.

"The cooperation of farmers is crucial, and the government will prioritise their needs," Shankar stated. Farmers voiced their opinions on the necessity of immediate implementation of the loan waiver and suggested



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar addressing a farmers' conference at Kondurgu in Ranga Reddy district on Thursday

that restrictions be imposed to ensure that only farmers are benefited. They also called for prompt support for small farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

The conference concluded with a strong consensus among the attending farmers for immediate government action to support small and marginal farmers and expedite the loan waiver process.

Cooperative Society Assistant

Registrar Nagalingachari, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies Saraswathi, PACS Chairman Damodar Reddy, Kondurgu Congress Party President Krishna Reddy, Chaudar Guda Congress Party President Raju, members of the Basic Agricultural Cooperative Society, and farmers from various villages in Kondurgu and Chaudhariguda mandals were present.

Time-barred Kalyana Lakshmi cheque given to beneficiary

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

A young couple approached a bank to encash the Kalyana Lakshmi cheque. But the bank officials refused to honour the cheque as it was time barred. The couple planned to clear debts on encashing the cheque.

This dishonouring of the cheque by the bank officials was attributed to the negligence attitude of the government officials. The incident took place in Mancherial district.

The BRS government introduced Kalyana Lakshmi

scheme to help indigent families to marry off their daughters. The government gives a gift of Rs 1,00,116 to bride at the time of her marriage to meet the marriage expenses.

After the marriage was over, the intending beneficiary should submit proof like marriage photos and other relevant documents to get Rs 1,00,116 under this scheme.

The negligence on the part of the officials resulting in the cheques not reaching the beneficiaries on time.

In the latest development, Sarita and Srinivas of

Yedullabandham village of Kotapallimandal of Mancherial district on Feb 23, 2023 performed marriage of their daughter. They applied Kalyana Lakshmi scheme. A cheque for Rs 1,00,116 was given to Sarita on April 3, 2024. Meanwhile, election code of conduct for the Lok Sabha elections came into effect. Therefore, the officials and elected people's representatives did not distribute the cheques to beneficiaries. The code of conduct was lifted on June 6. But the mandal officials did not distribute the cheques to the

beneficiaries. The validity of the cheques expired on July 3, 2024. The officials rather hastily called up Sarita and asked her to come to the mandal office and collect her cheque. She collected the cheque from the office and proceeded direct to the bank, but the bank's banking hours ended. She presented the cheque reaching the bank along with her husband. But the officials did not honour the cheque as it was time-barred.

They are appealing to higher authorities to render justice to them.

3 arrested; drugs, vehicles seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force South West zone, in coordination with Begumbazar police, on Thursday arrested three interstate drug peddlers and seized drugs and vehicles worth Rs 8,65,000 from them.

The accused were identified as Korra Babu (30), a native of Andhra Pradesh; Chandan Kumar Choudhury (34), a native of Odisha, who is the main peddler and Yaddnapudi Dhanraj, a native of Andhra Pradesh.

The police seized 1.275 kg of hash oil worth Rs 7,65,000, along with a bike and four mobile phones.

B12 deficiency may cause episodes of anger outbursts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A city-based Neurologist has said that deficiency of vitamin B 12 could cause episodes of anger outburst and long menstrual periods going beyond seven days could also produce similar episodes.

Dr Sudheer Kumar, Neurologist at the Apollo hospital, shared a case study of a patient who presented episodes of anger. The Neurologist took to X and said, "27-year-old Mrs. Laila

(name changed) presented with episodes of anger outbursts and restlessness for the past two months. There were no obvious reasons for her mood swings.

Laila also suffered from unusually long periods of menstrual bleeding lasting 15 days every month (hypermenorrhoea)."

Regular consultation with physician and gynecologist did not yield any specific cause for her underlying symptoms. She had turned into a strict vegetarian about

a year back. Investigations revealed a low vitamin B12 deficiency (the level was 59 pg/mL)."

Kumar diagnosed severe deficiency of vitamin B12 causing mood disturbances and hypermenorrhoea; the doctor discussed the issue with the patient and her husband and put Laila on vitamin B12 supplement.

The Neurologist suggested that people with unexplained mood swings must be checked for vitamin B 12 deficiency.

INDIA CORNER

High court asks ASI to submit Bhojshala survey report by July 15

The Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday granted 10 more days to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to submit its survey report of the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex in the state's Dhar district. The court ordered the ASI to present the complete report of the nearly three-month-long survey on the premises of the disputed 11th-century monument, the subject of a wrangle between Hindus and Muslims, by July 15. According to the previous order of the high court, the ASI was required to submit its complete survey report of the complex by July 2, but the agency moved a plea on the last day seeking another four weeks for the report submission. ASI contended that the Hyderabad-based National Geophysical Research Institute had sought three weeks to study the huge data collected during the Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)-Geographic Information System (GIS) survey.



4 killed in car accident in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad

Four persons, including a man and his two sons, were killed and three others were injured when the car they were travelling in collided with a bus here on Thursday, police said. Superintendent of Police (City) Akhilesh Bhadauria said, "A car carrying seven persons, including the driver, lost control and collided with another vehicle before crossing over to the opposite lane where it was hit by a bus on Thursday." Ashraf Ali (60), his wife Zaitoon Begum and their sons Khappe Ali (40), Arif alias Mehboob Ali (38), Intekaf Ali (30), Asif Ali (20) and the car driver Ehsan Ali (30) along with two other family members were travelling in the vehicle. All the occupants were residents of Mukarampur of Swar Kotwali area in the Rampur district where they were returning from Delhi. "Ashraf Ali and his sons Khappe Ali and Arif alias Mehboob Ali were killed on the spot while the car driver Ehsan Ali succumbed at the hospital," said the officer.



After her India visit, Bangla PM Hasina to travel to China next week

China on Thursday announced that Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit Beijing early next week and meet China's top leadership, including President Xi Jinping, which will facilitate political mutual trust, and push bilateral relations to a new level. Hasina's visit from July 8 to 10, days after her India visit, is being seen as an apparent attempt to balance ties between India and China, one of Dhaka's biggest investors. "This is her (Hasina's) first visit to China since she started her new term. It is also her second visit to China in five years," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here. During her visit, she will meet President Xi, Premier Li Qiang and attend the signing ceremony of cooperation documents together, Mao said. The leaders of the two countries will have an "in-depth exchange of views" on deepening traditional friendship, expanding mutually



PM Modi to visit Russia, Austria from July 8 to 10

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a visit to Russia from July 8 to 9 to hold the 22nd India-Russia annual summit that will review the entire range of multifaceted ties between the two countries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Thursday. After concluding the trip to Russia, Modi will travel to Austria, which will be the first visit by an Indian prime minister to that country in 41 years, it said. It will be Modi's first visit to Russia in nearly five years. His last visit to Russia was in 2019 when he attended an economic conclave in the Far East city of Vladivostok. The annual summit between the prime minister of India and the president of Russia is the highest institutional dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between the two countries.



So far, 21 annual summits have taken place alternately in India and Russia. The last summit was held on December 6, 2021 in New Delhi. President Vladimir Putin had visited India to attend the summit. The summit saw both sides sealing 28 MoUs and agreements besides coming out with a joint statement titled "India-Russia Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity". Modi and Putin last held

world," Modi had said. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Modi has held several telephonic conversations with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. In reflection of its strong friendship with Russia, India has not yet condemned Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue. India's import of Russian crude oil has also gone up significantly notwithstanding the G7 price cap and increasing disquiet over the procurement in many Western countries. In December 2022, the G7 grouping and its allies announced a cap on the price of Russian oil as part of a series of punitive measures against Moscow in view of its invasion of Ukraine. The price cap restricts countries to pay more than USD 60 a barrel.

LK Advani discharged from hospital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP veteran and former deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani was discharged from the Apollo Hospital here on Thursday evening, sources said. The 96-year-old was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday, days after being discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) following a night-long stay there. Advani was discharged from the Apollo Hospital around 5 pm, the sources said. The sources had said his condition remained stable after being admitted to the hospital on Wednesday night. Advani was brought to the facility around 9 pm on Wednesday. He was accompanied by his daughter Pratibha Advani.



'CBI geared up to help states implement new criminal laws'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CBI Director Praveen Sood on Thursday said the central agency is geared to help states and other stakeholders implement the three new criminal laws which came into force earlier this week. He also said that the CBI is working with the Law Ministry to successfully implement the three new laws. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act respectively from July 1. Addressing an event at the CBI academy, Ghaziabad where Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal presented the President's Police Medal (PPM) for Distinguished Service and Indian Police Medal (IPM) for Meritorious Service to 39 CBI personnel, Sood said the agency and the Law Ministry are working in synergy to prioritise more efficient prosecution along with investigation. According to a ministry statement, he noted that CBI's role has been evolving with the passage of time, from handling primarily anti-corruption cases in the beginning to special and economic crimes, cyber crimes and bank frauds. Addressing the gathering, Meghwal said the new criminal laws will usher in "ease of living" with citizenry contributing to the progress and development of the nation. Appreciating CBI, he observed that its importance is being recognised in the society



due to its investigative skills which is reflected in the high conviction rate. Referring to the new criminal laws, Meghwal asserted that they will bring in ease of living in a big way for the citizenry and will expedite delivery of justice and save crucial time of all the stakeholders spent in litigation. The minister stressed that this will prove highly productive for the nation as the energies would be channelised towards the process of development of the society and eventually lead to higher progress.

13th SUSPECTED SUICIDE THIS YEAR JEE aspirant from Bihar hangs self in Kota

PNS ■ KOTA

A 16-year-old engineering aspirant allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan inside his PG room here, police said on Thursday. This is the thirteenth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in Kota stood at 26 in 2023. Sandeep Kumar Kurmi, a native of Bihar's Nalanda district, was taking coaching for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) in Kota for the last two years and lived in a paying guest (PG) room in Mahaveer Nagar - III, the police said. At around 7 am on Thursday, the teen's classmate went to his room. When he did not get any response, he peeped through the window and found Kurmi hanging from the ceiling fan, Mahaveer Nagar SHO Mahendra Maru said. Kurmi's classmate informed the PG caretaker who then informed the police, he said. According to the SHO, the student committed suicide on the intervening night of Wednesday



and Thursday. No suicide note was recovered from the room, the police said. Kurmi's brother, Sanjeet, is taking coaching for the medical entrance exam NEET in Kota and lives in a separate PG room in Dadabari area, Head Constable Mahaveer Prasad said. The two brothers reportedly lost their parents four years ago and their uncle was funding for their education, he added. During a preliminary probe it was found that Kurmi was an average student and would often miss his coaching classes, the SHO said. According to the police, the PG room where Kurmi lived did not have any anti-suicide device installed on the ceiling fan. The district administration has made it mandatory for all hostels and PGs in the coaching hub to install anti-suicide devices in their rooms to prevent such cases. An anti-suicide device is a spring-like structure which is attached to the ceiling fans. When an object weighing more than 20 kilos is hung from the fan, the spring attached to it expands and a siren goes off.

DMK using NEET to oppose BJP, claims TN BJP president

PNS ■ TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (TAMIL NADU)

Tamil Nadu BJP on Thursday accused the DMK and other parties of using the NEET as a tool to target the BJP government at the Centre. It also reiterated that the ruling dispensation should furnish a white paper on the performance of students from the state in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET). BJP state chief K Annamalai sought to know what prevented the Tamil Nadu government, which passed resolutions in the Assembly seeking exemption from NEET on three occasions, from revealing the details. "The state government should present the data on the students' performance ten years before and after the test came into existence. Let the government say if any particular section like OBC, SC/ST has been affected due to the test," Annamalai told reporters here. Wondering why the DMK government was not revealing the data, he said views even if they opposed the screening test would last if they were expressed on a scientific basis, he said. "They are opposing NEET only because they want to oppose the BJP.

Soren takes oath as 13th CM of Jharkhand

PNS ■ RANCHI

JMM executive president Hemant Soren on Thursday took oath as the 13th chief minister of Jharkhand. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor C P Radhakrishnan at the Raj Bhavan here, an official said. Soren's father and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha supreme Shibu Soren, his mother Rupai Soren, his wife Kalpana Soren and senior leaders of the JMM-led alliance were present at the swearing-in ceremony. Chamapa Soren, who

resigned as the chief minister on Wednesday, was also present on the occasion. Hemant Soren was released from jail on June 28 after the High Court of Jharkhand granted bail to him in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. He had resigned as the CM shortly before his arrest on January 31 by the Enforcement Directorate. After taking the oath, Soren said former CM Champai Soren discharged his duties well. The court order is in the public domain for all to see, the



JMM executive president said, adding that he would discharge his duties with commitment. In a video message to people, Hemant Soren said that a

conspiracy was hatched against him by the opposition which had succeeded in their "evil designs" and he had to spend about five months behind bars. "I was arrested on January 31... I had given a message to you about how the opposition hatched a conspiracy against me and how they succeeded in their evil designs. They attempted to keep me in jail for a long time but I chose to take resort of the legal battle. You supported me on the streets. Finally, justice was delivered and I was released clean," Soren said in the video clip. The JMM leader said he was

given an opportunity to serve the people in 2019 but "the conspirators could not digest that a tribal youth could reach such heights and finally on January 31, I was removed on false charges. There could be delay in God's plans but ultimately truth prevails". Soren said he was ready to serve the people of Jharkhand with dedication. Former Jharkhand CM Champai Soren extended good wishes to Chief Minister Hemant Soren. JMM legislator Kalpana Soren said welfare work would be expedited in the state.

Dissolve Assembly and hold polls now Yediyurappa challenges K'taka CM Siddaramaiah

PNS ■ BENGALURU

BJP stalwart B S Yediyurappa on Thursday challenged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to dissolve the Karnataka Assembly and go for elections now and claimed that the saffron party will win 140 to 150 seats. He said the people of the state have rejected the 'useless guarantees', money and muscle power of the Congress government and opted for the BJP in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections. "I challenge Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, if he has guts, then dissolve the Assembly and go for elections again. Then only you will know what your

position is. If the elections are held, BJP will win 140 to 150 seats," the Lingayat strongman said during the BJP state special executive meeting organised at the Palace Grounds here. Karnataka has 224 Assembly and 28 Lok Sabha seats. The former chief minister said in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP-JD(S) alliance won 19 seats and the BJP got a majority in 142 assembly segments. Just a year ago, the Congress had come to power by winning 134 seats, but now the ruling party has trailed in places which are represented by Chief Minister

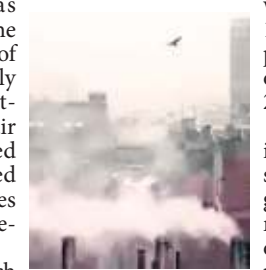
Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and several ministers, he said. "This shows how Congress has lost its popularity in the state within a year by indulging in corruption and ignoring public interest. It has no moral right to continue in power. People overlooked the money and muscle power of the Congress and showed their confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi," the BJP stalwart said. He said the state is heading for bankruptcy. "Due to the useless guarantees, Congress has increased the prices of all the commodities and laid the foundation for inflation.

Over 7 pc of daily deaths in 10 Indian cities linked to PM 2.5 pollution: Lancet study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On average, 7.2 per cent of all daily deaths in 10 of the largest and most polluted cities in India, including Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai, were linked to PM2.5 levels higher than World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for safe exposure, according to a study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal. Delhi was found to have the largest fraction of daily and yearly deaths attributable to PM2.5 air pollution, caused by particles sized 2.5 micrometres or less in diameter. Sources of such pollution include vehicular and industrial emissions. Researchers said that daily exposure to PM2.5 pollution in Indian cities is linked with a higher risk of death, and locally created pollution could be possibly causing these deaths. The international team included researchers from Varanasi's Banaras Hindu University and the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, New Delhi. They found that an increase of 10 micrograms per cubic metre in the average of fine particulate matter

(PM2.5) pollution measured over two days (short-term exposure) was related to 1.4 per cent higher daily mortality. The death risk was found to be doubled (2.7 per cent) per a 10 microgram per cubic metre increase, when the researchers restricted their analysis to observations below Indian standards of air quality, less stringent than WHO guidelines for safe exposure, which prescribe 15 micrograms per cubic metre of PM2.5 over a 24-hour period. Indian air quality standards prescribe 60 micrograms per cubic metre of PM2.5 over a 24-hour period. City-wise, the authors found a 0.31 per cent rise in daily mortality per a 10 micrograms per cubic metre increase in PM2.5 in Delhi, while in Bengaluru, the rise was 3.06 per cent. The links between daily exposure to PM2.5 pollution and locally created pollutants were found to be stronger in models which the researchers used to explore cause-and-effect relationships. Therefore, it was possible that the locally generated pollutants were causing these excess deaths, the authors said.



KARGIL HEROES ON 25th ANNIVERSARY OF 1999 WAR

Battles of Tololing, Tiger Hill proved to be decisive

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Barely four months into his service, a young Lieutenant Balwan Singh led the Indian Army's Ghatak Platoon in a strategic assault on Pakistani intruders during the Kargil war and was among the brave soldiers who captured Tiger Hill on July 4, 1999. "There was no looking back from there. It was victory after the capture of the Tiger Hill," recalls Singh, now a colonel with the famed 18 Grenadiers, who was injured while fighting the enemy but continued to fight.

He was honoured with Maha Vir Chakra for his valour. Raised in 1976, the 18 Grenadiers played a pivotal role in the war. The battalion was conferred with 52 honours, including a Param Vir Chakra, two Maha Vir Chakra, six Vir Chakra, several Sena Medals and a Commendation Card of the Chief of the Army Staff. On Wednesday, Col Singh and many other Kargil heroes from the battalion recalled the heroics of its bravehearts in Operation Vijay. The war was declared over on July 26, 1999, after the Indian forces successfully



pushed back the Pakistani forces which had stealthily occupied important heights in Ladakh. On the night of July 3, 1999, soldiers of 18 Grenadiers, also called the Pole Star Battalion, embarked on their mission to capture Tiger Hill and had accomplished the task by the next morning, said Brig

(Retd.) Khushal Thakur, who commanded the battalion during the crucial battles of Tololing and Tiger Hill. "On June 12-13, 1999, we won Tololing and it was a big turning point in this war. It boosted the morale of our armed forces and the countrymen and dipped the morale of the Pakistani side. One by one, we kept capturing the peaks in Mushkoo or Batalik sector and the next task was Tiger Hill," Brig (Retd.) Thakur, who was a colonel during the war, told PTI. "For the Tiger Hill, I had adequate time for reconnais-

sance. I had artillery guns, multi-barrel rocket launchers and high-altitude warfare equipment... Despite all the losses suffered, the morale of the men of 18 Grenadiers was sky high and our brave men captured the Tiger Hill, planting the Indian flag on top," he said. There weren't many TV channels back then but the defining images of the Indian soldiers celebrating the conquest of the Tiger Hill became a symbol of their bravery. Col Singh said the battles of Tololing and Tiger Hill were decisive battles.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Litmus test

With the UK deeply divided on key issues, the outcome of this election could alter its direction and shape its future

The UK voted yesterday to elect 650 representatives to the House of Commons who in turn would elect its next prime minister. The UK is at a crucial juncture. It is battling myriad issues ranging from economic downslides, healthcare and post Brexit hardships. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made a fervent appeal to voters, urging them to put an end to what he describes as Labour's dominance in British politics. Interestingly, for the last 14 years, the Conservative Party has been in power but has not delivered on its promises in full measure. The centre-right Conservatives took power amid the global financial crisis. However, their tenure has been plagued by economic stagnation, declining public services, and multiple scandals, leaving them vulnerable to criticism from both the left and right. The general election marks a pivotal moment in UK politics, with the Conservative Party, led by Rishi Sunak, pitted against the Labour Party under the leadership of Keir Starmer.



The two parties have diametrically opposite views on tackling the country's problems. The UK is still coming to terms with Brexit which did not go well for it and led to many hardships for the Government and the people. Besides, once a world power, the UK is reduced to just another ally of the US in the world arena seriously jeopardizing its international standing. So the battle is not just for seats in Parliament but for the very direction of the nation.

Rishi Sunak's campaign has centred on themes of stability and continuity. He has emphasised the need for a steady hand to navigate the complex challenges facing the UK, including economic recovery post-COVID-19, ongoing trade negotiations, and maintaining national security. Sunak's message to voters is: build a stronger, more prosperous Britain together. Sunak has vehemently criticised Labour's policies, which left the country vulnerable and economically fragile. He has positioned himself as the leader capable of delivering a balanced approach that protects jobs, supports businesses, and ensures a sustainable path to growth. The Conservative manifesto promises tax cuts, increased investment in infrastructure, and a commitment to maintaining a firm stance on immigration and national security. This of course is a litmus test for Rishi Sunak himself. He became the first Prime Minister of colour itself speaks volumes about his calibre as a politician. But right now the biggest challenge for him is to manage the economy and relieve people of tax burden. On the other side, Keir Starmer's Labour Party is campaigned for change and renewal. Starmer has highlighted the need for comprehensive reform of the welfare system and has promised to tackle the cost-of-living crisis through targeted support for low-income families and significant public sector pay rises. For Rishi Sunak, the election is a chance to solidify his leadership and set a course for a post-Brexit Britain that he believes can thrive globally. The results of this election will not only determine the next government but will also shape the trajectory of the UK for years to come.

The rise of radical rebels in Pakistan

This alarming rise in extremism has prompted Pakistan to initiate Operation Azm-i-Istehkam, an ambitious effort aimed at eradicating terrorism



BHOPINDER SINGH

Clergy has always played a pivotal role in the Pakistani narrative. The indelible impact of the 'Mullahs' has historically cut across institutions of power like the Military 'establishment', political parties, civilian society, academia et al. Each has, in their own way succumbed to puritanical displays and appropriations to posture alignment befitting the 'land of the pure' or Pakistan. However, it must be said that many of these institutions have also privately harboured the exact opposite instincts and preferences, from what has been prescribed by the clerical order. These institutions have pandered to religiosity only to tick in the box their own false, and publicly fronted sense of piety to legitimise their relevance, whilst indulging in vices, degeneracies, and excesses. A cursory look at the long list of the Pakistani infamous in the Pandora Papers or Panama List is a veritable who's-who of the Pakistani elites, who posture simplicity, austerity, and god-fearing honesty in the public sphere. This has led to the elites leading notoriously duplicitous lives with ill-gotten properties and excesses across the world, whilst injecting toxic-religiosity and religious extremism back home. The bunny of religion is essentially for public consumption to be invoked whenever everything else fails e.g., beseeching Arab Sheikhs or Turkey for life-sustaining aid in the name of a "brotherly muslim nation". The personal lives of the ruling Sharif family and the feudal Bhuttos are hardly the modicum of religious idyls, and the same discomfort applies to the Westernised Generals who are increasingly facing the wrath of the angry, long-bearded, armed, and madrasa-educated tribals. Today, it seems the ability of Pakistan's ruling elite to successfully play the patented double game has run its course. Not only have the radicalized masses (generously fanned by the elites in 'Olive Green' or Servants) refused to take orders, but far worse, they have turned on their begetters! Creations like the "Taliban" which was a joint



project between the wily politicians, amoral Generals, and unhinged clergy, simply refuse to take orders from their progenitor. The product i.e., Taliban, which was made for the export market, is getting unwelcomed back to its original source. The elite finally realise that it cannot differentiate between "Good Taliban" and "Bad Taliban", for at the end of the day it is "Taliban", an unhinged outcome of affording extra generous space to religion in governance. Terrorism has gripped Pakistan with elements 'within', going rogue. Elites now sense that not only must they take on the terror elements directly (as they have done multiple times, still terrorism worsened), but it must also snuff out the oxygen that breeds and nurtures the terror industry i.e., religious insinuations and outreach, in every sphere of Pakistani reality. Pakistani dispensation has come up with Operation Azm-i-Istehkam which seeks to eradicate terrorists, and religious extremism, and deradicalize society, in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It is easier said than done, given the deep-rooted grip of religiosity. This refreshing acceptance (though time will tell if it is sincere or posturing) of religious overload needs to be unloaded. For starters, it will diminish the



THE ELITE FINALLY REALISE THAT IT CANNOT DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN 'GOOD TALIBAN' AND 'BAD TALIBAN', FOR AT THE END OF THE DAY IT IS 'TALIBAN', AN UNHINGED OUTCOME OF AFFORDING EXTRA GENEROUS SPACE TO RELIGION IN GOVERNANCE

role of Islamist political parties like Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), or even the various militias and formations of sectarian denominations who have contributed to the morass. Such parties have not only imported strains of alien Wahhabism or Salafism but have been instrumental in ensuring that the Pakistani 'establishment' goes slow on anti-terror operations in restive areas. Caught between offering perfunctory platitudes towards the integrity of Pakistan and the safety of its citizens - they are also simultaneously offering mealy-mouthed suggestions to not partake in militaristic operations. They are truly caught between the devil and the blue sea, for their wishy-washy stand will neither endear them to the frustrated Pakistani Government (which they are no longer a part of the ruling coalition), nor to organisations like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) who would want them to be bolder and indulge in plain-speak in favour of religious and radical bodies. Nonetheless, these religious parties are mulling putting together an ostensible 'resistance movement' against Operation Azm-i-Istehkam, and they are unlikely to find too many partners to go along with them. Forces that are key to bailing out Pakistan eco-

nominally from sure 'failed-state' status e.g., China, international multilateral agencies (IMF, World Bank etc), Western Powers or even Arab Sheikhdoms are pitted against the agendas and outcomes of religious parties. The so-called 'iron brother' Chinese have invested over \$62 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridors (CPEC) and they cannot allow the religio-extremist Baluch insurgents to attack Chinese interests as part of their 'sacred' duties. Middle Eastern countries too have had their own tryst with the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood and their offshoots from Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, and have clamped down on the same. Now with the Taliban Government in Kabul hawking relations with outsiders and no longer surviving on Pakistani doles, Afghans also cock a snook at historical equations and madrasa-fed ranks from Pakistan. All this diminishes the relevance of religious parties in Pakistan and if the Pakistanis grasp the opportunity, they may just be able to overcome their history and instincts. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

PICTALK



Villagers catch fish in flood water, in Morigaon district

PTI

Balancing motivation and misuse in India's research landscape

Many students opt for PhD programme for reasons unrelated to research. This hinders the nation's intellectual progress



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

A higher academic degree like a PhD is often considered a symbol of quality. PhD training emphasizes innovation and the ability to tackle complex problems. Graduates are expected to think independently, identify gaps in existing knowledge, and propose novel solutions, making them valuable assets in both academic and industry settings. The more PhD holders a country produces, the more productive a country will be. Countries with more PhD holders tend to produce more scientific publications and patents. This intellectual output can lead to technological advancements and improvements in various industries, driving innovation and economic growth. Despite having the advantages of higher enrolments for the nation, the current system of registering for PhD as an escapism will not reap any benefits for the student or the country. Many students register for PhD as a stop-gap arrangement before their marriage, a permanent government job, or as a fashion to be called 'Dr.'. They never assess their moti-



vation for pursuing a PhD degree. Are they passionate about the research topic? Or have they reflected on their career goals? If the alignment is strong, it might justify pursuing a research degree that is highly demanding and time-consuming. The most successful PhD candidates are often driven by intrinsic motivations such as intellectual curiosity, passion for their field of study, and a desire to contribute new knowledge. These motivations sustain them through the challenges of research work. Recently, it has been observed that many scholars registering for PhD through national-level competitive fellowships like CSIR, UGC etc, try to prolong their study for the sake of fellowship amount.

In many colleges in Tamil Nadu, college teachers work for a salary as low as Rs. 4000- 8000 per month. Qualifying for a national test will at least provide a scholar with a decent salary for 3 to 5 years. The sole motive of the scholar is financial support. For some, the academic environment may provide a refuge from societal expectations of marriage, family responsibilities, and other traditional roles. Unfortunately, even today, female students are not provided the freedom to make decisions. Our society gives a girl's marriage more importance than acquiring knowledge. Earning a doctorate requires extensive study, self-sufficiency, and intellectual development, which are priceless assets to the community. Even in a highly literate society like Kerala, many women, even after getting a PhD degree, are forced to stick to societal norms and move away from active research. Many students with PhD degrees ultimately land in job sectors where their research has no role, like clerical jobs in

government sectors, banks, or even as a school teacher, to cite a few. To change people's minds, we must keep fighting for equal rights for women, spreading the word that education should be accessible to everyone and dispelling myths about women's abilities and goals. It's essential for prospective PhD candidates to carefully consider their motivations and the potential impact of their research. Pursuing a PhD solely for recognition or prestige, without a genuine commitment to contribute meaningful research or knowledge, offers little benefit to society or the nation. People who do research for name sake are involved in many unethical practices, like outsourcing the work and outsourcing their thesis writing and paper writing to other agencies. Unfortunately, these people reach higher positions through their influence, overtaking genuine researchers who have toiled their lives for research. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PM'S REMARKS ON MANIPUR

Madam — The Congress has strongly criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his remarks in the Rajya Sabha, where he claimed that the situation in Manipur was returning to normal. The Congress argues that this statement is far from the reality on the ground, pointing out that the Prime Minister has yet to visit Manipur since violence erupted between the Meitei and Kuki communities in May of the previous year. Congress MP Jairam Ramesh accused the Prime Minister of making light of the situation and not acknowledging the continuing violence and tension in Manipur. Despite more than 200 deaths and thousands of people displaced due to ongoing ethnic violence, the Prime Minister's comments suggested a lack of serious engagement with the issue. The Congress also criticized the Prime Minister for not listening to voices from Manipur and for focusing more on political jobs than addressing the concerns of those affected by the violence. The party emphasized that the Prime Minister's response is insufficient given the severity of the crisis in Manipur and accused him of turning a blind eye to the plight of the state's residents. **Bhagwan Thadanij | Mumbai**

HATHRAS TRAGEDY

Madam — The recent stampede in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, resulting in numerous deaths, is a tragic reminder of the consequences of poor crowd management. A stampede, or crowd crush, occurs when an area becomes dangerously overcrowded and mismanaged, leading to fatal accidents. If crowd densities exceed four to six people per square meter, the risk of such incidents significantly increases. Authorities must not downplay their role in these tragedies by labeling them as mere accidents. Effective crowd management requires meticulous planning, including venue

Bowing to elders is a sign of respect



Recently, political strategist Prashant Kishore criticized Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for touching the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, describing it as a "sale of dignity of the people of Bihar." While Kishore's comments reflect a certain perspective, it's important to recognize that showing respect to elders, even political rivals, is a personal choice deeply rooted in Indian culture. Touching the feet of elders is a gesture of humility and respect, irrespective

of the individual's public standing or knowledge. It's a tradition that underscores the significance of age and wisdom. Such practices are part of a cultural ethos that teaches younger generations to respect their elders. In a recent incident, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi criticized Om Birla, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, for bowing before Prime Minister Modi, claiming it compromised the dignity of the Speaker's office. Gandhi cited Mahatma Gandhi's views on the impartiality and dignity of the Speaker. However, the gesture by Birla was a personal one, reflecting respect for an elder, not a political statement. It's crucial to separate personal respect from political actions. In Hindu culture, it's customary for the younger to show respect to the older, irrespective of their positions. Rahul Gandhi's criticism may stem from a place of political rivalry, but it overlooks the cultural context of such gestures. **K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru**

selection, emergency response preparation, and public awareness initiatives. The lack of a culture of safety among authorities is evident in such incidents. Learning from this tragedy, it's imperative to adopt a proactive approach to safety and crowd management to prevent future incidents. This includes mandatory safety provisions and increased public awareness to ensure the well-being of participants at public events. Authorities must prioritize the safety of citizens to avoid repeating such devastating outcomes. **K V Chandramouli | Mysuru**

UNSUNG HEROES IN INDIAN CRICKET

Madam — Last Saturday, Indian cricket fans witnessed the celebration of Team India's T20 World Cup victory in Bridgetown, Barbados. Among the jubilant players, a lesser-known figure, Raghu Raghavendra, stood out. Known affectionately as Raghu, he has been a pivotal part of the Indian cricket sup-

port staff since 2011, specializing in throwdowns to help batsmen practice against fast bowling. Raghu's ability to deliver balls at speeds exceeding 150 km/h using a sidearm device has been instrumental in preparing Indian batsmen for international challenges. While his name may not be widely recognized, his contributions to the team's success are immense. Raghu represents the behind-the-scenes dedication and skill that supports every win by Team India. His work exemplifies the importance of support roles in sports, highlighting how essential unsung heroes are to the success of prominent athletes and teams. As India celebrates its cricketing triumphs, it's important to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of individuals like Raghu, who play a crucial role in these victories. **Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN STRATEGIC DYNAMICS AT THE SCO SUMMIT

As China asserts its influence within the SCO, the interplay of geopolitics becomes increasingly visible



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or SCO held its 24th meeting for heads of State this week. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, otherwise known for promoting Bharat to crucial allies at bilateral and multilateral forums, skipped this regional dialogue citing parliamentary responsibilities back home. However, many also point out that, the frosty relationship with Pakistan and China both of whose top leadership were present for the SCO summit, was one of the reasons PM Modi avoided travelling to Astana in Kazakhstan. India was represented by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for the summit, where he held separate bilateral meetings with several SCO Central Asian member countries.

The SCO as a Eurasian intergovernmental group was announced in China in June 2001. India and Pakistan joined the SCO as full members in 2017. Currently, SCO has 9 member states, 3 observer states and 14 dialogue partners, which represent an entire swathe of emerging economic geographies, that occupy the theatre of current geopolitical developments. Russia and China along with four neighbouring Central Asian states form the founding members. However with Iran later joining in as a member state along with Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bahrain, Myanmar, and Maldives as dialogue partners, one can see why, SCO is an important platform for shaping the current geo-political landscape. Russia is engaged in a long war with Ukraine, while much of Middle Eastern and West Asia nations are intimately engaged in the Israel-Hamas war. China has been trying to dominate the dialogue since its inception and could be seen by many, as one of the diplomatic extensions of its sovereignty-threatening foreign policy. In the past few years, it has managed to bring a weakened Russia under its wings and is portraying SCO as an alternate multilateral dialogue platform challenging the US control of world affairs. In the run-up to the Astana SCO summit, the Chinese state mouthpiece Global Times carried a few reports extolling the virtues of the summit. "It sends a message to the Western world that there are many different voices from the emerging economies that need to be heard and represented, and the mainstream trend of global cooperation won't



be reversed by their obstruction," wrote Zhou Rong, a senior researcher at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. "Chinese President Xi Jinping also clubbed the SCO summit with two state visits to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, thereby, expanding its footprints in the Central Asian states. State media reminded global audiences that Kazakhstan, was where China's Belt and Road initiative was proposed in 2013, which in the past decade managed to get China to secure strategic infrastructure footprints in landlocked Central Asia. Quoting a few analysts Global Times reported "Central Asia, as one of the key areas in the implementation of the BRI, offers a vivid example of how the China-proposed global public good has been transforming the landlocked region into a land-linked region, transforming it into a bridge connecting the Eurasian continent." Central and West Asia has been PM Modi's focus in the past decade. Even though PM Modi avoided the Astana summit, he is expected to travel to Russia for a 'post-Ukraine' bilateral meeting with President Putin, followed by a stopover in Austria, a first in nearly four decades.

The meeting with President Putin and PM Modi, both of whom have returned to power after elections would be closely followed, since, it would be one of the first face-to-face meetings post Russia's isolation by Western countries following the Ukraine war. It will also be the first, where regional issues including the ongoing Israel offensive on Gaza and, the evolving geo-political situation in a conflict-ridden, post-COVID world are likely to be taken up. From a regional platform perspective, India China and Russia, also interact closely at BRICS. The unfolding engagement in the next few weeks will be closely followed.

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

Railway accidents expose neglect, systemic failures



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The latest report from the CAG highlights a troubling decline in funding for crucial track renewal projects amidst an alarming rise in train accidents



Railway accidents not only cause significant loss of lives and severe financial setbacks but also undermine public confidence in the system. A recent incident near New Jalpaiguri, where a train collided with another, resulting in eleven fatalities and 40 injuries, has once again highlighted the issue of signal failures. The railways have received less scrutiny since the decision to discontinue the presentation of a separate Railway Budget. This change has allowed many faults within the railways, including outdated equipment and complex signal failures, to go unnoticed. While accidents draw attention, derailments are equally frequent and damaging.

The full extent of the losses is challenging to estimate, as they not only impact the railways but also disrupt the movement of goods and people, with far-reaching consequences. The CAG audit found that while the Gross Budgetary Support of Rs 15,000 crore had been contributed, the Railways' internal resources fell short of the target for funding the remaining Rs 5,000 crore per year to Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK), set up in 2017. The report highlighted a decline in the allotment of funds for track renewal works, from Rs 9,607 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 7,417 crore in 2019-20. The railways' Rs 2.55 trillion budget is self-generated. Ignoring critical signal and track safety issues it has allocated Rs 24470 crore to be spent for 508 of the 1300 stations planned to be demolished and rebuilt in 16 states.

The buildings may need some repairs and refurbishing but demolition is outrageous under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. Many stations are already on the block though these hardly need demolition. The railways should have prioritised its operational safety issues and utilised the station rebuilding funds for safety. According to the CAG report 2022, an Analysis of 1129 'Inquiry Reports' of derailment accidents in 16 Zonal Railways (ZRs) revealed 24 factors



THE KAVACH SYSTEM OF BRINGING THE TRAINS TO A HALT HAS A COST OF RS 50LAKH PER KM AND RS 70 LAKH PER LOCOMOTIVE. IT MAY TAKE LONGER THAN THE RAILWAY HAS PLANNED

responsible for derailments in the selected cases/accidents. The total damages/loss of assets in these cases was reported as Rs 32.96 crore. The report adds that nearly 75 per cent of the consequential train accidents between 2017-18 and 2020-21 were caused by derailments. Out of 217 consequential train accidents, 163 (around 75 per cent) were due to derailments. The goods train ramming into the Kunchenjunga Express between Rangapani and Chatter Hat, off New Jalpaiguri, has almost the same pattern as the triple train accident near Balasore that killed 296 persons and injured 1100 people a year back. Like the Balasore, this one is also blamed on manual failure at the initial stages.

It was routine for Rail Board chairman Jaya Varma Sinha and two zonal chief public relations officers to blame it on the deceased train driver for "disregarding" signals and speed limits. The signal failure in both cases is responsible for the accidents as scrutiny of the system reveals. The Rangapani goods train was issued a manual authorisation paper chit signal, called a paper-line clear ticket (PLCT). It allowed goods train drivers to pass all inoperative automatic signals.

As per procedure the driver should have stopped for a minute at each signal and restricted speed at 10 to 15 km. Now it is being told that restriction should have been imposed on each of the trains in the section. The document of the railways says that all trains had the PLCT issued suggesting major signal failure. The rail officials said that the track circuits had failed due to the lightning and thunderstorms,

rendering the automatic signals defunct since 5.50 am.

In such a situation absolute block comes under restriction. When signals are not operational it is covered with paper or a piece of cloth. Railway Minister Ashwani Vaishnav had told Rajya Sabha on July 21, 2023, that the rear collision at Balasore was due to lapses in the signalling-circuit alteration carried out in the past and during the execution of the signalling work related to the replacement of the electric lifting barrier for a level-crossing gate. Two months before this, the Railway Board had flagged the issue of signalling staff resorting to short-cut methods.

Referring to five alarming incidents where trains entered the wrong path due to short-cut methods adopted by the signalling staff, the Railway Board in a letter to General Managers of Zonal Railways expressed "serious concern" that despite repeated instructions the ground situation was not improving and "signalling staff continue with short-cut methods for clearing signals".

In another incident of collision between two passenger trains, the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) has found the Indian Railways administration at fault for not implementing, and harmonising safety norms and protocols, the lack of which led to the collision of two passenger trains in Andhra Pradesh on October 29, 2023. The collision claimed 17 lives including three crew members. The CRS noted that senior officers continuously overlooked such violations in the recent past. The CRS found five flaws in the safety system:

1. Officials Overlooked Multiple Violations Earlier,

2. Employees in Crucial Safety Posts are Incompetent, and not aware of basic safety rules, and assistant loco pilots should be trained on simulators even on brake use,

3. Mismatch of Two Sets of Rules - general rules peg speed at 10km in case of signal failure and subsidiary rules at 15 km,

4. Every Passenger Train's Last Two Coaches Need Crash-Worthy Features, 5, Record Walkie-Talkie Conversations Between Station Masters and Loco Pilots in yet another incident the South Western Railway Zone official wrote: "on 08.02.2023 the loco pilot of Up Train No: 12649 Sampark Kranti Express, had stopped the train before Point No: 65 A, while observing that the point was set to down main line (wrong line), while as per PLCT, the train was supposed to pass through Up main line."

An audit report of the last year flagged serious lapses in rail safety. In a 2022 report focusing on derailments within Indian Railways, the CAG sought to investigate how preventive measures were implemented by the railway ministry against derailments and collisions.

The Kavach system of bringing the trains to a halt has a cost of Rs 50lakh per km and Rs 70 lakh per locomotive. It may take longer than the railway has planned. The eastern region alone needs Rs 3000 crore. Even if Kavach implemented the railways to improve on signal and track maintenance, accidents would not be easy to prevent. Even now it is not too late to divert funds from station demolitions to safety aspects.

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

Women suffer in silence as violence against them keeps increasing

Despite the high prevalence of such crimes, many women are unable to report these incidents due to societal pressures and lack of support

Violence against women remains a critical issue in our society, hindering both their physical development and mental well-being. According to the 2022 annual report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes against women increased by four per cent in 2022 compared to 2021. Over 5.8 million cases of crime were registered across the country in 2022, with nearly 450,000 involving crimes against women. The report highlights that the highest number of cases of violence against women were recorded in Delhi, the capital city, while Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan,



KAVITA DHAMEJA

was listed as the fourth most unsafe city for women. Rajasthan is the third state with the highest number of cases of violence against women in 2022. Notably, Rajasthan had the highest number of recorded rape cases, with over 31,000 incidents reported across the country and 5,399 cases registered in the state. The report also reveals that most incidents of violence or discrimination against women are

perpetrated by their husbands or close relatives. Gender-based violence encompasses physical, mental, sexual, and economic abuse, with intimate partner violence being the most widespread form. Women often experience sexual or physical violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives.

Despite the prevalence of violence, many women do not report these incidents due to several factors. First, the burden of the family's honour is disproportionately placed on women, instilling fear and preventing them from reporting the abuse, even to close family members. Second, many women lack access to support groups where they can confide and seek help. Third, and perhaps most crucially,

there is a widespread unawareness of the support systems and legal frameworks established by the government to aid women affected by violence. However, some women - who are a little aware and have found support groups - raise their voices against the violence they face and report it to the police.

One example of this courage is found in Baba Ramdev Nagar Kachhi Basti in Jaipur, Rajasthan, where gender discrimination and violence are prevalent. Meena Devi (name changed), a 38-year-old resident, shared her experience: "I collect trash, and my husband works as a laborer. We have six children, including four daughters. Our financial situation is dire, and my husband sometimes does not find work.

To contribute to the household income, my two daughters and I collect trash daily, and I had to stop their schooling." She further revealed, "My husband used to beat me after getting intoxicated, which also affected my daughters. One day, I gathered the courage to call the police, and since then, he has significantly reduced the violence." This settlement, predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, is located about 10 kilometres from the city in the Gurjar Ki Thadi area.

With a population of over 500 people, many residents engage in occupations such as blacksmithing, scavenging, drumming at weddings, bamboo crafting, and daily wage labour.

Meena mentioned that it is so common for women to be subjected to violence by their husbands that it does not bother anyone in the settlement. Most men indulge in substance abuse and mistreat their wives.

Although several non-government organizations are working in the area to raise awareness among women to stand up against this violence, the problem has not been completely eradicated. Another woman, who preferred to remain anonymous, recounted her story: "My husband works as a scrap dealer, while I stay busy with household chores." She explained that her husband gets intoxicated every day and abuses her. Her hands bore burn marks, evidence of the physical violence she endured.

She said that other women in the settlement often protect her from her husband's violence and have advised her to seek help from the police, but she does not wish to do so. Such control by partners leaves women without access to a safe space to share their experiences and seek advice.

Social worker Akhilesh Mishra, who has been working on the health of women and children in this area explains, "The government has enacted several laws to protect women from gender-based violence and women can file complaints against the violence they face. Various NGOs are also working here to raise awareness among women about gender discrimination and violence."

This effort has started showing results, as women in the settlement have now started to stand up against the violence and seek support from the police. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach. Cultural norms that place the burden of family honour on women must be challenged and redefined.

Efforts to increase awareness of support groups and governmental resources must be intensified, ensuring that all women have access to the help they need. Only through collective societal effort can we hope to build a capable, equal, and violence-free society for all women.

(The author is a social worker; views expressed are personal. Charkha Features)

MONEY MATTERS

Karnataka government signs MoUs with two Korean firms

The Karnataka government on Tuesday signed two MoUs worth Rs 1,040 crore with DN Solutions and EMNI Company Limited in Seoul, South Korea. The MoUs were signed on the second day of the delegation's visit, led by Karnataka Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development M B Patil. He participated in the 'Roadshow on Investment Opportunities in Karnataka' in Seoul, South Korea, which was organised by the Karnataka government and Embassy of India. A statement issued by his office said these strategic partnerships are set to advance the state's manufacturing, research and development, and battery technology sectors. "Karnataka secures Rs 1,000 crore investment from DN Solutions and has committed from the company for an investment of Rs 1,000 crore towards establishing machine manufacturing facilities, a research and development centre, and a technical support centre for Indian manufacturing companies," the statement read.



Gold jumps Rs 530, silver bounces Rs 1,200 on firm cues

Gold prices jumped by Rs 530 to Rs 73,080 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday tracking a bullish trend in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also leapt Rs 1,200 to Rs 92,500 per kg. In the previous session, it closed at Rs 91,300 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 73,080 per 10 grams, up by Rs 530 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,355 per ounce, up USD 16 from the previous close. Additionally, silver was quoted higher at USD 30.25 per ounce against USD 29.80 per ounce in the previous session. "Gold prices rose more than 1 per cent to a nearly two-week high while silver was up by more than 2 per cent, on the back weak US economic data which increased rate cut bets by Fed, fall in the dollar index and rally in industrial metals," Manav Modi, Senior Analyst - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.



Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma recall drugs in US market: USFDA

Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Sun Pharma are recalling products in the US due to manufacturing issues, as per the latest Enforcement Report by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). According to the report, Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling drugs to treat insomnia and going in the American market. New Jersey-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Inc., a unit of Hyderabad-based drug major, is recalling 13,752 bottles of Eszopiclone tablets, the USFDA stated. The affected lot has been produced at Dr Reddy's Bachupally plant in Telangana. As per the USFDA, the drug firm is recalling the affected lot due to "Failed Impurities/Degradation Specifications". The company issued the Class III nationwide recall on June 4 this year. As per the USFDA, a Class III recall is initiated in a "situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product is not likely to cause adverse health consequences".



RBI's bumper payout to limit big ticket divestment

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The record Rs 2.1 lakh crore dividend payout by the Reserve Bank of India will limit the need for big-ticket divestment, a domestic rating agency said on Thursday.

Care Ratings said the new government will retain the interim budget's Rs 50,000 crore target on receipts from divestments.

"With a bumper dividend from the RBI, the central government's fiscal position remains comfortable, which may limit the urgency to push ahead with big-ticket divestments," it said.

If there is a shortfall in the resource accretion, the government will prefer asset monetisation, it added.

Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) sales expected to be completed during the year will make it easy sailing for the government on the FY25 target, the agency said.

Govt to maintain Rs 50k cr target: Report



"After the demerger of land assets of the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), its possible divestment looks likely in FY25, provided favourable market conditions prevail. If the government offloads its entire

stake in SCI, it could generate Rs 12,500-22,500 crore as divestment proceeds," according to the report. The other plausible candidates include CONCOR and Pawan Hans, the rating agency said, adding that they continue

to be on the slow burner.

In the last ten years, the government has raised Rs 5.2 lakh crore from the divestment initiatives.

According to the report, the government can raise Rs 11.5 lakh crore by selling stakes in state-owned companies without getting the stake below 51 per cent. Selling stakes in central public sector enterprises can contribute Rs 5 lakh crore, while the remaining Rs 6.5 lakh crore can come from stake sales in insurance firms and banks, it said. The government may not opt to divest all its potential, and the decision to divest these listed firms may be influenced by the industry's strategic nature, the companies' profitability, financial market conditions and welfare/social considerations, the agency added.

Govt plans to streamline visa process for Chinese, foreign experts in non-PLI sectors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is working to streamline the visa process for experts from China and other countries for non-PLI beneficiaries in key sectors, a senior government official said on Thursday.

The government has already streamlined the visa process for professionals and experts for industries getting the benefits under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

Replying to queries about what kind of easing of visa process is being considered for China and other countries under the PLI scheme, DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said the government is working on the matter. He said there is already a streamlined visa process for PLI beneficiaries.



"We are trying to get it extended to other non-PLI beneficiaries which are operating in those same strategic sectors since we felt...one is getting a subsidy and a visa clearance. The other is not getting a subsidy but at least he should also get a streamlined process," Singh said. He further said that the government is in the process of

drawing up a similar streamlined process for non-PLI beneficiaries in the PLI sectors as well.

"The final decision has not been taken but we are moving in that direction and we are hopeful that it will be done," the Secretary said, and added initially the streamlined process will be for 14 PLI sectors.

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs will take the final call, Singh said.

The central government had announced the PLI scheme in 2021. When asked if more sectors will be included in the PLI scheme, he said internal consultations keep taking place. Industry keeps demanding for extension of the scheme to other sectors, he said.

On a question related to price indices, the DPIIT Secretary said his department deals only

with the wholesale price index (WPI), and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) looks at other statistical indicators, including the consumer price index (CPI).

"I suppose you could expect some kind of updation of the base year eventually...So it is an ongoing process again unless we have a decision I can't really tell," Singh said. The Secretary also informed that the e-commerce policy is on the anvil.

On industry demand for the removal of angel tax, Singh said that based on the consultation with the startup ecosystem "we have recommended that in the past as well and I think we have recommended it this time also".

But ultimately an integrated view will be taken by the Ministry of Finance, he said.

Coal recorded 10.2 pc growth among 8 key infra sectors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The coal sector has registered a growth of 10.2 per cent among all eight core industries of the economy in May, the government said on Thursday.

The index of coal industry has reached 184.7 points during May as compared to 167.6 points during the same month last year. "The coal sector has demonstrated highest growth of 10.2 per cent (provisional), following the electricity industry among the eight core industries for the month of May, 2024 as per the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) (Base Year 2011-12) released by Ministry of Commerce & Industries," the coal ministry said in a statement.

The driving force behind growth can be attributed to a considerable rise in coal production during May.

Mcap of BSE-listed firms hit all-time high of Rs 447.40 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms hit a record high of Rs 447.30 lakh crore on Thursday with the benchmark Sensex closing at a fresh all-time high level. The 30-share BSE Sensex scaled an intraday record high of 80,392.64 in early trade.

The index pared most of the gains later due to volatility and profit-taking by investors and settled 62.87 points or 0.08 per cent higher at 80,049.67.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed firms hit a record peak of Rs 4,47,30,452.99 crore (USD 5.36 trillion).

Of the total 4,021 traded stocks, 2,185 stocks advanced while 1,742 declined and 94 remained unchanged on the BSE. "Indian stock markets opened higher on Thursday, extending their record-breaking rally amid expectations that the Federal Reserve could begin

lowering borrowing costs sooner following weak US economic data.

"Despite an initial surge, benchmark equity indices ended the day largely unchanged from Wednesday's close, as gains in technology shares were offset by losses in HDFC Bank," Avdhut Bagkar Technical and Derivatives Analyst at StoxBox, said. Overall, the market and momentum breadth remained positive. In terms of sectors, Pharma, Healthcare, and IT stood out as the highest gainers compared to their peers, Bagkar added.

In the broader market, the BSE Smallcap gauge jumped 0.62 per cent and the midcap index climbed 0.60 per cent.

Benchmark BSE Sensex breached the historic 80,000 level intraday for the first time while Nifty raced more than 162 points to close at a fresh lifetime high of 24,286.50 on Wednesday.

BoM logs 19 pc loan growth in Apr-Jun

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Friday reported a 19 per cent growth in credit to Rs 2.09 lakh crore for the April-June quarter.

The outstanding credit was Rs 1.75 lakh crore at the end of June 30, 2023, BoM said in a regulatory filing.

The Pune-headquartered lender reported a 9.44 per cent increase in total deposits to Rs 2.67 lakh crore as against Rs 2.44 lakh crore at the end of the first quarter of the previous financial year. During the quarter, it said, Current Accounts and Savings Accounts declined to 49.86 per cent of the total deposits as against 50.97 per cent.

The Credit Deposit ratio increased to 78.18 per cent at the end of June 30, 2024, as against 71.89 per cent in the year-ago period.



Mahindra Lifespace eyes Rs 2050cr revenue from 2 new projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd on Thursday said it has acquired land in Bengaluru and bagged a redevelopment project in Mumbai with a combined revenue potential of Rs 2,050 crore.

In a regulatory filing, the company informed about the "closure of two deals aggregating to Rs 2,050 crore in Gross Development Value (GDV)".

These strategic moves include securing a third redevelopment project in Mumbai and acquiring a prime land parcel in Bengaluru, it added.

Mahindra Lifespaces has been chosen as the preferred partner for the redevelopment of seven residential societies in the prestigious Borivali West,

Mumbai neighbourhood.

The company has recently acquired 2.37 acres of land in Singasandra, South Bengaluru. The land is estimated to have a developable potential of approximately 0.25 million square feet, with a Gross Development Value of around Rs 250 crore.

Amit Kumar Sinha, Managing Director & CEO, Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd, said, "These strategic moves in Mumbai and Bengaluru, with a combined GDV potential of Rs 2050 crore, mark a significant milestone in our growth trajectory. Our third redevelopment project in Mumbai, with a GDV of Rs 1,800 crore, reinforces our commitment to urban renewal by creating value in established neighbourhoods."

Cement sector sees marginal growth of 2-3 pc in Q1FY25: Icra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The cement sector has witnessed a muted growth of 2-3 per cent in the first quarter of current fiscal on account of a slowdown in construction activity because of the Lok Sabha polls, according to a report from rating agency Icra.

However, the overall volumes for the FY2024-25 are likely to expand by 7-8 per cent driven by a healthy demand from the infrastructure and housing sectors.

"Nevertheless, the government's focus on infrastructure projects, sanction of additional houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and the industrial capex is expected to meaningfully improve cement volume offtake in H2 FY2025," it said.

The report also projects further consolidation in the cement industry by the top players to increase their capacity.

The sector has witnessed consolidation by leading players such as Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement and Adani group firm Ambuja Cements.



Besides, the sector is also expected to continue its organic growth in the medium term as makers continue to invest to expand capacity.

"While organic growth is expected to continue in the medium term, cement companies are also preferring the inorganic route to boost capacities rapidly," it said.

Icra estimates that the market share of the top five cement companies witnessed a steep rise to 54 per cent as of March 2024 from 45 per cent as of March 2015.

Now it "projects it to further increase to 58-59 per cent by March 2026, resulting in consol-

idation in the cement industry", it said.

Moreover, the cement companies may also witness an improvement in their operating profit by 1-3 per cent due to softened raw materials prices.

"While the cement prices are projected to largely sustain at previous-year levels, some softening of cost-side pressures - primarily power and fuel costs along with an increasing focus on green power, is likely to result in an improvement in OPBIT-DA/MT by 1-3 per cent YoY to Rs 975-1,000/MT," Icra Corporate Ratings Vice President and Co-Group Head Anupama Reddy said.

Sensex, Nifty close at fresh lifetime highs on gains in ICICI Bank, Infosys

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ticked higher to close at fresh all-time high levels on Thursday, following buying in market heavyweights ICICI Bank, Infosys and TCS amid a largely positive trend in global equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex scaled an intraday record high of 80,392.64 in early trade. The index pared most of the gains later due to volatility and profit-taking by investors at record levels. Sensex closed 62.87 points or 0.08 per cent higher at 80,049.67, its all-time closing high.

The broader Nifty also hit an intra-day record high of 24,401 in early trade before closing almost flat. The 50-issue index rose by 15.65 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a record 24,302.15 with 23 of its shares closing higher and 27 with losses.

"The defensive bet on large caps like IT and pharma gained momentum due to the



diminishing US inflationary pressure, improvement in QoQ earnings outlook and a resultant sharp fall in the US 10-year bond yield.

"The buoyancy in government spending and the green shoots in corporate earnings are now supporting the premium valuation. Return of FIIs to the domestic market and expectation of a rate cut in September are supporting market sentiment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among Sensex shares, HCL Technologies, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Mahindra and Mahindra were the gainers.

'L&T using Generative AI to enhance processes'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) is using generative artificial intelligence to enhance its processes across the project life cycle, company's Chairman and Managing Director S N Subrahmanyam said on Thursday.

To fuel this innovation, the company has launched a collaborative platform connecting aspiring data scientists with domain experts and technology champions to develop cutting-edge, future-proof solutions, Subrahmanyam said during 79th Annual General Meeting.

"Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as a game-changer, and the company is leveraging its power to enhance its processes across the project life cycle - from tendering to contract management to design, execution, and operation & amp; maintenance," he said.

Cargo traffic at 12 major Indian ports rises 6.8 pc to 69.8 MT in Jun

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Cargo traffic across 12 major Indian ports rose 6.8 per cent to 69.08 million tonnes (MT) in June from 64.69 MT in the year-ago month, with ten ports showing positive growth while the remaining two witnessed a decline.

Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Maharashtra recorded the highest growth in cargo handling at 15.12 per cent during the reporting month, followed by



Cochin Port with 15.12 per cent, Kamarajar Port (10.70 per cent), Deendayal Port (8.57 per cent) and New Mangalore Port (8.53 per cent), according to the data released by the major ports' apex body Indian Ports Association (IPA).

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 Short NIT No.07/SE (M) /Sec-bad Zone/GHMC/2024-25/344 Dated: 04.07.2024
 No. of Works: 10 Works. Estimated amount: Rs. 1615.50 Lakhs, Bid Submission Start Date & Time: Dt: 05.07.2024 @ 1.00 PM, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: Dt: 11.07.2024 @ 1.00 PM. Name & Address Officer Cell No.: SE, Sec'bad Zone, GHMC, Cell No. 9989930374. Further details can be seen at @ https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer R.O.No: 1498-PP/CL/ADVT/11/2024-25, Dt. 04-07-2024 Secunderabad Zone, GHMC

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BELLAMPALLY, DISTRICT: MANCHERIAL
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTIFICATION
 E-Procurement Tender Notice No. E1/01/Tender/2024-25/BPL/MP/ty. Date: 03-07-2024
 This office invites tenders from civil contractors through e-procurement for execution of six works with Pattara Pragathi 14th Finance Commission funds worth an estimated cost of Rs. 25.00 lakh in the municipal office. The details of works are as follows: Dates for tender and other details: 1) Date & Time for downloading tenders: 04-07-2024 from 11.00 AM, 2) Last date and deadline for downloading: 10-07-2024 up to 11.00 AM. For further details, the interested parties can contact the municipal office during working hours or call 8712333442. Contact for complete details website www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Commissioner, Bellampally Municipality R.O.No: 1477-PP/CL/ADVT/11/2024-25, Dt. 04-07-2024

OOMPHING UP HER GLAM WITH SUNKISSED VIBES IN MAURITIUS

Actress Nikita Rawal adorned her Instagram page with a few sizzling pictures from her trip to Mauritius. Today, *The Pioneer* shares with you some BTS moments and her travelogue from the trip through an exclusive discussion with her.

TEJAL SINHA

It's not an unknown thing to know about Nikita Rawal. She's been a big-time travel buff. She's been someone who constantly makes it a point to take time out to satisfy her wanderlust whenever she gets a break from the hectic schedule of her normal life. Speaking of her travel journals, the bubbly bombshell and stunner visited Mauritius and her spicily hot Instagram feed is glaring proof that she had a great time there.

Well, it was no less than an enriching experience, for sure. While she enjoys her trips, be it with family and friends or solo, she personally believes solo travel opens up various perspectives about life.

Talking of Mauritius, the place boasts beaches, lagoons and reefs, so what did she observe? And as we connect with her for an exclusive Travelogue segment, she enthusiastically shares, "Since the island is volcanic in origin, it is surrounded by coral reefs everywhere. I loved the coral reefs that occur in the shallow waters near land. They encircle the island and protect it from the sea. I personally love the beaches and in fact, I am more of a beach person than a mountain person. All the beaches were a treat to be on. I love the waterfalls and I love to surrender myself to the tempting beauty of water whenever I am on the beach. Crystal clear water and incredible weather made it a really fascinating experience."

A trip to Mauritius was always on her cards and finally, she got to tick it off her bucket list.

However, as far as outfits are concerned, she went out of her comfort zone with the slit bodycon gowns, co-ord sets and monotone outfits, swimsuits, monokinis and everything casual that kept her cool, easygoing and comfy. For her, fashion is always about comfort and that's always been her top priority. Well, gotcha, Nikita!

Meanwhile, she recalls that the culture is influenced by a blend of African, Asian and European cultures combined together. As far as hospitality is concerned, "The locals there were very friendly and protective towards the tourists. I loved the curry that I had there, and just like us, even for them, good meals are a good way of celebrating an occasion for family and friends. People voluntarily wanted to help in terms of place suggestions and other things; that's all that made the travel experience memorable."

Her 'gram feeds' describe her as a

water baby, but does she too? Well, definitely yes, because she calls herself a 'beach person' and a 'water baby' any day. "I like mountains too, but the sun-kissed vibe and vivacious presence that I get at beaches is something mind-blowing. I love the sea and swimming pool and I always carry my swimming attire anywhere I travel. So yes, I would be a beach person who's also a water baby."

Kashmir, beyond any doubt, stands out as the most distinctive place for her in India, with the beauty and serenity that it offers. No wonder it's called 'Heaven on Earth'.

A trip without a stay that doesn't make it feel like a staycation can certainly make your trip feel so incomplete. And so at Mauritius, she was putting up in one of the finest luxurious 7-star hotels there and the hospitality, she recalls, was simply outstanding.

To pick out one place for her quick rejuvenation, we ask and for her, it's Goa for its hippie vibe, laid-back lifestyle and scenic beaches.

Meanwhile for her, she says, "Delayed flights are scary. I have unfortunately been the victim of many super-delayed flights that mess up your entire schedule. So the only thing I can complain about here is this. I hope that never happens again for me."

Well, "I am a sucker for beaches and hence, if I get pretty beaches as per my liking, I am quite sorted there as well. However, apart from that, I also explored quite a lot. I loved the yacht ride chill moment. I also visited the Seven Coloured Earths, La Vanille Nature Park, Casela Nature Park and quite a few interesting beaches. I loved the Chamarel Waterfall and Tamarind Falls as well. Also, the food is so special. If anyone visits there, they have to try the special, yummy *dhol-puri* and *roti*. It's an Indian-origin delicacy, but the best you get of this is in Mauritius. It's primarily seafood-heavy and the stews, curries and everything is so delicious."

And on a concluding note, guess what Nikita brings into a hypothetical revelation for her travel: "I would love it to be Tom Cruise and Rihanna. That would be quite an interesting trip."



Stirring up opulence in travel

Remember when flying meant cramped seats, long security lines and stale peanuts? Those days are fading fast as a new era of luxury travel takes wing. Welcome to the world of private jets and exclusive experiences, where comfort isn't just an afterthought—it's the whole point.

The evolution of luxury travel

Luxury travel has come a long way since the golden age of ocean liners. Back then, first-class meant fancy dinners and ballroom dances. Today, it's all about personalisation, privacy, and getting the most out of your precious time.

India's skies are buzzing with this trend. With the country's aviation market set to double by 2030, hitting a whopping \$26 billion, there's a growing hunger for travel that goes beyond just getting from A to B. We're talking experiences that make you feel like a VIP from the moment you leave your front door!

Time: Ultimate luxury

Let's face it—in our always-on world, time is the one thing money often can't buy. That's where private aviation really shines. Imagine skipping those endless TSA lines and crowded terminals. No more sprinting through airports or praying your connecting flight isn't delayed.

With a private jet, you're the boss. Fly when you want, where you want. Need to hit three cities for meetings in one day? No problem. Want to squeeze in a round of golf before that big presentation? You got it. Guarantee to the kids you'll be home the same day? For sure. It's not just travel; it's time travel—giving you hours of your life back, for you, for your business, for your family.

Private jet experience: More than just a flight

Stepping onto a private jet is like entering an exclusive club. Forget about fighting for overhead bin space or elbow room. We're talking plush leather seats, gourmet meals, and maybe even a bedroom or shower on larger jets. It's your own flying five-star hotel.

But the real magic happens before you even take off. Private terminals are oases of calm. You can drive right up to the plane in some cases. No luggage carousels, no waiting. Just you, your bags, and the open sky.

Off beaten path: Accessing remote destinations

Here's where private aviation gets really exciting. Those smaller jets aren't just for show—they can land at airports commercial

flights can't reach. This opens up a whole new world of travel possibilities.

Imagine touching down on a tiny island for a secluded beach getaway, or landing near a remote wildlife reserve for an unforgettable safari. Private jets turn those "wouldn't it be nice" daydreams into "pack your bags, we're going" realities.

The future takes flight

The next chapter in luxury travel is already being written, and it's called Advanced Air Mobility (AAM). This isn't science fiction—it's happening now, and it's set to revolutionise how we move, especially for shorter trips.

Picture electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft zipping between or around cities or whisking you from downtown to the airport in minutes to connect to your jet. Several companies are already making moves in this space, partnering with cutting-edge aircraft developers. These new air taxis promise to be quieter, greener, and more flexible than anything we've seen before. Stuck in soul-crushing traffic? Not anymore. AAM could turn your dreaded cross-town commute into a breezy, aerial hop. And it's not just about urban areas. Regional air mobility is set to connect smaller cities and towns like never before. Hybrid-electric aircraft with ranges up to 800km could make those critical site visits or weekend getaways a breeze, all while significantly reducing emissions.

The road (sky) ahead

Of course, this bright future comes with some turbulence. India's recent proposal to curb imports of private jets and helicopters has raised eyebrows in the industry. While aimed at addressing trade deficits, it could impact the growth of luxury aviation.

Then there's the infrastructure challenge. For urban air mobility to really take off, we need a network of "vertiports" and charging stations. It's a big task, but one that could transform our cities and how we move through them.

Despite these hurdles, the future of luxury travel looks incredibly exciting. From personalized jet experiences to emission-free urban air taxis, we're entering an age where the journey truly can be as rewarding as the destination.

So fasten your seatbelts and get ready for take-off. The dawn of a new era in luxury travel is here, and the sky is no longer the limit—it's just the beginning.

(The author, Kanika Tekriwal, is the Founder and CEO, of JetSetGo.)

Forget Baguette, Brö's here to serve up a musical feast

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Brö cultivates her distinctiveness and makes a statement. She outperforms rappers in vintage skirmishes while wearing a coat over her shoulders and a glass of chardonnay in her hand. On record, she effortlessly conveys her sexuality and women's yearning in between songs and raps.

Her name, Elisa Broli, is an unconventional thinker. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, the genius shining through her music acquaints us: "My mixed-race family has always encouraged me to combine items that wouldn't often go together. I've witnessed a lot of similar things happening in India, where I've noticed that traditional music is frequently mixed with contemporary hip-hop or pop. I find that to be really inspiring and I really like that approach to art."

Well, "I'm making an effort not to define my style but rather to be who I am, which is a mix of several identities." This young woman's DNA comes from her Italian and Savoyard father and her Algerian Amazigh mother. She has a cool brain and a

flaming heart due to her Mediterranean and Alpine origins. A dichotomy that blends sensual desires with the dread of love can be seen in her writings. However, she had a different perspective while in India. "The Indian audience is especially considerate. They listen to the music intently and it makes them feel wonderful. That's not always the case in the West, depending on where you live, hehe. Because the Bhopal show was followed by an Indian dancing show, I found it especially enjoyable. It was the ideal opportunity to bring our cultures together on this unique music day."

She pours her heart and soul into her songs, never afraid to be vulnerable in the process. She creates music that takes listeners on a unique trip with each track! In sooth, "The majority of what makes me a very serious and meticulous artist is my academic background. It has also introduced me to a particular line of inquiry and questioning in my thoughts. I think my lyrics demonstrate that."

Another one of Brö's peculiarities is this. She expresses her victories and delights in crass language, utilising codes used by men. Brö's

world is humorous even if the tone is purposefully cynical. Lisa, who has a master's degree in both criminology and law, likes to explore the boundaries of morality and dissect them to defy expectations and live freely once more. "I think my music is approaching the category of 'alternative pop.' Although jazz, hip hop and electronic music are influences, the primary objective is to create music that is listenable. Folk music is something I'm interested in for my next project," the songstress shares.

Since releasing one album in 2023 (*Grande*) and two EPs (*Klaus* and *Cassandre*) in 2019 and 2021, her style has drawn attention in every way. She has been chosen for numerous initiatives both domestically and internationally since joining Keychange in 2022. For the past two years, she has been travelling nonstop, performing at events and festivals in France as well as in Brussels, Montreal and Oslo. She also put in the picture, "I think I know what my priorities are, but I also enjoy the challenge of the industry, so I don't mind making a compromise to further my professional goals. I believe I'm just shar-

ing my personal narrative—that of a liberated woman. I am not just free to do as I want, but also free in the sense that I have responsibilities and enjoy attempting to fulfill them. My intention is to convey the idea that equality extends to all ages."

She believes there isn't another way, hehe. She dislikes paths so much! She believes that trying to depict the world as it is would be too unpleasant because it is such a mess. She therefore likes to make it funnier by being ridiculous and humorous. She considers that it makes the audience happy to watch her laugh at herself. Through the Keychange program, she has made

amazing friends and as a blessing, now she has contacts all around the world. She was able to perform in Oslo thanks to the program; seeing Norway was a dream come true. With a string of French and international features (including forthcoming features in Germany, Norway, Belgium and Quebec), she is returning to those bygone days. "Fall 2024 will see the release of my next EP. As previously mentioned, I'm working on a second album with more folk influences. I want to continue touring the globe with my amazing team and my music," she declared at the end of our exclusive interview with her.

French pop singer Brö, who captivated the crowd at Hyderabad's "Fête de la Musique 2024" with her songs, talks exclusively with *The Pioneer* about her influences, style of music and musical philosophy.



Salma Hayek looks back on facing racism for being Mexican



Salma Hayek is a well-known Hollywood star and an actress of Mexican lineage. She first encountered racism due to her initial days in the industry. She talked about it in the interviews, describing how people repeatedly informed her that she would never play anything other than conventional representations of Mexican women, discouraging her from trying. She is currently among the most significant Latina actors in the business! Salma's career began with *Mexican telenovelas*, from which she eventually moved to Hollywood. With roles in films such as *Desperado*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Dogma* and *Wild Wild West*, the actress rose to prominence in Hollywood. She played Frida Kahlo, the painter, in the 2002 movie *Frida*. She received a nomination for an Oscar in the Best Actress category for her role in *Frida*. However, she did not have an easy life. When Salma Hayek was interviewed by Drew Barrymore a few years ago, the actress talked candidly about her experiences with racism in business. Salma recalled, "You will never make it in this town; there are no other roles for you. You will only play a prostitute, a drug dealer's wife or girlfriend and a housekeeper. And then here comes Robert Rodriguez, who gave us the chance for Latinos to have other kinds of roles. That's how my career started."

Salma Hayek stated that studios were hesitant to make films with minority casts during her early professional years in the 1990s. She also disclosed that, despite the sizeable Latino population in the US, studios were unwilling to produce films for this demographic. Salma Hayek continued, "I once recall speaking with a studio executive who said to me, 'You know what? The wrong side of the border is where you were born. If you had been born on the correct side of the border, you would most likely be the most famous person on the planet. However, regardless of how stunning people find you to be or how skilled an actress you are, the moment you speak, the audience is just going to be reminded of their maids.' And that's what he said to me. But they smartened up."

STANDALONE



The "Youth Acts - Planting for a Sustainable Future" event successfully concluded at Kanha Shanti Vanam, the global headquarters of the Heartfulness Institute in Hyderabad, by the G20 Global Land Initiative (G20 GLI) at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in partnership with the Heartfulness Institute. 2,500 eager youngsters from all across the area came together for the event to spend a stimulating day learning about land restoration and environmental conservation.

STANDALONE



Thursday marked the start of the eagerly awaited Birth Care Practitioner (Birth Doula) Certificate Program offered by Fernandez Foundation & University of Hyderabad. The purpose of this course is to provide aspiring birth professionals with the information and abilities needed to assist moms prior to, during and following childbirth. The three portions of the self-paced online training program, which are called Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Courses and last for one, two, and three months each, must be finished within two years after entrance. The event was attended by Dr Pooja Shenoy, Course Coordinator, Fernandez Foundation; Dr Evita Fernandez, Chairperson and Managing Director of Fernandez Foundation and Prof. B R Shamanna, School of Medical Science, University of Hyderabad.

PARTY

Here's everything Prime Video has to offer this week

Mirzapur season 3

Set in India's hinterland, the well-acclaimed *Mirzapur* franchise tells a gripping saga of power, revenge, ambition, politics, betrayal, deceit, and intricate family dynamics. Building on the spine-chilling climax of the previous season, *Mirzapur Season 3* takes viewers back into an intriguing yet dark and brutal world of crime and power. After the bloodbath at the end of *Season 2*, Pankaj Tripathi returns as 'wounded lion' Kaleen Bhaiya, who won the battle in *Season 1* along with Ali Fazal, who plays Guddu and ascended the throne in *Season 2*. The ensemble cast also includes Shweta Tripathi Sharma, Rasika Dugal, Vijay Varma, Isha Talwar, Anjum Sharma, Priyanshu Painyuli, Harshita Shekhar Gaur, Rajesh Tailang, Sheeba Chadha, Meghna Malik and Manu Rishi Chadha. Created by Puneet Krishna and Karan Anshuman, produced by Excel Media & Entertainment and directed by Gurmmeet Singh and Anand Iyer, *Mirzapur Season 3* will premiere exclusively on Prime Video on July 5 in Hindi with dubs in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada.

Space Cadet

Space Cadet is a comedy about the power of being yourself, following your dreams and shooting for the stars. Tiffany "Rex" Simpson (Emma Roberts) has always dreamed of going to space, but life isn't going quite as planned. Determined to turn things around, she aims high and with the embellishing touch of her supportive best friend Nadine (Poppy Liu), her "doctored" application lands her in NASA's ultra-competitive astronaut training program. In over her head, Rex relies on her quick wits, moxie and determination to get to the top of her class, and NASA program directors Pam (Gabrielle Union) and Logan (Tom Hopper) certainly take notice. Written and directed by Liz W. Garcia, *Space Cadet* will premiere on Prime Video starting July 4 in English with dubs in Hindi.

Garudan

Set in the picturesque town of Theni, Tamil Nadu, *Garudan* follows Minister Thangapandi (R.V. Udayakumar) as he disrupts the lives of the innocent in his quest to seize temple land. As greed takes over, childhood friends Aadi (M. Sasikumar) and Karuna (Unni Mukundan), along with their trusted confidante Sokkan (Soori), are pitted against each other, leading to a series of betrayals and acts of revenge. What unfolds is a gripping narrative of the consequences of power and ambition, offering intense drama and promising to keep viewers on the edge of their seats. Directed and written by R.S. Durai Senthilkumar, who co-wrote the film alongside Vetrimaaran, the film stars Samuthirakani, Soori and Shivada Nair in pivotal roles. The Tamil action thriller will premiere on Prime Video on July 3.

Tastemakers

In *Tastemakers*, join Emmy Award-winning food journalist Cat Neville for an eye-opening journey into the heart of the food movement. *Tastemakers* introduces viewers to artisans who are defining the flavor of food today. Throughout the documentary-style series, viewers learn what drives these makers, what inspires them, and how they perfected their craft. Season one of this reality drama will premiere on Prime Video on July 4.

Temptation Island Mexico

Temptation Island Mexico follows a group of dating couples at a crucial time in their relationship, where they must mutually decide if they are ready to commit to each other for the rest of their lives or if they should go their separate ways. Together, the couples travel to a tropical paradise, where they host a host of eligible men and women. There, they live the "single life," in a test that aims to help answer the most difficult questions about their relationship. The nine-episode reality series will be produced locally in Mexico and Brazil, as well as a combined version in Argentina and Chile, through an agreement between Amazon Studios, Banijay Mexico & U.S. Hispanic and Banijay Americas-owned Endemol Shine Brazil. Starring Davian Esparza, Ana Cisneros and Angie Taddei Cella, amongst others, the popular reality drama will premiere with its Spanish version on July 5 on Prime Video with subtitles in English.

The K2

In *The K2*, Kim Je Ha (Ji Chang-wook) is a former mercenary soldier known as "K2" who suddenly turns into a fugitive when he is wrongfully accused of killing his girlfriend while he is serving in Iraq. He finds his way back to Korea and gets a job as a bodyguard for Choi Yoo Jin (Song Yun-ah), the owner of JSS Security and the wife of Jang Se Joon (Jo Sung Ha), who is running for president. Je Ha uses his new job to plan his revenge on Park Kwang Soo (Kim Kap Soo), the leader of the current ruling party and Se Joon's rival, whom Je Ha believes ordered the murder of his girlfriend. The South Korean drama series is directed by Kwak Jung Hwan and will premiere on Prime Video on July 3.

Bob Marley: One Love

With *Bob Marley: One Love*, celebrate the life and music of an icon who inspired generations through his message of love, peace, and unity. In this powerful and uplifting film, discover Bob Marley's incredible story of overcoming adversity and the journey behind his revolutionary music that changed the world. Directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, produced in partnership with the Marley family and starring Kingsley Ben-Adir as the legendary musician and Lashana Lynch as his wife Rita, the film will premiere on Prime Video on July 3.

FUN

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



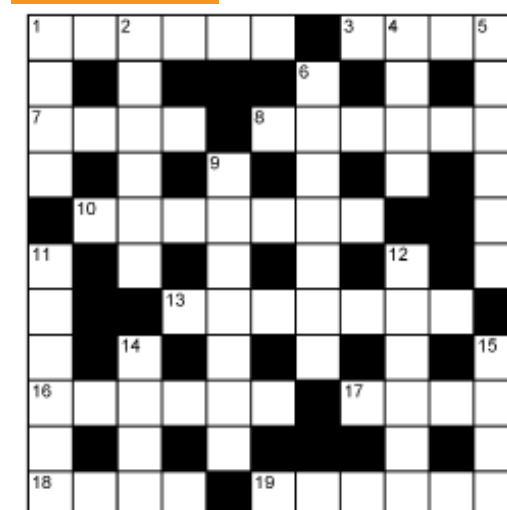
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- The least dangerous
- Become larger
- A great river in Egypt
- A black symbol on playing cards
- Alters
- A bright red colour
- An archer fires at this
- Do a sketch
- The capital city of Italy
- Every twelve months
- Cleaned with soap and water
- Comes into sight
- Bumped
- Quicker
- Extreme fear
- A percussion instrument
- Absent

DOWN

- and daughters
- Extremely dirty
- Very impolite

SOLUTION

C	O	N	T	I	N	E	D
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J	O	G	R	I	V	E	R
I	E	S	W	E	U		
G	E	R	M	P	A	S	S
S	N	Y	S				
A	N	S	W	E	R		
W	E	E	C	R	A		
S	A	V	E	D	O	N	
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U	N	H	E	A	L	T	H



Vishwambhara dubbing begins

Megastar Chiranjeevi's eagerly awaited socio-fantasy extravaganza, *Vishwambhara*, has commenced its dubbing process as part of its preparation for a Sankranti theatrical release. The film, known for its extensive VFX, is currently undergoing simultaneous production and post-production activities to ensure its timely completion. In *Vishwambhara*, Megastar Chiranjeevi portrays a devout follower of Lord Hanuman, with the movie promising intense action sequences crafted under the meticulous direction of Vassishta. Produced by UV Creations, known for their blockbuster hits, the film boasts a stellar cast and a crew of renowned technicians. Joining Chiranjeevi are Trisha Krishnan and Ashika Ranganath as the leading heroines, with Kunal Kapoor set to deliver a powerful performance in a pivotal role. Vikram, Vamsi, and Pramod are spearheading the production efforts, while the acclaimed MM Keeravani, fresh off an Oscar Award, composes the music and Chota K Naidu handles the cinematography. *Vishwambhara* is scheduled for release on January 10th, 2025, promising an enthralling blend of fantasy and action for audiences to look forward to.



NIHARIKA NM SET FOR TOLLYWOOD DEBUT!

Niharika NM, well-known for her engaging social media presence, is set to make her debut in Tollywood under the banner of Geetha Arts. Celebrating her birthday, Geetha Arts warmly welcomed her into the Tollywood family with a special announcement on social media. Born in Chennai and raised in Bangalore, Niharika pursued her MBA at Chapman University in California, USA. Her passion for theater arts sparked early, leading her to begin her career as a YouTube influencer while still in high school. Niharika captivates her audience with Instagram reels where she shares

her unique perspectives on various topics. Having earned the moniker of social media's entertainment and comedy queen, Niharika boasts a substantial following of 6 million subscribers. She recently represented India for the second consecutive year at YouTube's Creators for Change program, highlighting her commitment to addressing vital social issues through her content. Her remarkable career trajectory is even studied as a case study at Chapman University. As Niharika NM ventures into Tollywood, her expertise in creating relatable and impactful content is poised to pave the way for a successful film career. Her transition from social media sensation to Tollywood star holds immense promise, driven by her talent, charm, and unwavering dedication. Niharika NM is set to leave a significant mark on Tollywood with her upcoming endeavors.

Satyadev's look from Zebra hints at his intense character

Satyadev's debut look in the film *Zebra*, directed by Eashvar Karthic and produced by SN Reddy, S Padmaja, Bala Sundaram and Dinesh Sundaram under Padmaja Films Private Ltd and Old Town Pictures, was revealed on his birthday. Alongside Kannada star Daali Dhananjaya, Satyadev plays a prominent role in this crime action entertainer. In the unveiled poster, Satyadev appears in a sleek suit, exuding a serious demeanour with an intense gaze. He is depicted walking assertively, carrying a bag and holding a pen in his other hand, set against a backdrop featuring currency notes. This glimpse hints at the intense character portrayal by Satyadev in the film. Titled *Zebra*, the movie is completed with shooting wrapped up, and it is currently undergoing post-production. The tagline "Luck Favours The Brave" underscores the theme of the movie. The film's release date will be announced soon. Joining Satyadev and Daali Dhananjaya are Priya Bhavani Shankar and Jennifer Piccinato as the leading ladies, with veteran actor Sathyaraj in a pivotal role. Sathya Akala and Sunil round out the prominent cast. Ravi Basur, known for his work in *KGF* and *Salaar*, composes the music, while Satya Ponmar handles cinematography. S Srikrishmi Reddy serves as the co-producer, Anil Krish manages editing, and Meeraq pens the dialogues.

Sathyaraj joins Sikandar



The announcement of uniting these three powerhouse figures—producer Sajid Nadiadwala, superstar Salman Khan, and director AR Murugadoss—has heightened excitement to its peak and now, another potent personality has joined the team: Sathyaraj. Renowned for his role as Kattappa in the iconic *Baahubali* franchise, Sathyaraj brings his talent to *Sikandar*. The actor started filming for the film recently along with Prateik Babbar. This update adds to the film's exhilarating progress. Having portrayed diverse roles on screen, witnessing Sathyaraj alongside other prominent figures of the entertainment world in *Sikandar* promises a thrilling experience. The production house took social media to announce the same. Produced by Nadiadwala Grandson, *Sikandar*, directed by AR Murugadoss, stars Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna in leading roles. This action-packed entertainer guarantees an unparalleled cinematic experience, slated for the Eid 2025 weekend.

Saripodhaa Sanivaaram 2nd look: New dimension to Nani's character

The anticipation for *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* just reached a pitch higher as the second look featuring Natural Star Nani has been unveiled! This latest look reveals an entirely different facet of Nani's character, contrasting to the fiery intensity we've seen in previously. The second look of Nani from his upcoming film offers a glimpse into a completely different side of his character. While the initial teasers and posters showcased his intense and raging persona on Saturdays, this new poster highlights a more serene and composed Nani, depicting his calm side from Monday to Friday. Sharing the post on their social media, the makers captioned it "Every raging Saturday has its calm counterpart. Now, experience a new dimension of Surya

on other days." The Makers recently surprised fans with the release of their first single *Garam Garam* by Vivek Harihan. The song was an instant hit soon it was released. Produced by DVV Entertainment, *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* is written and directed by Vivek Athreya. The film promises a unique storyline and a diverse portrayal of Nani's character, showcasing his versatility as an actor. Alongside Nani, the film features a stellar cast including SJ Suryah, Priyanka Arul Mohan, and Sai Kumar P, adding to the excitement surrounding its release. *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* will be available in multiple languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.



Krithi Shetty onboard film Kaantha

Recently there have been announcements about Dulquer Salmaan next major project, which is a highly anticipated pan-India film *Kaantha*. Following his recent successes, Dulquer is set to captivate audiences once again with his versatile acting prowess in this upcoming venture. Joining Dulquer Salmaan in the lead role is Krithi Shetty, whose rising popularity and impressive performances have garnered attention across the industry. Together, they promise to bring a fresh dynamic to the screen, creating anticipation among fans eager for this



cinematic treat, say sources. Scheduled to commence shooting in September, *Kaantha* is poised to be a significant release following Dulquer's forthcoming film *Lucky Bhaskar*. As details continue to emerge about the film's plot and production, expectations soar for *Kaantha* to make a lasting impression on audiences across India.

Ari gearing up to deliver a big hit!



The trend of mythology-themed films continues to dominate Indian cinema, with productions exploring epic and divine narratives achieving blockbuster success nationwide. Movies such as *Karthikeya 2*, *Hanuman*, *Kantara* and *Oh My God* have all found substantial acclaim and box office success in recent times. Prabhas' *Kalki 2898 AD*, drawing from the epic Mahabharata, is the latest testament to this trend, breaking records globally. In sync with this wave, *Ari* emerges as an eagerly anticipated film centered on the concept of Arishadvargala and the magnificence of Lord Krishna. This unique narrative angle has stirred considerable interest, making *Ari* a standout project in the mythology genre. Presented by RV Reddy and produced by Srinivas Ramireddy, Thimmappa Naidu Purimetla, and Seshu Maram Reddy under ARVY Cinemas, *Ari* carries the intriguing subtitle "My Name is No Buddy." The film stars Vinod Varma, Surya Purimetla, Anasuya Bharadwaj, Sai Kumar, and Srikanth Iyengar in pivotal roles. Directed by Jayashankar, known for his previous success with *Paper Boy*, *Ari* is gearing up for its theatrical release. Moreover, there is buzz about Bollywood star Abhishek Bachchan showing interest in a Hindi adaptation of *Ari*.



SIVAKARTHIKEYAN, RASHMIKA MANDANNA'S FILM TITLED BOSS

In an exciting development for fans of south cinema, Sivakarthikeyan gears up for his next big project under the direction of Cibi Chakaravathi. Sources confirm that the film has been titled *BOSS*. The film marks a significant collaboration set to ignite screens with its dynamic storyline and star-studded cast. Joining Sivakarthikeyan in the lead role is the talented Rashmika Mandanna, adding to the anticipation surrounding the project. Notably, seasoned actor SJ Surya is set to portray the formidable antagonist, promising electrifying confrontations on screen. Produced by Passion Studio, *BOSS* is slated to commence filming by the end of October, promising a blend of action, drama and intrigue that audiences have come to expect from Sivakarthikeyan's ventures. As details continue to unfold, expectations soar for this upcoming cinematic treat that aims to leave a lasting impact on south cinema enthusiasts worldwide.



Shalini's social media post raises concern

Shalini, the former actor and wife of Tamil superstar Ajith Kumar, recently caused concern among fans after sharing a picture from the hospital on her Instagram. The photo, which quickly went viral on social media, shows Shalini dressed in beige hospital scrubs with black dots, lying in a hospital bed. She is seen holding Ajith Kumar's hand, her hair tied back in an updo, and wearing hospital wristbands. Ajith Kumar is seated next to her in a blue striped shirt. Alongside the picture, Shalini expressed her affection with the caption, "Love you forever." The image has sparked worry among her followers, accumulating over 158K likes. Concerned fans flooded the comments section, with one asking, "Any problem,



Shalini?" Another fan praised their enduring relationship, commenting, "Evergreen Couple of Kollywood," while a third sent well wishes, saying, "Get well soon, Shalini ma'am." Meanwhile, Ajith Kumar is currently occupied with his film *Vidaa Muryachi*, filming in Azerbaijan alongside Trisha. Reports suggest he hurried back to Chennai upon learning of Shalini's health condition.

Second single Aadapilla song from Peka Medalu out

Peka Medalu is a film, introduced by Vinod Kishan, as a hero who acted in hit films like *Na Peru Shiva* and *Andhagaram* and Anusha Krishna is playing the heroine. After establishing the company Crazy Ants Productions with the movie *Evvariki Cheppoddu*, now coming forward to audience with the crazy movie *Peka Medalu*. Previously, the first song and teaser of this movie got an excellent response. Recently, the innovative promotional video made by hero Vinod Kishan impressed the audience. Now the second single *Aadapilla* song from this movie has been

released. Bhargava Karthik penned the lyrics of this song which is sung by singer Sakae Rajashekar and says 'Anandam Attaku Swaha Manasshanti Mamaku Swaha Aadanani Janmanta Swaha'. The music given by Smaran Sai is very attractive and new. It seems that this song has been portrayed in a new and different way. As a story with a good concept and content, this movie will definitely be a success. Movie team said that this movie is releasing on July 19 grandly.



Address Varalaxmi Sarathkumar and Nicholai Sachdev, recently celebrated their marriage with a grand wedding ceremony on July 3, followed by a lavish reception. The event was graced by numerous eminent personalities from the South Indian film industry, adding to the glamour and excitement of the occasion. The wedding festivities of Varalaxmi Sarathkumar and Nicholai Sachdev have taken social media by storm, with photos and videos capturing memorable moments shared by the couple and their esteemed guests. Among those in attendance were icons such as Rajinikanth, Mani Ratnam, Balakrishna, AR Rahman, S Thaman, Siddharth, Trisha Krishnan, Kichcha Sudeep, among many others, each contributing to the joyous atmosphere with their presence. Varalaxmi radiated elegance in a heavily embellished lehenga, complemented by Nicholai's traditional sherwani attire. Memorable snapshots from the occasion included superstar Rajinikanth posing with Sarathkumar and Himani, as well as actor-politician Nandamuri Balakrishna warmly engaging with Sarathkumar's family and other guests.



Rajawat stuns Gemke, enters second round of Canada Open

PTI ■ CALGARY (CANADA)

Promising Indian shuttler Priyanshu Rajawat stunned higher-ranked Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in a hard-fought three game contest to advance to the second round of men's singles event at the Canada Open here.

World No.39 Rajawat had to dig deep to get the better of eighth seed Gemke of Denmark 17-21 21-16 21-14 in

his opening round match that lasted one hour and 10 minutes on Wednesday night.

Rajawat, thus, remained the only Indian surviving player in the men's singles competition and will take on Takuma Obayashi of Japan in the next round.

The two other Indians in the fray, Ayush Shetty lost 14-21 11-21 to sixth seed Koki Watanabe of Japan, while Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian was shown the

door by France's Alex Lanier 16-21 17-21.

In the women's singles, Tanya Hemanth and Anupama Upadhyay also progressed to the second round.

While Tanya beat Jackie Dent of Canada 21-13 20-22 21-14, Anupama defeated Rachael Darragh of Ireland 21-11 21-11. Tanya will be up against third seed Busanan Ongbamrunphan of Thailand, while Anupama will play Canada's Michelle Li.

Moreeng appointed as USA women's cricket team coach



PTI ■ NEW YORK

Former South Africa cricketer Hilton Moreeng has been appointed as the coach of USA's national women and Under-19 teams, the country's governing body announced.

Moreeng will take over from West Indian legend Shivnarine Chanderpaul, and will prepare the team for the T20 World Cup which will be held later this year in Bangladesh.

The 46-year-old, who served as South Africa women's team coach for over a decade, said he wanted to contribute to the growth of cricket in the USA. "I am eager to collaborate with both current players and emerging talent. My goal is to methodically build a competitive squad capable of

rivaling the best in women's cricket globally," said Moreeng, who stepped down as SA coach this March.

USA Cricket Chairman of the Board, Venu Pisike said Moreeng's vast experience will benefit the nation's progress at top-flight cricket.

"Hilton brings a rich background and vast experience to USA Cricket having been a critical part of the transformation of South African women's cricket.

USA women are also at the beginning of a transformative period with an Olympics in four years' time and we believe Hilton's successes, diverse experiences and understanding of challenges in an emerging cricket nation is well-suited for our program," he added.



Plenty of intrigue, even if Messi, Vinicius can't participate

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

Lionel Messi's leg injury was the only major obstacle that fell into Argentina's path while it rolled through group play and into the Copa America quarterfinals.

Bigger challenges await the defending champions, and they're hoping Messi will be there to lead the way in perhaps his final international tournament.

The 15-time Copa America champion Albiceleste are still the undeniable favorites in the Americas' biggest soccer tournament when quarterfinal play gets underway, but the other 15-time Copa champs - Uruguay - top the list of challengers capable of taking them down.

With the host Americans and Mexico eliminated in group play, the spotlight shifts firmly to the South American powerhouses determined to raise the trophy.

ARGENTINA VS ECUDAOR In Houston, it's unclear whether Messi will play in the opening quarterfinal due to a leg injury that sidelined him in the team's most recent match against Peru. Coach Lionel Scaloni said Messi's availability will be a game-time decision.

"Depending on how he responds, we will decide," Scaloni said Wednesday before training. "There are ramifications when Leo is not able to play. We'll try to make sure that he can play. If not, we'll try to find the best solution for the team. I will talk

to him today. It's only fair that he can take his time and be able to train as much as he can."

Argentina has been sturdy even without a goal from Messi in the tournament, winning all three group stage matches by a combined 5-0.

Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez has four goals in a spectacular effort despite coming off the bench twice, while Manchester City's Julián Alvarez got the other goal. If Scaloni decides to play both center forwards together, it could be more than enough to make up for Messi - and a nightmare for underdog Ecuador, which earned its unexpected quarterfinal spot by holding Mexico scoreless last weekend.

VENEZUELA VS CANADA In Arlington, Texas, it is a matchup of pleasant surprises. Venezuela has enjoyed an outstanding tournament so far, winning its three matches by a combined 6-1 with offensive leadership from Salomon Rondón and Eduard Bello.

Canada got out of Copa group play for the first time despite scoring just one total goal in three games before losing Inter Milan's Tajon Buchanan to a broken leg in training Tuesday. Reaching the semifinals would be a massive achievement for either of these teams.

COLOMBIA VS PANAMA In Glendale, Arizona, the quarters move west for a pair of games held in air-conditioned stadiums amid a continent-wide heat wave. Colombia is now unbeaten in

26 consecutive matches after holding Brazil to a draw to win its group. Led by veteran star James Rodríguez, Los Cafeteros will be favored to eliminate Panama, which knocked off the host U.S. Team to advance from group play.

BRAZIL VS URUGUAY The Sin City will host easily the most tantalizing matchup of the round, featuring a faltering powerhouse against a team known for perennially punching above its weight. No quarterfinal team looked as shaky as Brazil, which stumbled into the next round with a thoroughly unimpressive effort. Colombia and Costa Rica both held the Seleção to draws, and fan discontent is roiling.

Even worse, Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior is suspended for the quarterfinal after accumulating two yellow cards. Yet Brazil is still laden with individual talent that's barely touched the field in this tournament, so it's far too early to write off the five-time World Cup winners.

Uruguay looks just as good as advertised under brilliant coach Marcelo Bielsa, winning three times by a combined 9-1 in group play led by Liverpool striker Darwin Núñez.

After beating Brazil and Argentina in recent World Cup qualifying matches, La Celeste probably would be the tournament favorites if not for Argentina's similarly strong form - but Brazil has the pure talent to end those dreams in a hurry.

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag signs contract extension until 2026

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag has signed a contract extension through to 2026, the Premier League club said Thursday. The Dutchman has won back-to-back trophies in his first two years at Old Trafford, but faced uncertainty over his position after leading it to its worst league finish in 34 years last season.

After a performance review, United decided to stick with Ten Hag and he has now agreed on a new deal, which is a one-year extension on his previous contract, which was due to expire at the end of the upcoming season.

"Looking back at the past two years, we can reflect with pride

on two trophies and many examples of progression from where we were when I joined," Ten Hag said. "However, we must also be clear that there is still lots of hard work ahead to reach the levels expected of Manchester United, which means challenging for English and European titles.

"In my discussions with the club, we have found complete unity in our vision for reaching those goals, and we are all strongly committed to making that journey together."

Ten Hag joined United from Ajax in 2022 and won the English League Cup in his first year in England. He followed that up last season with a victory over Manchester City in the FA Cup final.



He stays on in the face of a major overhaul of United's soccer operations by new co-owner Jim Ratcliffe.

British billionaire Ratcliffe bought a 27.7% stake in the club in February and has hired a new CEO, sporting director

and technical director in a bid to return the 20-time English champions to the top of European soccer.

"With two trophies in the past two seasons, Erik has reinforced his record as one of the most consistently

successful coaches in European football. While the club's review of last season highlighted areas for improvement, it also reached a clear conclusion that Erik was the best partner for us to work with in driving up standards and outcomes," said United Sporting Director Dan Ashworth.

Spain face hosts Germany in quarterfinals with a potential record on line



AP ■ STUTTGART (GERMANY)

Spain meet host nation Germany on Friday in the quarterfinals of the European Championship in an eagerly-anticipated match between two of the best performing sides at the tournament.

There is also a potential record on the line as Spain and Germany have each won three European Championships, better than any other nation.

Two of the most exciting talents will be on show in Spain teenager Lamine Yamal and 21-year-old Germany forward Jamal Musiala.

MATCH FACTS: The winner will advance to face France or Portugal in the semifinal in Munich on Tuesday.

Spain and Germany are the leading scorers at Euro 2024, having netted nine and 10 goals respectively in their four matches. They have also conjured the most attempts on target.

Spain has never eliminated a host nation, either at a European Championship or at the World Cup. La Roja is the only team to

have won all its matches at Euro 2024, beating Croatia, Italy and Albania in the group stage before thumping Georgia 4-1 in the round of 16.

Germany beat Scotland and Hungary but drew against Switzerland before eliminating Denmark.

Germany hasn't beaten Spain in a major tournament since a group-stage victory at Euro '88.

TEAM NEWS: Lamine Yamal, Nico Williams and Fabian Ruiz all missed Spain's training session on Tuesday, while Aymeric Laporte only jogged once around the field. However, all are expected to be fit for Friday's match.

Germany defender Jonathan Tah returns from suspension and coach Julian Nagelsmann has reported no injury concerns.

BY THE NUMBERS: Spain and Germany have only conceded three goals between them. The only time Spain goalkeeper Unai Simón had to pick the ball out of his net was against Georgia, while Germany conceded against Scotland and Switzerland.

The teams have met 26 times, with Germany winning nine to Spain's eight. Spain edges Germany slightly on goals scored with 32 compared to 31.

Three of the last four encounters have finished in a 1-1 draw with the exception being a 6-0 thrashing of Germany by Spain in a UEFA Nations League match in November 2020.

Germany has won all six of its European Championship quarterfinals. Spain has lost five of its nine.

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will likely make a national record 39th appearance in a major tournament, having matched Bastian Schweinsteiger's mark in the previous round.

Germany has won the last six penalty shootouts it has been involved in, losing only its first in the 1976 final. Spain has won seven of its 13.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: "I am not at all nostalgic and I don't feel like this will be my last-ever match." - Germany midfielder Toni Kroos, who will be retiring after the tournament.

"We're aiming for the trophy and even though it's been a pleasure playing with Toni Kroos - because he's been a teammate at Real Madrid and a friend - I'd still like to retire him on Friday!" - Spain forward Joselu.

"I don't know if Spain are all that happy having to face Germany; likewise, there could have been easier opponents for us. If you want to win this tournament, you have to go through Spain." - Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich. "Both are amazing players, they are young talents who will be the best in the world in the future. The wrong thing that everybody does is compare players. I think we only have to enjoy them."

Tvesa T-24, Diksha T-46 in London Aramco Series

PTI ■ LONDON

Tvesa Malik Sandhu was unable to hold on to her early gains and finished at even-par 73 to be tied-24th at the end of the first round of the Aramco Team Series London here.

Fellow Indian Diksha Dagar, who will play in the Major Evian Championships next week, shot 2-over 75 to be tied-46 at the Centurion Club, while Pranavi Urs carded a disappointing 7-over 80 and looks unlikely to make the cut.

Tvesa, who lost a play-off last week and missed out on a maiden win on the Ladies European Tour (LET), began well from the 10th tee. She had a bogey on 12th but it was followed by an eagle, her third in her last three rounds. She



had eagles in the second and third rounds of last week's Swiss Ladies Open. She added a birdie on the 18th to turn in 2-under. She dropped three shots on the second, third and seventh but got one back with a birdie on

the eighth to close at 73. Diksha had three birdies, three bogeys and a double-bogey.

Ireland's Leona Maguire led the individual standings, while her team comprising Solheim Cup winner, England's Liz Young, Spain's Marta Sanz Barrio and amateur Yana Wilson, was joint leader after day 1 at 14-under. Leona's team shared the lead with Team Nuria Iturriz and Team Georgia Hall.

Leona sits at the top of the leaderboard after producing a bogey-free first round. The two-time LPGA winner rolled in back-to-back birdies on her fifth and sixth holes, before making three on the trot from holes 8 to 10 before adding further birdies on the 13th and 15th for her round of seven-under par.

AP ■ LONDON

Coco Gauff likes No. 1 Court at Wimbledon. It's where she beat Venus Williams back in 2019 when Gauff made her Wimbledon debut at age 15.

On Wednesday, Gauff beat qualifier Anca Todoni 6-2, 6-1 to advance to the third round at the All England Club. "This is the court where I first started here at Wimbledon. Court 1 is always a special place for me to play on," the 20-year-old Gauff said in her on-court interview.

The victory also allows Gauff, the No. 2 seed, to move another step away from last year's first-round exit. "Overall, I just learned about life a lot," the U.S. Open champion said when asked about putting that three-set loss to Sofia Kenin behind her. "I just realized that, yes, what I do I'm very passionate about, but it's not ever that serious and sometimes the world can make you feel like there's so much pressure, there's so much expect-

Coco Gauff and Carlos Alcaraz advance at Wimbledon. Naomi Osaka loses



old Spaniard replied with a smile: "I'm going for him." "We played a really good match



in the U.S. Open," the No. 3 seed said of their 2022 semifinal that Alcaraz won at Flushing

Meadows. In other results, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was eliminated in the second round by No. 19 Emma Navarro by a score of 6-4, 6-1, while No. 1 Jannik Sinner got past 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4), 2-6, 7-6 (4) at Centre Court in an all-Italian contest.

"I knew that I had to raise my level today," Sinner said. "He is a grass-court specialist. ... I'm very happy how I handled the situation."

No. 11 Danielle Collins completed her first-round match - a 6-3, 7-6 (4) win over Clara Tauson. It had been suspended Tuesday night at 4-4 in the second set. No. 20 Beatriz Haddad Maia advanced to the third round by beating Magdalena Frech 7-5, 6-3.



Spaniards Pedro Martinez and Jaume Munar. Martinez and Munar won 6-2, 6-2 in one hour and seven minutes. India will have further representation in men's doubles first round through N Sriram Balaji and Yuki Bhambri later on Thursday. Balaji will partner Britain's Luke Johnson and will face fourth seeds Mate Pavic of Serbia and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador. On the other hand, Bhambri and France's Albano Olivetti will take on the Kazakh duo of Alexander Bublik and Alexander Shevchenko.