

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer

In 2029, YS Sharmila will become the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and Rahul Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India. If there is a by-election for the Kadapa Parliament seat, I will campaign for the Congress. Andhra Pradesh doesn't have an opposition. It has only the ruling BJP, that is, Babu, Jagan and Pawan, who are all on the side of Modi.

- Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister P4



DON'T MISS...

Trauma care centre to be set up...

ADP India on Monday announced that it will construct a state-of-the-art trauma care centre on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway. The new facility will be constructed at the Korlahad toll plaza in Kethelpally mandal, Nalgonda district, in close partnership with the department of health. The primary purpose of this trauma care centre is to deliver immediate medical treatment to accident victims, significantly reducing the time between injury and care. The foundation stone was laid in the presence...

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Rath Yatra: Chariots reach...

The chariots of the sibling deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, reached the Gundicha temple on Monday, with which the first leg of the Rath Yatra celebrations in Odisha's Puri concluded. Thousands of people pulled the chariots, while lakhs of devotees gathered on the roadside to watch the procession on 'Badadanda' amid heat and humidity. The 'Yatra' began on Sunday evening, but halted a few metres later due to sunset. It resumed the 2.5 km journey from the 12th-century...

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Budget should focus on tax relief...

The Union Budget FY25 should focus on offering relief to taxpayers, especially in the lower income brackets, to stimulate consumption, industry players suggested. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the full Budget for fiscal 2024-25 on July 23 which will be the first major policy document of the new government. The industry also urged the finance minister to lower corporate tax, phase out tax exemptions, and broaden tax base to boost economic growth. "Rationalise and..."

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India eye improved bowling show in...

Desperate to level the three-match series after the second game was washed out, India would hope weather doesn't play spoilsport, besides eyeing a much-improved bowling effort in the final women's T20I against South Africa here on Tuesday. India are trailing the three-match series 0-1 after losing the opener by 12 runs. Their problems compounded after the second game here on Sunday was washed out midway due to persistent drizzle. And with 30 to 40 per cent of rain forecast for Tuesday, the Indians...

-SPORTS



'Will make TG skill, knowledge hub'

Skill University soon in Gachibowli: CM

- Orders officials to speed up arrangements to establish the university
- Stresses need for a blueprint on courses, curriculum and employment opportunities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has announced the establishment of a Skill University in the state aimed at providing advanced knowledge and skills. The first Skill University is planned to be set up at the Engineering Staff College in Gachibowli. During a meeting held at the Engineering Staff College, Gachibowli, on Monday, the CM ordered officials to speed up arrangements to establish the university. He asked officials and industry leaders to submit clear propos-

als one or two days before the Assembly's budget session by July-end. The government will decide within 24 hours of receiving the proposals, the CM said.

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, IT and Industries Minister Sridhar Babu, and the CM's Advisor, Vem Narender Reddy, attended the meeting. "My government views on the proposed skill university from officials and industry representatives and proposed establishing the Skill University on the premises of the Engineering Staff College making use of its proximity to IT companies and other industries.

He also discussed constituting a temporary board for the university, modelled after the International School of Business (ISB), and emphasized the need for a blueprint on courses, curriculum and employment opportunities.

2

YSR an inspiration behind Congress' guarantees: CM

Says YSR's padayatra motivated Rahul to launch Bharat Jodo Yatra

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The welfare programmes introduced by YSR inspired the Six-Guarantees announced by the Congress during the recent Assembly elections, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said.

The CM said that YSR was the inspiration behind the Musi Riverfront Development Project, the Metro Rail, the Krishna and Godavari projects and in attracting investments to Hyderabad.

"My government is implementing YSR's ideas. The development that took place during the YSR admin was very useful for Telangana. YSR is synonymous with social welfare and the country remembers the great leader," the CM said.

The CM said that all political parties and their leaders should remember the welfare schemes of YSR and implement them. The departed



Chief Minister Revanth Reddy attended the 75th birth anniversary celebrations of former Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy at the Gandhi Bhavan on Monday.

Congress leader made his mark in implementing social welfare schemes, he said.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy attended the 75th birth anniversary celebrations of former Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy at the Gandhi Bhavan on Monday. "I remember the statement made by YSR after coming to power for the second time in 2009 that Rahul Gandhi will become the

Prime Minister. YSR left us before Rahul could become the PM. Inspired by YSR, all Congress workers should work hard to make Rahul the Prime Minister. YSR's padayatra also influenced Rahul to embark on

his Bharat Jodo Yatra. The departed leader's yatra helped to bring the Congress to power in Andhra Pradesh.

2

Come back to Congress



Govt appoints chairpersons for 35 corporations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government of Telangana has appointed chairpersons for 35 state-run corporations.

Most of those appointed chairpersons are leaders of the ruling Congress who were denied tickets to contest the Assembly elections held in November 2023.

Although seven orders appointing chairpersons for a period of two years were issued by Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari on March 15, they were made public only on Monday.

S. Anvesh Reddy has been appointed the Chairman of the Telangana State Seeds Development Corporation Limited.

Kasula Bala Raju will head the Telangana State Agro Industries Development Corporation Limited while Janga Raghav Reddy will head the Telangana State Co-operative Oil Seeds Growers Federation Limited.

Manala Mohan Reddy has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Telangana State Co-operative Union

Limited. Rayala Nageshwara Rao is the Chairperson of the Telangana State Warehousing Corporation Limited.

Gyaneshwar Mudiraj has been appointed as the Chairman of the Telangana Mudiraj Co-operative Societies Corporation Ltd.

Mettu Sai Kumar has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Telangana State Fisheries Co-operative Societies Federation Limited.



2

Govt Whip Beerla Ilaiah says he is in race for minister post

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah who is also the Congress MLA representing Alair said that he is expecting a Minister post. He also said that he had told Chief Minister Revanth Reddy this and the CM had responded positively.

He said that he had asked the Chief Minister to give a Minister post, the TPCC President post, the TPCC Working President post,

Continued on Page 2

'By-polls likely if BRS MLAs join BJP'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There is a possibility of by-polls in Telangana if BRS MLAs join the BJP. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said that 26 BRS MLAs have contacted the BJP, but they will have to resign their MLA posts if they want to join the BJP.

However, out of the 38 BRS MLAs already seven MLAs have joined the Congress along with six MLCs. Now, the BRS has 31 MLAs. But Sanjay said that 26 BRS MLAs are in touch with the BJP and that they are hesitating to join as the BJP wants them to resign their MLA posts. Meanwhile, there is talk



among political observers that some BRS MLAs may join the BJP. If the Congress inducts 26 BRS MLAs into it and makes the BRSLP merge with the Congress it would have two-thirds of the 38 BRS MLAs. The BRS then will have only 12 MLAs and the BJP may try to

attract the remaining BRS MLAs. However, here the big question is whether the BJP will play the two-third majority game or will it make them resign. If the BJP opts for the two-third majority game then it needs eight BRS MLAs of the leftover 12 MLAs. Then there is no need for the eight BRS MLAs to resign their MLA posts. If the BJP really wants to make them resign then there would be by-polls in the state. Here the big question is whether the BRS MLAs would dare to quit and face elections again or not. It all depends on the BRS MLAs who want to join the BJP. However, political analysts say that no BRS MLA is ready to face elections.

EXCISE 'SCAM'
Kavitha seeks default bail in CBI case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BRS leader K Kavitha on Monday approached a Delhi Court seeking 'default' bail in the corruption case linked to the alleged excise scam.

Special CBI Judge Kaveri Bawaja sought the CBI's stand on the bail application which claimed that Kavitha should be granted 'default bail' as the investigating agency filed an "incomplete chargesheet" within the stipulated time of 60 days.

The trial court also reserved order on the point of taking cognizance of the third chargesheet filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the matter. While the bail application was listed for further consideration on July 12, the trial court said it will pronounce order on the point of cognizance on July 15.

Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, was arrested by the CBI from Tihar Jail in April where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case related to the alleged scam.



The scam pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and implementation of the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22 which was later scrapped.

2

Heavy rain cripples Mumbai



Putin hosts Modi at his official residence for 'private engagement'



PNS ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday evening welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence at Novo-Ogaryovo for a "private engagement".

A meeting of two close friends and trusted partners," the Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs posted on X.

"PM @narendramodi welcomed by President Vladimir Putin of Russia at his official residence at Novo-Ogaryovo for a private engagement," it said, sharing some photographs of the meeting.

2

'Will repay with interest'

KTR on Congress govt's harassment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KTR said the Congress government's harassment will be repaid with interest.

Reacting angrily to the illegal demolition of houses being built by people in Peerzadiguda in Medchal district, he said that it was nothing but political vendetta and urged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to take immediate action.

He criticized former Medchal MLA Sudhir Reddy who claims to be a supporter of Revanth Reddy for demolishing houses built on plots that were regularized by an earlier Congress government. He questioned the actions of Sudhir Reddy

and demanded an investigation into the matter.

KTR said that Congress leaders sold these plots to ignorant people and they were regularized in 2008 when YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the Chief Minister.

He said that many people had taken bank loans and built houses on these plots after getting permission from municipal authorities. However, Sudhir Reddy pressured officials to demolish these houses on Monday.

KTR criticized the Congress government for targeting the public and assured that the BRS would support the people.

2

Sanctity of NEET-UG breached: SC

Says decision on re-test to be based on extent of paper leak effect

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that the sanctity of the NEET-UG 2024 has been "breached", the Supreme Court on Monday said a re-test may be ordered if the entirety of the process is affected and sought details from the National Testing Agency and the CBI including the timing and manner of the paper leak, besides the numbers of wrongdoers, to know the extent of its effect.

"Let us not be in self-denial. Self-denial is only adding to the problem," a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud told the Centre and the NTA, which conducts the prestigious test, in a string of strongly-worded observations. "One thing which is very clear is



that the leak has taken place. That the sanctity of the exam has been breached is beyond doubt. The question is how widespread is the leak," said the bench which also comprised Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. Posing a volley of searching queries, the bench said a re-test has to be ordered if the breach in sanctity affects the entirety of the

process. The court said if the sanctity of NEET-UG 2024 is "lost" and if the leak of its question paper has been propagated through social media, then a re-test has to be ordered.

It said the extent of question paper leak and the beneficiaries across geographical boundaries have to be ascertained before the top court may

order a re-test in the controversy-ridden exam which was taken up by 23.33 lakh students at 4,750 centres in 571 cities including in 14 cities overseas. It said if the breach was confined to specific areas and it was possible to identify the wrongdoers, then it may not be appropriate to order for a re-test in an examination of such a massive scale.

The apex court said it will have to scrutinise whether the alleged breach has taken place at a "systemic level", whether it has affected the integrity of the entire exam process and whether it was possible to segregate the beneficiaries of the fraud with untainted candidates who undertook the test on May 5.

2

Ashadam comes in the way of Cabinet expansion

SNCN ACHARYULU
HYDERABAD

The much-awaited Cabinet expansion and the appointment of new TPCC chief will happen only after August 4. The Ashadam month has become a hurdle to the Cabinet expansion and for the appointment of the new TPCC chief. The Congress high command has taken a decision to take up these things only after Ashada Masam.

According to Telugu calendar, the Ashada Masam began on July 6 and ends on August 4. The Ashadam is considered as inauspicious to take up new things. Traditionally, during the Ashadam month, people avoid planning marriages and to take up new things to respect cultural beliefs. The Congress high command thought of completing this before the beginning of Ashada Masam. It had earlier given green signal for the Cabinet expansion to be taken up on July 4, before the beginning of Ashada Masam. After discussions with

the Congress high command on these issues at Delhi, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy returned to Hyderabad in the end of June. Amid speculation on the Cabinet expansion on July 4, the Chief Minister met Governor CP Radhakrishnan on July 1 at Raj Bhavan. The meeting with the Governor by the Chief Minister had strengthened the speculation on the Cabinet expansion on July 4. The Chief Minister rushed to Delhi on July 3 and

Congress circles thought that he went to inform the high command about the Cabinet expansion. Meanwhile, some advisors told the high command that it will be better to take up the Cabinet expansion and appointment of new TPCC chief after Ashada Masam. Accordingly, the Congress high command reportedly told Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to postpone the Cabinet expansion and can take it up after Ashada Masam, that means after August 6.

Rachakonda CP forms drug disposal panel

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

About 106 cases of illicit narcotic substances were registered in 23 police stations of Rachakonda Commissionerate. In accordance with the priorities of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and the GO's, guidelines issued by the Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TGANB) in Rachakonda, Commissioner of Police Dr Tarun Joshi formed a Drug Disposal Committee on Monday. The committee was under chairmanship of Praveen Kumar, DCP, LB Nagar and members P Indira, DCP (Admin) of Rachakonda Commissionerate, S Chakrapani, ACP, Malkajgiri Division, and J Ramesh Kumar, ACP (CCRB).

Eatala lashes out at Ponguleti for demolishing houses in Sai Priya Enclave

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Malkajgiri MP, Eatala Rajender, asked Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy to explain how 250 policemen can go without his knowledge and demolish houses in the Sai Priya Enclave in Firzadiguda's Parvathapuram. Speaking to the media at the State BJP office here on Monday, Eatala said that of the 350 acres in Salarjung Kanchara in Firzadiguda's Parvathapuram some people purchased 90 acres and named it Satyanarayanapuram and some others purchased 100 acres and named it Sai Priya Enclave. Low-income groups purchased plots in Sai Priya Enclave in instalments 30 years ago. Another firm purchased the remaining 80 acres, he said. The Congress government demolished the houses of the



poor in Sai Priya Enclave although they have clear documents, he said. "It is unjust. They have GHMC permissions. How can the authorities demolish houses when the owners have evidence supporting them? Shockingly, authorities demolished houses under the supervision of the MRO, the RDO and the Collector. One can understand how much sincerity the CM has towards people and his peoples' governance," Eatala said.

He asked how officials could permit them. Why did not the government take action against the officials who gave permission? How can they demolish houses without taking action against the officials who gave the permission? He said that the KCR government had subjected the people to violence and the Revanth government too is continuing the violence towards people. Eatala said that officials are harassing people in the name of Waqf lands.

Govt neglecting primary education, says Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao criticised the Telangana Education Department for claiming that there are no real problems with education at a time when the Congress government is 'neglecting' primary education. Harish highlighted the problems faced by teachers, students, and mid-day meal workers which he had brought to the Chief Minister's attention through a letter. He said that students in government schools are suffer-



ing due to the administration's inaction. After a field inspection in his constituency, I confirmed that these problems exist across the state, he said. Harish pointed out that the Rs 3,000 honorarium for cook-

cum-helpers was paid only till December 2023, and that salary from January 2024 to June 2024 is pending. He also said that mid-day meal bills for Classes IX and X have been paid only up to January 2024, leaving bills from February to June unpaid. For Classes I to VIII, mid-day meal bills have been paid only up to April 2024, and bills for June are pending. The payment for eggs provided with mid-day meals has been made only up to January 2024 and bills from February to June are pending, he said.

Kavitha seeks default bail...

Continued from page 1

The ED arrested Kavitha (46) from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15. Kavitha is currently in judicial custody (JC) in both the cases. Last month, the CBI had filed a supplementary charge sheet against Kavitha, claiming there was sufficient evidence to prosecute her in the corruption case linked to the alleged excise scam. The CBI officials had earlier questioned Kavitha inside the prison after obtaining permission from a special court. The BRS leader was asked about the WhatsApp chats recovered from co-accused Buchi Babu's phone and documents related to a land deal, after which an amount of Rs 100 crore was allegedly paid to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in kickbacks to swing the excise policy for the national capital in favour of a liquor lobby. In her bail plea, Kavitha said the chargesheet is "incomplete", which gives her the "indefensible right to default bail" under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Sanctity of NEET-UG...

Continued from page 1

"In a situation where a breach in sanctity affects the entirety of the process and it is not possible to segregate the beneficiaries of the wrongdoings from others, it may be necessary to order a re-test," the bench said. "One thing is clear that leak of question paper has taken place," it said and

sought information from the NTA about the number of wrongdoers identified so far and the methodology adopted for it. The court directed the investigating officer of the CBI, which is conducting a probe into the allegations of malpractices, OMR sheet manipulation, impersonation and cheating, to place before it a report indicating the status of the probe as

on Monday. It said the NTA must disclose the steps taken so far for the identification of beneficiaries of wrongdoings. The bench asked the NTA to apprise it about the steps taken to identify the centres and cities where the question paper leak took place, the modalities followed for identifying the beneficiaries and their numbers ascertained so far.

Putin hosts...

Continued from page 1

It is an occasion for the two leaders to cherish & celebrate India-Russia friendship, it said. In his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Prime Minister Modi on Monday travelled to Russia to hold summit talks with President Putin on Tuesday -- a visit that is being seen as having a wider geopolitical context and signalling. Shortly after landing in Moscow, Modi said he is looking forward to deepening bilateral partnership in futuristic areas and that stronger ties between India and Russia will "greatly benefit our people".

'Will make TG...

Continued from page 1

The meeting decided that industry and education departments should engage with industry leaders to develop an action plan for the university. A report would be submitted to the government before the Assembly's budget session on July 23. The Skill University will operate as a PPP project with a hub in Hyderabad and spokes in all erstwhile district headquarters and will eventually cover all LS constituencies. Industry will play an important role in demand assessment, curriculum development, skill training and in offering internships. The government will provide regulatory approvals, land and buildings including exist-

ing facilities like ESCI and NAC. A corpus fund will be created with CSR donations from industry. Deputy CM Bhatti will address financial issues, while IT and Industry Minister Sridhar Babu will oversee the preparation of the curriculum and courses. The two ministers would meet every five days as the Assembly session approaches. Officials will hire a reputed consultancy to prepare proposals and project reports and the Department of Industries will act as the nodal agency. Before the meeting, the CM inspected the convention centre which is being constructed at the Engineering Staff College for over 20 minutes and reviewed its facilities.

'Cong govt deceived the unemployed'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS leaders G. Devi Prasad, Manne Govardhan Reddy, Palle Ravikumar and Ramba Bu Nayak criticised the Congress government for failing to deliver on its promises even seven months after assuming power. They accused the Congress of neglecting its commitments and deceiving the unemployed. Addressing a press conference at the Telangana Bhavan on Monday the BRS leaders pointed out that the Congress had campaigned near the coaching centres in Ashok Nagar promising mega DSC (District Selection Committee) appointments but delivered disappointment instead. They criticised the government for fixing the 1:50 ratio for qualifying candidates for Group 1 prelims instead of the promised 1:100 and for forgetting their promise to publish a job calendar. The BRS leaders accused the Congress government of betraying the unemployed and warned them of the growing discontent. The BRS leaders asked why the Congress couldn't change the Group 1 system introduced by KCR as they wanted to erase his legacy and also demanded an immediate mega DSC with 25,000 posts.

Come back to Congress

Deputy CM Bhatti calls upon all former leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka urged all former Congress leaders who have left the party for various reasons to return. While Bhatti first made the statement, Revanth endorsed it. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu has called upon those leaders and others who moved away from Congress due to various reasons or changes in the institutions to come back to the party's fold and take Indiramma admin's welfare programmes to the people. Speaking at a meeting held on the occasion of YS Rajasekhara Reddy's birth anniversary at Gandhi Bhavan here on Monday, the Deputy Chief Minister said the Cong government will work for the welfare of people for the next two decades and all Congress ideologues should unite and work together. In an appeal to all YSR fans to join the Congress, the CM said that he is supporting the call given by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti



DCM Bhatti addressing the gathering on the occasion of former AP CM YSR's 75th birth anniversary celebrations at Gandhi Bhavan

Vikramarka that leaders must quit the Congress and rejoin the party later. Meanwhile, Bhatti said YSR had left an indelible mark on people's hearts with his development and welfare programmes. His last wish was to make Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister. "Let's all try to work for YSR's ideals and dedicate ourselves to his thought process and work again for the public," Bhatti said. Noting that even after a decade, YSR's footsteps are still intact in the country, Bhatti said that YSR took the State forward with development and welfare as his two eyes. The fruits of Jala Yagnam programme are

today's irrigation projects. The Indiramma housing scheme became a popular programme and YSR's Fee Reimbursement programme helped Telugu to make an impact globally. YSR was the leader who brought the Rajiv Arogya Sri programme to rescue poor people from ill health and diseases and made medical treatment affordable to them. Lauding YSR's foresight, Bhatti said that the foundation laid by YSR then became the reason for the speedy progress of Telangana. Outer Ring Road, Airport, other basic infrastructure made Hyderabad garner space on the world map.

BJP started its politics in TG putting TDP in front: Jagga

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Working President T. Jagga Reddy said the BJP started its politics in Telangana by putting TDP in the front. He said that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu entered Telangana citing Division Act issues. "Chandrababu and AP Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan are functioning as per the BJP's directions. They both are trying to start the political game in Telangana they played in AP," he said. Speaking to the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Monday, Jagga said the Congress laid the foundations of the IT industry and Chandrababu continued it. "Chandrababu is now behaving like a BJP pawn to destroy the Congress in Telangana. However, the BJP will not be able to eliminate the Congress whatever it may do,"



he said. Jagga said the BJP came to power at the Centre a third time due to the ED, the CBI and the IT department or else Rahul Gandhi would have become the Prime Minister. He said the BJP had 'so ground' in the north and 'is it concentrating on the south, particularly the states of AP, Telangana and Karnataka. The LS election outcome in these three states brought the BJP to power. Otherwise, INDIA would have come to power, he said.

"The time has come for the Congress leadership and activists to behave carefully. The BJP protected former AP CM Jagga Mohan Reddy indirectly in AP. The BJP also controlled Chandrababu through Pawan Kalyan. The four-pillar game was played out in AP. Pawan encouraged the TDP during the last one and a half years before the elections. The BJP won three seats in AP. The elections in AP would have been close if Jagga had not kept Chandrababu in jail.

Stop recruitment of Indians in Russia-Ukraine conflict: Asaduddin

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to prevent Russia from recruiting Indians in the conflict against Ukraine. PM Modi is on a two-day visit to Russia, where he will discuss a host of bilateral issues with President Vladimir Putin. "Owaisi took to X and said, "Since @narendramodi is in Russia, he must follow up with Putin and stop the recruitment of Indians to fight in the Ukraine war. He should also ensure that innocent Indians who are stuck in the war are brought back home at the earliest. It is to be noted that several Indian citizens including those from Hyderabad were recruited in the Russian army earlier this year.

Govt Whip... Govt appoints chairpersons...

Continued from page 1

one MLC post, one Government Advisor post, five corporation chairmen and two CM's PROs to his Golla-Kuruma community. In a chat-chat with journalists at his chamber on the Assembly premises on Monday, Beerla Ilaiah said that he had met the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and other Ministers seeking a Minister post for Golla-Kurumas. He said that Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and N. Uttam Kumar Reddy got Minister posts from Nalgonda LS seat limits and that there is no one in the Cabinet now from Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency. He said that he thinks the CM would give a Minister post to him. "The CM should give an opportunity to someone from the Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency. For the first time, there is a Minister from the Golla-Kuruma community.

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The government appointed MD Riyaz as the Chairperson of the Telangana State Mineral Development Corporation Limited), T. Nirmala Jaggareddy (Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Limited), Aitha Prakash Reddy (Telangana State Trade Promotion Corporation Limited), Manne Sateesh Kumar (Telangana State Technology Services Development Corporation Limited), Challa Narasimha Reddy (Telangana State Urban Finance Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited), K. Narender Reddy (Satavahana Urban Development Authority), E. Venkatrami Reddy (Kakatiya Urban Development Authority), Ramreddy Malreddy (Telangana State Road Development Corporation Limited), Patel Ramesh Reddy (Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation Limited), MA Faheem (Telangana Foods), Bandru Shoba Rani (Telangana State Women's Co-operative

Development Corporation Limited), M. Veeraiah (Telangana State Vikalanga Co-operative Development Corporation Limited), K. Shiva Sena Reddy (Sports Authority of Telangana State), Alekhya Punjala (Telangana Sangeetha Nataka Academy), N. Preetham (Telangana State Scheduled Caste Co-operative Development Corporation Limited), Nuthi Srikanth (Telangana State BC Co-operative Finance Corporation Limited), Bellaiah Nayak (Telangana State Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Finance Development Corporation Limited), Kotnaka Tirupati (Telangana State Girijan Co-operative Finance Development Corporation), and Jeripeti Jaipal (Telangana State Most Backward Classes Development Corporation Limited).

The government appointed MA Jabbar as the Vice-Chairman of the Telangana State Minorities Finance Corporation.

YSR an inspiration behind...

Continued from page 1

Rahul's Jodi yatra played a key role in bringing the Congress to power in Telangana, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh," the CM said. He said that Rahul is already working hard as the leader of the opposition. The Congress leader is just one step away from the PM post. The

country can 'develop only' under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, Revanth said. "All Congress workers should take an oath that they will try their best to make Rahul the Prime Minister. Posts and positions are not important for Rahul. The Congress leader could have become the PM in 2004 and 2009. The entire country is 'wait-

ing' for Rahul to become the PM," he said. "The true followers of YSR are those who are working hard to make Rahul the next Prime Minister. We appeal to all YSR fans to join the Congress," the CM said and endorsed the call given by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka that all those who quit the Congress must come back.

'Will repay...

Continued from page 1

He warned that the Congress government's harassment would not be tolerated and that the BRS would take action to protect its leaders and activists. KTR concluded by stating that the BRS government when it comes to power again, would ensure justice for the plot owners.

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MIN KOMATIREDDY LAYS FOUNDATION STONE

Trauma care centre to be set up on Hyd-Vja highway

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

ADP India on Monday announced that it will construct a state-of-the-art trauma care centre on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway.

The new facility will be constructed at the Korpahad toll plaza in Kethelpally mandal, Nalgonda district, in close partnership with the department of health. The primary purpose of this trauma care centre is to deliver immediate medical treatment to accident victims, significantly reducing the time between injury and care.

The foundation stone was laid in the presence of Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Minister of Roads & Buildings, Cinematography, and Narayana Reddy, Nalgonda District Collector, along with the senior leadership of ADP India Pvt. Ltd.

This cutting-edge facility spread across 6,500 square



Minister of Roads & Buildings, Cinematography Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, with representatives of ADP India

feet, aims to promote public safety by supporting the health department to provide enhanced, immediate medical assistance to accident victims, ensuring that critically injured individuals receive the urgent care they need. The Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway (NH65), has 17 blackspots, leading to over 500 accidents, claiming over 120 lives in 2023-24.

This area is a critical junction with high traffic flow, making it a vital point for emergency medical services. The trauma care centre, equipped with the latest, state-of-the-art trauma care medical facility and equipment, and medical support staff will cater to severe trauma cases. Immediate medical intervention can significantly reduce the number of fatal-

ities and improve the prognosis for accident victims.

Following the ceremony, Vijay Vemulapalli, Managing Director, ADP India said, "ADP India is committed to making a positive impact in the communities we serve. The construction of this trauma care centre underscores our dedication to enhancing public safety and providing immediate medical assistance to those in need. By leveraging the latest medical technology and strategically positioning the facility at a high-traffic area, we aim to significantly reduce mortality rates and improve outcomes for accident victims."

The first hour after a traumatic injury, often called the 'golden hour', is the most crucial for survival.

ADP's Trauma Centre is strategically located near the high-risk Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway, designed to provide immediate, life-saving care to critically injured patients.

PRAJAVANI

People voice their issues on six guarantees at GHMC office

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY ■ HYDERABAD

Apart from land issues, people attended the Prajavani programme for settling various issues ranging from six guarantees scheme to employment issues at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) headquarters on Monday. Additional Commissioner G Nalini Padmavati, along with Additional Commissioner K Srivatsava, received appeals from the people.

A total of 147 applications were received in six zones under the GHMC. Out of them, four appeals were received in Charminar zone, 18 in Secunderabad zone, 61 in Kukatpally zone, 51 in Serilingampally zone, one in Khairatabad zone and 12 in LB Nagar zone. Nine requests were received through the phone-in programme and were sent to the authorities concerned for resolution. Among them, complaints were received on town planning, drains and other issues.

In the public hearing organ-



ised at the GHMC headquarters, 30 requests were received, out of which 15 are related to town planning, one to transport, five to revenue, two to CE maintenance, two to elections, two to administration and one request under lakes department.

Kalyani (name changed) from Ramagundam said, "I belong to the economically weaker sections. Despite having all valid documents, the government has not offered me 200 units of free electricity as per the six guarantees scheme. I hope the officials solve this issue by offering me free electricity."

Ayesha said, "I have come to Prajavani for the fourth time. My issue on the free electricity scheme is not resolved by the officials."

Avula Madhavi, a municipal sweeper, said, "I am working as a sweeper in Goshamahal Municipality. I have come to Prajavani on an employment issue. I am in desperate need of promotion from sweeper job to attendant."

I possess required educational qualifications for the post. Besides that, I want a transfer from Goshamahal Municipality to Rajendranagar Municipality due to some severe health issues. However,

the officials haven't solved my issue yet."

V Shashikanth Rao, president of Are-Katika Charmkash Sangh (sheep and goats slaughter house workers union) said, "sheep market at Jiyaguda in Hyderabad, is the largest slaughter house in Telangana. It supports around 5,000 families. When it was closed in January 2004 and moved to Chengicherla, the public exerted pressure on the government on building it in its original place."

The Pollution Control Board objected to the construction of the slaughter house in Jiyaguda. But later, the Board withdrew its objection after we showed valid documents. Our demand for constructing and modernising the slaughter house has not been met. This is my third time here."

A Venkataswamy Sagar, president of Telangana Sagara Uppara said, "Our association has not been getting payments for 14 months from the GHMC office. As a result, we are unable to pay our employees. I hope that the officials solve this issue at the earliest."

A PRECURSOR TO THE GLOBAL AI SUMMIT

State-wide datathon to create Telugu Large Language Model

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Information Technology, Electronics, and Communications (ITE&C) department of the Government of Telangana has announced a groundbreaking datathon aimed at creating a Telugu Large Language Model (LLM) to preserve the rich cultural history of the Telugu-speaking people.

This event is a joint collaboration between the ITE&C department and Swecha, conducted across all engineering colleges in Telangana. Emerging Technologies Wing will facilitate the event, and the Telangana Academy of Skill and Knowledge (TASK) will be the outreach partner for this activity.

The International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad (IIITH), will serve as the research partner, while Ozonetel, DigiQuanta, and TechVedika are industry part-

ners. This event will be a precursor to the Global AI Summit to be held in Hyderabad in September. The datathon represents a significant step towards collecting and digitizing a diverse range of Telugu linguistic and cultural resources. Participants will gather data from various oral sources, including folk tales, songs, local histories and traditional knowledge about food and cuisine.

By engaging with these rich oral traditions, the datathon will play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the Telugu language and its cultural heritage. This datathon is important for several reasons.

First, it aims to preserve the cultural heritage of Telugu, one of the classical languages of India, by collecting, preserving, and digitizing invaluable oral traditions at risk of being lost. Second, the data collected will be instrumental in developing a comprehensive Telugu Language Model, enhancing

the language's representation on digital platforms and AI technologies. Third, the datathon will foster a sense of pride and participation among students and citizens, encouraging them to actively contribute to the preservation of their cultural identity.

Finally, engineering students across Telangana will gain hands-on experience in data collection, processing, and the application of AI technologies, enhancing their skills and employability. Undergraduate students from all colleges across Telangana are invited to participate.

Swecha, a prominent organisation dedicated to promoting free software and digital freedom, is the driving force behind this initiative.

With its expertise and commitment to open-source technology, Swecha will provide the necessary technical support and guidance to ensure the success of the datathon.

AEEs request Uttam to solve transfer issues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana AEEs Association on Monday met Minister for Irrigation Uttam Kumar Reddy and requested him to transfer the employees who are working at the same unit for the last 10 years.

In a statement, the association said that the government has released a GO on transfers in the department but the officials are not conducting general transfers. So they have requested the Minister to transfer them.

After the Minister heard their problems, he called the Engineer-in-Chief (admin) and spoke with him over their transfers and other problems.

Association president Bandi Srinivas said that from the last 16 years the officials have not got any promotions in the department. Along with the transfers, the AEEs requested the Minister along with engineer-in-chief (admin) to solve their problems.

SPOILT EGGS IN ANGANWADI CENTRES

Min pulls up officials, contractors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Women and Child Welfare Minister Seethakka is serious about the distribution of spoiled eggs in some Anganwadi centres. She has ordered strict action against contractors supplying inferior goods and directed continuous inspections with flying squads.

During a review meeting of the Women and Child Welfare department held on Monday at the Secretariat, Minister Seethakka expressed concern over the distribution of low-quality eggs in several Anganwadis. She instructed officials to submit reports on the issue, emphasising that low quality eggs could endanger the health of children, pregnant women and new mothers.

Seethakka urged measures to ensure the distribution of quality food in Anganwadis.

Minister Seethakka reviewed the performance of Anganwadi centres, directing them to reject substandard eggs and goods supplied by contractors and report to higher authorities. She warned that failure to do so



would hold local staff accountable. Officials were instructed to regularly report to the government about the quality of supplies in Anganwadis. Seethakka emphasised the use of technology for continuous monitoring and stricter implementation of biometric systems during the supply of goods.

Seethakka mentioned that the previous government extended contracts for two years, leading to some contractors acting arbitrarily. Hence, the current government is considering reducing the duration of these contracts. Third-party studies will be conducted to address any shortcomings in the services provided by

Anganwadis. Minister Seethakka also stated that the rules for tenders supplying goods to Anganwadis would be made stricter, enhancing transparency in the tender process with the help of other government departments.

Minister Seethakka conducted a review of the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP). The review meeting included Panchayat Raj Rural Development department Secretary Lokesh Kumar, SERP CEO Divya Devarajan, and several other officials. Seethakka enquired about the current schemes being implemented through SERP and the budget proposals.

Strict action against pubs for promoting drugs: DGP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Director General of Police (DGP) Ravi Gupta on Monday said strict action will be taken against pubs and bars which promote drugs.

Gupta took to X and said, "Stringent cases will be registered against pubs, bars and clubs for promoting drugs and marijuana. Those who supplied the drugs and those who consume drugs should serve jail term."

Telangana police and government are committed to preventing drug use and supply by enforcing strict laws. Our first priority is to suppress the drug epidemic with an iron fist."

The DGP's statement comes a day after the Cyberabad Police arrested 24 persons during a raid at the 'Cave' pub in Raidurgam.

Ex-TDP media panel chief hails CBN wife's role in TDP win

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

LVSRR Prasad, the former chairman of the Central TDP Media Committee and former chairman of the AP State Warehousing Corporation visited Nara Bhuvaneshwari at her residence in Hyderabad and congratulated her on the victory of the TDP which brought back N Chandrababu Naidu as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

As the daughter of the TDP's founder president, NT Rama Rao, she had a role in the victory of the Telugu Desam Party-led alliance in the recent AP elections.

Prasad said Bhuvaneshwari's State-wide tour 'Nijam Gelavali' (truth should triumph) supporting Chandrababu Naidu and the



Former chairman of Central TDP Media Committee LVSRR Prasad presenting a bouquet to AP Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's wife Nara Bhuvaneshwari

TDP and exposing the YSRCP's misdeeds and vendetta politics played a major role in the TDP's triumph.

Losses are more to SCB if govt merges it with GHMC, says board member

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) nominated member J Ramakrishna said that there would be more losses to the Cantonment people, if the government merges the Secunderabad Cantonment Board with the GHMC.

He said that the State government could help the Cantonment, without merging it with the GHMC. Who is stopping to fund the Board? he questioned.

He said that there are only two benefits to the Cantonment if the government merges it with the GHMC, those are, people in the Cantonment would build one more floor in their hous-



es. Other benefit is the transfer of property tax (TPT) may be reduced by 3.5 per cent.

"But the disadvantages are plenty compared to the advantages, those are, heavy structures would come in Cantonment area. Water would be contaminated and vehicle congestion would increase. There are chances to change from a lung space to concrete

jungle," he said.

He said that both the parties, Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) and the Congress have an eye on surplus lands in the Cantonment area. That is the reason they always want to merge them.

"Those who have lands near army areas should have no objection certificate (NOC) from the Army to construct a

building," he mentioned.

He said, however, economically, GHMC is also not in a good position. Every asset of the GHMC is mortgaged. The employees of the GHMC are not getting salaries on time. Contractors are struggling with their bills. There are more problems in the GHMC.

Former chief minister KCR and present Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy want to merge the GHMC and Cantonment for the surplus lands of the board. A few years back also, the Centre did agree to merge the Cantonment but did not agree to give the surplus lands to the State. At that time, KCR did not agree. Now, we have to see present CM Revanth Reddy call on merging.

Unemployed aspirants demand 25,000 teacher posts under DSC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Thousands of unemployed aspirants from different districts laid siege to the office of the Directorate of School Education, Lakdikapal on Monday. The protesters demanded that 25,000 teacher posts should be increased and sought the postponement of the DSC written examinations for three months.

Tension prevailed when the unemployed aspirants were lathi-charged and arrested. The siege was led over by Neela Venkatesh, president of the State BC Youth Association.

Rajya Sabha member R Krishnaiah said that there are very few school assistant posts. There are over four lakh people who have done BEED but

there are only 2,200 school assistant posts. We demand to increase the posts. About 75 per cent should not be given through promotions but should be reduced to 25 per cent and the rest should be filled under direct recruitment quota. "B.Ed candidates are not eligible for other posts except School Assistant posts. A lot of injustice is done to those who have done B.Ed", he added.

"On the other hand, seven lakh unemployed people with BEED, DED and all qualifications are either unemployed or wasting their energy.

If the full-time teacher posts are filled, if the public school system is strengthened, the educational standards will increase and the students will contribute to the development of the society.

Measures stepped up to combat dengue, seasonal diseases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In response to the Chief Minister's directives, Principal Secretary of the MA&UD Department, Danakishore, has instructed officials to implement precautionary measures to protect the residents of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) from seasonal diseases and dengue fever. During a review meeting held on Monday at Dr BR Ambedkar Secretariat, Danakishore discussed strategies with GHMC Commissioner Amrapali, Additional Commissioners, Zonal Commissioners, Deputy



Commissioners, and Health Department officials.

Danakishore emphasised the need to prevent mosquito-borne diseases by conducting anti-larvae operations and spraying local ponds, lakes and nallas. He also stressed the importance of conducting awareness camps on dengue fever and other seasonal diseases, with the support of local

public representatives. A volunteer system will be established in each colony to facilitate these efforts.

Deputy Commissioners and assistant medical officers have been instructed to visit the 268 basti dawakhana daily to collect data on dengue cases and take appropriate preventive measures. Additionally, awareness programmes involving

students from various public and private educational institutions within GHMC limits will be organised to further educate the community.

Danakishore highlighted the importance of strengthening field-level monitoring. He noted that only 148 dengue cases have been registered up to the end of June this year, a significant decrease compared to last year. This reduction is attributed to the efforts made by municipal authorities and medical teams last year. The Principal Secretary stressed the need for continued focus and vigilance this year to maintain and improve these results.

VANA MAHOTSAVAM BEGINS IN CITY

30 lakh saplings to be planted in GHMC area

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With a target to plant 30 lakh saplings in the GHMC area, the government started Vana Mahotsavam programme in the city on Monday. Minister for Transport Ponnamb Prabhakar, along with the GHMC officials, planted saplings as part of the Vana Mahotsavam at Ramanthapur Government Polytechnic College.

Minister Prabhakar said that the government has organised the Vana Mahotsavam with the aim of providing a better environment for the future generations. A total of 7,134 saplings were prepared for plantation in 56 locations in 30 circles on Monday.

He said that the next generation will not forgive us if pollution increases. So everybody should actively participate in planting saplings in the name of their family members and relatives.

City Mayor G Vijayalakshmi said that



the target set by the government is 30 lakh saplings but the GHMC prepared 60 lakh saplings keeping in mind the past experiences.

According to the Forest Survey of India, Hyderabad's greenery has expanded from 33.15 to 81.81 square kilometers.

The Mayor said that as part of the Vana Mahotsavam programme, steps have been taken to plant saplings in colleges, open spaces, parks, central medium and roadsides in the city.

Deputy Mayor Srilatha Shobhan Reddy, GHMC Commissioner Amrapali Kata, Uppal MLA B Lakshmareddy, Zonal Commissioner Hemanth Keshav Patil, Additional Commissioner (UBD) Sunanda, corporators and others attended the programme.

Minister for Transport Ponnamb Prabhakar planting a sapling in the city on Monday.

BRS lists 5 scams engineered by Congress in 7 months

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS has levelled serious allegations against the Congress saying that scams have become the hallmark of Congress rule.

The BRS said the Congress and its leaders are preoccupied with politicking and are unable to address the numerous allegations of corruption.

The BRS said that they have exposed multiple scams in the last seven months under Congress rule.

The first scam involves rice procurement. Local millers offered to buy paddy at Rs 2,200 per quintal, but the Congress government invited

global tenders allowing companies to purchase it at prices between Rs 1,885 and Rs 2,007 per quintal. These companies then sold the rice to millers at Rs 2,230 per quintal resulting in a profit of Rs 700 crore for them.

The government purchased rice for social welfare hostels at Rs 57 per kg even though millers offered it at Rs 35 leading to another scam of around Rs 300 crore, the BRS said.

The second scam pertains to the TGSRTC.

The Congress-led government altered tender rules to favour Chalo Mobility, a company that charges a commission for every ticket issued by

the TGSRTC.

This manipulation of the tender process for buying ticket vending machines is estimated to run into hundreds of crores, considering the volume of tickets issued daily.

The third scam involves fly ash from the Ramagundam Thermal Power Plant. Trucks permitted to carry 32 tonnes were found transporting 73 tonnes of fly ash leading to daily losses of around Rs 50 lakh. This illegal overloading also resulted in a fatal accident highlighting the dangerous implications of the scam.

The fourth scam is a liquor-related scandal. The Congress

government approved the sale of alcohol from Som Distilleries, a company that had earlier donated Rs 1.3 crore to Congress leader Digvijaya Singh and Rs 25 lakh to the Congress.

The same company had a history of selling harmful liquor, which led to the death of 24 people in 1999.

The fifth scam involves illegal sand mining. The BRS said that illegal sand mining is going on in Mulugu, Tungathurthy and Chennur since December 2023 under the watch of Congress leaders Danasari Anasuya, Mandula Samuel, and Vivek Venkatswamy.

HC posts defections case of Kadiam, Danam to July 11

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After hearing the arguments on the case of defections of Kadiam Srihari and Danam Nagender, the High Court of Telangana posted the case to Thursday.

The two cases have been filed in the High court. The case has been filed by Padi Kaushik Reddy and KP Vivekanad against the defections of Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender, Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari and Bhadrachalam MLA Venkat Rao Tellam.

In the petition, the petitioners requested the court to give a direction to the Speaker of the Assembly to disqualify the defectors as per the provisions of 10th Schedule of the Constitution of India.

They told the court that there is a Supreme Court order that the Speaker should disqualify the defectors in a span of three months. But the Speaker of Telangana State is not disqualifying the defected MLAs. After hearing the arguments from both sides, the court posted the hearing to Thursday.

Seethakka stresses importance of rain water harvesting

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Minister for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, and Women and Child Welfare, Danasari Anasuya Seethakka, has installed a rainwater harvesting system at her camp office in Praja Bhavan. The system, set up on a roof area of 13,600 square feet, can conserve approximately 1.15 million liters of rainwater annually.

During the event, Minister Seethakka emphasised the importance of water conservation. She urged the citizens of the state to actively participate in rainwater harvesting to enhance groundwater levels and reduce urban flooding. "We cannot dig a well when we are thirsty or sow seeds when we are hungry. Rainwater must be captured with foresight," she said, highlighting recent water



Minister for Panchayat Raj Seethakka emphasising importance of rain water harvesting after installing rain water harvesting system at her camp office in Hyderabad on Monday

crises in cities like Bengaluru and Delhi. She stressed that Telangana should avoid similar situations by conserving rainwater.

Minister Seethakka reiterated that conserving and using water sustainably is the only way forward. She called on

every citizen to support water conservation efforts and contribute to restoring environmental balance. She also commended the efforts of Walk for Water and its founder, Karunakar Reddy, for promoting water conservation initiatives across the state.

Appoint Brahmana Parishad Chairman within one month: Tiwari

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

State Joint Convener Dharmik Parishad, Endowment Cell, BJP, Sudarshan Prasad Tiwari alleged that the state government did not announce the chairman for Telangana Brahmana Parishad. Tiwari warned that they will organise Assembly Gherao pro-

gramme if the Chief Minister failed to announce the name for Brahmana Parishad chairman within one month.

In a statement issued on Monday, Tiwari said that the government should appoint the chairman for Brahman Parishad immediately. Funds have to be allotted to the Brahman

Parishad. Financial assistance has to be announced by the government for higher studies of students of the Brahmin community in the state.

He said that as well as financial assistance has to be extended for the students who have interest to continue their studies in the Abroad Universities.

Enhance the salaries to Archakas who are performing poojas in the temples throughout the state. Retirement age has to be enhanced for Archakas of the Temples. Government has to take immediate steps to re-constructions and repairs to the temples in the state at an early date.

Revanth government neglecting minority welfare: Mahmood Ali

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister Mahmood Ali, at a press meet at Telangana Bhavan, accused the Revanth government of neglecting minority welfare. He expressed displeasure over the decision to hand over electricity bill collections in Hyderabad's Old City to the Adani group, calling it an insult to minorities. Ali criticised Revanth Reddy, saying that "while Rahul Gandhi opposes Adani, Revanth welcomes him."

KCR's dedication to providing quality education for minorities. He questioned the Congress government's decision to convert the Anees-ul-Ghurba orphanage building, constructed by KCR, into a residential headquarters. He also



lamented the lack of a minority minister in the Congress government, contrasting it with KCR appointing a Home Minister from the minority community.

Ali noted that even though a minority leader was nominated as an MLC under the Governor's quota during Congress rule, it never materialised. He expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the Old City and the rise in com-

munal clashes under the Congress government, asserting that KCR maintained peace and security during his decade-long rule.

He accused the Congress of acting as B-team of the BJP, pointing out the warm welcome Revanth Reddy extended to Chandrababu Naidu, who is aligned with the BJP. Ali criticised Revanth for befriending the BJP locally while Rahul Gandhi fights them in Delhi.

He acknowledged Naidu's statement that Telangana has the highest per capita income in the country, attributing it to KCR's efforts and urging Revanth not to ignore these facts.

Mahmood Ali concluded by emphasising KCR's significant contributions to Telangana's development, predicting that the world will recognise his achievements. He criticised the Revanth government for not taking any steps towards the welfare of minorities despite receiving their votes in the parliamentary elections. He urged the Congress government to fulfill its election promises to minorities immediately

ACB arrests SI, journalist on corruption charge

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials on Monday trapped

Havelighanpur Sub Inspector Karre Anand Goud on charge of demanding and accepting a Rs 20,000 bribe from a lorry owner. The Sub Inspector, the ACB officials said, had accepted the bribe through a journalist.

The ACB officials also took the journalist, identified as Mohammad Masthan, into custody. Officials continued searches at the police station till evening.

According to ACB officials, Anand Goud had seized a lorry laden with sand on June 26. The lorry belongs to Poola Gangadhar, a resident of Koligadda in Medak town.

When the lorry owner approached the Sub Inspector seeking the release of his vehicle, the latter allegedly demanded Rs 30,000 bribe from him. Unable to pay the amount, Gangadhar approached the ACB officials on June 29.



Sub Inspector K Anand Goud and journalist Mohammad Masthan

An ACB team led by DSP Sudarshan then laid a trap and caught the Sub Inspector on Monday. The Sub Inspector asked the lorry owners to hand over the money to Masthan. The lorry owner then handed the money to Masthan outside the police station.

The ACB officials caught Masthan while accepting money and took him to the police station. Investigation is underway.

Priyanka to unveil Rajiv Gandhi statue at Uppal Cricket Stadium

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Congress leader V Hanumanth Rao said that AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi will unveil the statue of former prime minister late Rajiv Gandhi at Uppal Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium.

VH said that the unveiling of the Rajiv Gandhi statue by Priyanka will take place on August 20, that is the birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi. He said that he is getting the statue at a cost of Rs 22laks and it will be prepared at Kothapet village near Amalapuram and designer Raju Odiyar is erecting the statue.



On Monday, VH visited the place where the statue is to be installed at Cricket Stadium along with Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) secretary Devaraj, treasurer CJ Srinivas,

HCA member Bhaskar, statue designer Raju Odiyar, Uppal Congress incharge Parameshwar Reddy, PCC general secretary R Laxman Yadav, PCC secretary S Srikanth Goud, and others.

Special officers assume charge of local bodies

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The Zilla Parishads and Mandal Parishads have transitioned to a regime overseen by special officers. This shift follows the end of tenure for Mandal and Zilla Parishad members, prompting the government to issue a circular initiating the rule of special officers. As a result, these officials assumed their roles on Thursday, taking control of all Mandal and Zilla Parishads across the district.

The elected MPTC and ZPTC members, who served for five years, now stepped

down. The expenditure of funds and other administrative tasks will now be managed by the appointed officials.

Rangareddy district comprises 21 Mandal Parishads and 257 MPTC seats, with 21 MPPs and 21 ZPTC seats. In 2019, MPTC and ZPTC elections were conducted by the previous government ahead of the deadline set by the ruling factions. However, the current government, led by CM Revanth Reddy, has shown little interest in these matters. With no announcement regarding upcoming elections,

the special officers' regime has been implemented, mirroring the approach taken with Sarpanches.

The government dashed the hopes of MPTC and ZPTC members by not extending their tenure. Given the lack of immediate election opportunities for Mandal and Zilla Parishads, many members expected their terms to be prolonged. Despite appeals from members statewide, the government opted for the appointment of special officers instead, leaving requests for tenure extension unaddressed.

Bandi appeals to political leaders to stop vilification campaign

PNS ■ SIRICILLA

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay has called upon people's representatives of various political parties to stop criticise each other and focus on development.

He was visiting Siricilla district on Monday. He made several interesting comments during his visit to the district.

Now that the elections were over, political leaders of various hues should stop the blame game and levelling allegations and criticising the rival parties and focus fully on the development activities.

The development of the state is possible only with the complete cooperation of the state and central governments. He offered to take full responsibility to ensure that the Centre supports the Telangana State.

Further, he maintained that the development of the nation was possible only with the development of the villages



and towns, he said calling upon the political leaders to stop criticizing the rivals.

He laid the foundation stone for the Munnuru Kapu Kalyana mandapam being built at a cost of Rs 10 lakh contributed by Sanjay from his MPLADS funds. Later, he planted a sapling on the premises of the Kalyana mandapam.

Later, the MunnuruKapu association leaders felicitated the Union Minister.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Bandi Sanjay went on record stating that building the MunnuruKapu Association building would only benefit the association leaders. If marriage halls were

to be constructed they would be helpful to everyone in the community, he said making it clear that he would contribute his MPLADS funds for such projects only.

If the caste associations should sustain further it should support the poor of the community, he said.

He visualized the role of the people of Siricilla district who enabled him to get elected as MP for the second time. By virtue of winning the seat for the second time, Modi accommodated him in his cabinet, he said adding that he would strive to work hard round the clock for the development of the district.

The Centre gives top priority to the development of education, medical and health, transportation, national highways, railways and welfare sector, he said and added that he would strive for the development of Karimnagar LS constituency by bringing funds from these sectors.

Sharmila will be AP CM, Rahul will be PM in 2029: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At the 75th birth anniversary celebrations of the late former Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy in Mangalagiri, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy predicted that YS Sharmila will become the next Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh while Rahul Gandhi will be Prime Minister of India. He said, "As per the aspirations of YSR, In 2029, Sharmila will become Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and Rahul Gandhi will become Prime Minister of India".

Amid the speculation about a by-election in Kadapa Parliament, Revanth Reddy expressed his willingness to campaign actively if the opportunity arises, emphasising his commitment to showcasing Kadapa's strength in Delhi. "If there is by-election for Kadapa Parliament, I will take responsibility of campaigning for Congress. We should find it where we lost it. We will protect Congress in Andhra Pradesh and that's why entire Cabinet from Telangana came".



Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy paying tributes to YS Rajasekhara Reddy portrait in Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh on Monday. APCC president YS Sharmila and senior Congress leader KVP Ramachandra Rao are also seen

He mentioned that Sharmila is playing a similar role to that of YSR in 1999, voicing the concerns of the people. He described Sharmila as a leader fighting on behalf of the people. Revanth Reddy criticized

the current political scenario in Andhra Pradesh, stating that there is no real opposition as BJP, Babu, Jagan, and Pawan are all on the same side.

"Andhra doesn't have Opposition and has only rul-

ing - BJP - "Babu Jagan Pawan" are all on side of Modi", he said.

He stressed that true successors of YSR are those who carry forward his ideals, not those who use his name for political gain. He assured that they

stand in support of Sharmila in continuing YSR's mission.

"Even school kid knows that it is difficult for Congress to win even as sarpanch in Andhra Pradesh. Despite knowing that it is difficult, Sharmila has embarked on this journey to take forward YSR's legacy", he said.

Revanth Reddy highlighted that despite being away for 15 years, YSR is remembered fondly by the people. He left an indelible mark on their hearts, especially those of the poor. Revanth Reddy remarked that the void left by YSR is still evident and emphasized the millions of admirers YSR has in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Sharing a personal anecdote, Revanth Reddy recalled his first experience in the legislative council, preparing extensively to make an impression on YSR. He appreciated YSR's encouragement and support for new members, stating that strong leadership is built by fostering newcomers. He stressed that the respect for opposition members is a lesson to be learned from YSR.

SCR reviews monsoon preparedness, safety measures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway, conducted a detailed review meeting on the monsoon preparedness and safety measures in view of the monsoon rains across the zone, on Monday at Rail Nilayam, Secunderabad, along with principal heads of

departments.

He laid primary focus on probable monsoon affecting vulnerable sections, bridges, tunnels and their status of maintenance in view of monsoon season.

The General Manager also reviewed the availability of emergency equipment and reserve stocks of necessary materials like sand, boulders

and pipes in case of any eventuality.

He instructed the officials to deploy watchmen to monitor 24x7 at vulnerable bridges and tank bunds in case of heavy rainfall. Round-the-clock monitoring should be done so as to immediately undertake necessary measures in case of any emergencies.

YSR birth anniversary celebrated in Shadnagar

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The Congress Party organised the 75th birth anniversary of the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, former Chief Minister of combined Andhra Pradesh. In Shadnagar, the event was led by Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar at the YSR statue in Shadnagar town. Congress Party town president K Chennaiah and

minority leader Ibrahim, MLA Shankar highlighted YSR's significant contributions.

MLA Veerlapalli Shankar praised YSR's policies, particularly the Aarogyashri scheme, which provided essential healthcare to the poor, saving countless lives and improving health outcomes. He noted the distribution of 400 Indiramma houses in one village, Keshampet mandal.

LVPEI among top 10 best NGOs in 2024

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based LV Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) was awarded among the top 10 Best NGOs of the Year 2024, at the Global CSR & ESG Awards function held at the Hyatt Regency in Gurgaon, which saw a gathering of influential dignitaries.

Public Relations and Donor Affairs team accepted the award on behalf of the LVPEI.

"The award is a testament to the tireless dedication of the entire team, and the unwavering support of our donors and partners. Awards such as this propel us to continue our efforts #SoThatAllMaySee.", said Dr

Prashant Garg, Executive Chairman, on receiving the award.

The Global CSR & ESG Awards are designed to discuss and review the CSR and ESG mandates of corporates, recognise NGOs and social enterprises partnering with them to fulfil these mandates meaningfully and creating a lasting impact.

INDIA CORNER

Tremor of 3.3 magnitude recorded in Kutch; no report of damage

A tremor of 3.3 magnitude with its epicentre in Gujarat's Kutch district was recorded late Monday afternoon, an Indian Seismological Research official said. The epicentre of the tremor was 10 km east north east (ENE) from Dudhai in Kutch district, the ISR said in its update. "It was recorded at around 4:10 pm and was located at a depth of 30 kilometres. This is the third earthquake of over 3 magnitude recorded in the state's Saurashtra-Kutch region so far this month," as per the ISR update. Officials said there are no reports as yet of injuries to anyone or loss of property. As per information provided by Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA), the earthquake risk is very high in the state, with nine major ones taking place in the last 200 years. The earthquake on January 26, 2001 in Kutch, measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale, was the third largest and second most destructive earthquake in the country in the last two centuries, the GSDMA said.



EC allows Sharad Pawar-led NCP-SP to accept donations

The Election Commission on Monday allowed the Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar to accept donations keeping in mind the forthcoming assembly polls in Maharashtra. The Sharad Pawar-led outfit had requested the commission to certify the status of the party for it to accept voluntary contributions from the public. The poll panel has authorised the party to "accept any amount of contribution voluntarily offered to it by any person or company other than a government company" under the relevant sections of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which govern the contribution to all political parties. An eight-member delegation of the NCP-SP party led by its working president Supriya Sule met the commission on Monday. In July last year, Ajit Pawar led a rebellion against his uncle Sharad Pawar and claimed the symbol as well as the party name Nationalist Congress Party.



Six-foot-long Indian Rat snake rescued from toilet in Agra Fort premises

A six-foot-long Indian Rat snake was rescued from a toilet of Agra Fort premises, an official said on Monday. The incident occurred on Thursday last week when the staff at the Agra fort found the snake coiled in the toilet seat and called an NGO to rescue it, they said. Kalandar, Conservation Assistant (CA) at Agra Fort, said the snake was found in a toilet near the office premises and not in the one used by the tourists. "We informed the NGO Wild Life SOS team, and then the two skilled staff rescued the snake without harming it," Kalandar said. Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS said, "People must understand the importance of coexistence with wild animals and report these incidents swiftly." Baiju Raj M.V., Director of Conservation Projects at Wildlife SOS, said, "The Rapid Response Unit was involved in rescuing the 6-foot-long Indian rat snake from an unexpected location, the toilet of Agra's Lal Quila."



Stronger ties will greatly benefit our people: PM Modi in Moscow

PNS ■ MOSCOW

In his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday began a two-day high-profile visit to Russia to hold summit talks with President Vladimir Putin with a focus on boosting bilateral ties in areas of energy, trade and defence.



Shortly after landing in Moscow, Modi said he is looking forward to deepening bilateral partnership in futuristic areas and that stronger ties between India and Russia will "greatly benefit our people". Modi was received at the Vnukovo-II airport by Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. The Russian first deputy minister also accompanied the Indian prime minister to his hotel from the airport in the same car, officials said. Manturov had received Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Russia as well. "Landed in Moscow.

Looking forward to further deepening the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between our nations, especially in futuristic areas of cooperation," Modi said on 'X'. "Stronger ties between our nations will greatly benefit our people," he said. It is Modi's first trip to Russia since 2019, the first after the start of the Ukraine conflict in February 2022 and the first in Modi's third term as the prime minister. Russian President Putin is set to host a private dinner for Modi tonight ahead of Tuesday's talks at the 22nd India-Russia summit in Moscow. Modi will co-chair the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Putin, and will also interact with the members of the Indian community. "PM is set to hold substantive discussions with President Vladimir Putin to take forward the special partnership between the two countries. He will also interact with the Indian community in Russia," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on 'X'. The Indian prime minister was accorded a guard of hon-

our at the airport. He was given a warm welcome outside The Carlton Hotel in Moscow by members of the Indian diaspora and a group of Russian artists who danced to the tune of Hindi songs. In his departure statement, Modi said India seeks to play a supportive role for a peaceful and stable region. After concluding his engagements in Russia on July 9, Modi will leave for Austria in the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to that country in over 40 years. The focus of the Modi-Putin summit talks is expected to be on further boosting bilateral cooperation in trade, energy and defence. The Ukraine conflict is set to figure in the discussions. "The special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia has advanced over the past 10 years, including in the areas of energy, security, trade, investment, health, education, culture, tourism and people-to-people exchanges," Modi said in his departure statement.

Octogenarian waits for 3 hours for wheelchair at Delhi airport

PNS ■ MUMBAI

An 84-year-old Parkinson's disease-affected woman had to wait for over three hours for a wheelchair at the tarmac of Delhi airport after her arrival from Jaipur on an Alliance Air flight on Sunday, an incident which the airline said is being investigated. The government-owned airline also said it is in touch with family members of the woman passenger, who was travelling with her son, and has already "apologised" to her for the incident. Separately, Alliance Air is taking up the matter with AI-SATS, who is also the ground handling services operator for Air India at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi. "There was some mess up... We are looking at the incident from several angles. Besides, we are taking up the matter with the ground handling agency AI-SATS, which was supposed to provide wheelchair to the passenger," Alliance GM M Tufchi said.

Heavy rain cripples Mumbai, Maha CM reviews situation

Rahul Gandhi seeks relief for flood-hit Assam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Heavy rain in Mumbai on Monday affected local train services and flight operations, prompting Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to review the situation while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi visited flood-hit Assam and sought the Centre's help for the state. The rain mayhem led to the inundation of several low-lying areas in Mumbai, impacting vehicular movement, while all schools in the city, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts remained shut. Both Houses of the Maharashtra legislature were adjourned as many members and officials could not reach the Vidhan Bhavan due to the downpour. Maharashtra Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation and Disaster Management Anil Patil and NCP MLC Amol Mitkari alighted from the Howrah-Mumbai train and



walked on the tracks for some distance, a video of which went viral. Chief Minister Shinde took stock of the heavy rain situation by chairing a meeting at the Mantralaya and visiting the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) control room. Train services on the fast line of the Central Railway's (CR) main corridor between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in south Mumbai and neighbouring Thane were suspended for a few hours due to waterlogging at various places and later resumed, officials said. The CR officials asked people to avoid travelling unless unavoidable. Heavy rain and low visibility led to the suspension of runway operations at the Mumbai airport from 2.22 am to 3.40 am on Monday and the cancellation of 50 flights, according to sources. A spokesperson of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking in the morning said at least 40 bus routes in the city and suburbs were either diverted or curtailed due to waterlogging.



Congress slams govt over 'private investment plans slumping to 20-year low'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over new private investment plans reportedly slumping to a 20-year low in the first quarter of this fiscal, the Congress on Monday alleged India has suffered due to "random policy changes" and an atmosphere of "fear and intimidation". Congress general secretary, in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, in a statement alleged that everyday in the "Modi-Made Anyak Kaal" is a new record of economic failure. "We have already seen a 45-year high unemployment rate, a 50-year low household savings rate, and the first-ever decrease in real rural consumption. Now, we have another disturbing fact to reckon with. The Hindu reports that in the April-June quarter of this 2023/24 fiscal year, fresh investments announced by corporates is

just Rs. 44,000 crore. This is a 20-year low," Ramesh said in a post on X. "Compare the decade of Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister with that of the non-biological PM. Investment as percentage of GDP (average over time) was 33.4% during the UPA and 28.7% in the Anyak-kaal," he said. The FDI as percentage of GDP rose from 0.8% in 2004 to 1.7% in 2014 under Manmohan Singh's stewardship, Ramesh said, adding that as of 2022, it is now 1.5%. Manufacturing as percentage of GDP (average over time) fell from 16.5% in UPA to 14.5% under the current government, he said. Ramesh said Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) in India, or the total investment in fixed assets, has been lower for the entire Modi regime than the lowest point of the UPA.

Four soldiers injured as terrorists ambush security vehicle in J-K

PNS ■ KATHUA/JAMMU

At least four army personnel were injured on Monday when terrorists ambushed their vehicle in the remote Machedi area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said. The terrorists hurled a grenade and opened fire targeting Army vehicles which were on a routine patrol on the Machedi-Kindli-Malhar road at around 3.30 pm near Badnota village in Lohai Malhar, 150 km from Kathua town. Security forces retaliated but the terrorists fled into the nearby forest, the officials said, adding an intermittent exchange of firing was going on between the terrorists and security forces when the last reports were received. They said reinforcements had been rushed to the area to neutralise the terrorists, who are believed to have recently infiltrated from across the border and were moving to the higher reaches. "The four troopers who have been injured were in the vehicle which came under grenade attack and firing by the terrorists," an official said. They said the injured were shifted to a military hospital, where the condition of two of them was stated to be "critical".

National policy at advanced stage: Centre to SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The national policy on distribution of menstrual hygiene products to adolescent school-going girls is at an advanced stage of formulation, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Monday. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice J B Pardiwala took note of the submissions of Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, and allowed her plea for grant of

DISTRIBUTION OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS

two more months for framing of the policy. The top court was hearing a plea of Congress leader and social activist Jaya Thakur seeking directions to the Centre and the states to provide free sanitary pads to girl students of class 6-12 and ensure separate female toilet facilities in all government-aided and residential schools. The framing of the national policy on the issue is at an advanced stage and two more months' time may be granted, the ASG said.



"We will keep this matter on the first Monday of September month," the bench said. The plea highlighted the difficulties faced by adolescent females from poor back-

grounds in the schools. The Centre had earlier said that it was in the process of collating all necessary material to form a national policy on the distribution of menstrual hygiene products to school-going girls in terms of the orders dated April 10, 2023 and November 6, 2023. The top court had directed the Centre to lay down a national model for building toilets commensurate with the number of girl students in all government-aided and residential schools across the

country. While emphasising uniform procedure, it also asked the Union government about the policy it has formulated for the distribution of sanitary napkins to female school students nationally. During an earlier hearing, the Centre had informed the apex court that a draft national policy for the distribution of sanitary napkins free of cost to school-going girls has been formulated and sent to stakeholders to elicit their comments.

Rath Yatra: Chariots reach Puri's Gundicha temple

PNS ■ PURI

The chariots of the sibling deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, reached the Gundicha temple on Monday, with which the first leg of the Rath Yatra celebrations in Odisha's Puri concluded. Thousands of people pulled the chariots, while lakhs of devotees gathered on the roadside to watch the procession on 'Badadanda' amid heat and humidity. The 'yatra' began on Sunday evening, but halted a few metres later due to sunset. It



resumed the 2.5 km journey from the 12th-century shrine to the Gundicha temple around 9.30 am on Monday and concluded at 2.35 pm. The three majestic chariots will remain outside the

Gundicha temple on Grand Road. The deities will be taken inside the temple on Tuesday in a ceremonial procession. The deities will remain at this temple for a week. "The chariots have reached their destination. We have put cordons around the three chariots and are regulating the crowd. Adequate traffic arrangements have been made for smooth flow of vehicles," said DGP Arun Sarangi, who also participated in pulling the chariots. Rath Yatra is a two-day affair this time, after 53 years, due to celestial arrangements.

11 INCLUDING EX-CM CHAMPAI SWORN IN AS MINISTERS

Hemant Soren govt wins trust vote

PNS ■ RANCHI

Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren and 10 other leaders of the JMM-led coalition took oath as ministers in the Hemant Soren government after it won a trust vote in the assembly amid a walkout by opposition members on Monday. A total of 45 MLAs, including nominated member Glen Joseph Galstaun, voted in favour of the confidence motion. BJP and AJSU legislators walked out of the House as the headcount for voting started. The BJP-led opposition has 24 legislators of the saffron party and three of the AJSU party.

He said the JMM-led alliance has been performing strongly since coming to power in 2019 by following the constitutional procedures and it was again witnessed during the day. During his speech on the confidence motion in the assembly, the chief minister said, "One could see the conduct of BJP legislators after seeing me again in the House." "The BJP doesn't have any agenda for the state. The country's people held a mirror to the BJP in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls. In the upcoming assembly elections, they will face strong resistance from the JMM-led alliance," the CM said. Speaking on the confidence motion, Leader of Opposition Amar Bauri alleged that the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance government did not fulfill a single promise in the last five years.



Telecom infrastructure spruced up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Monday announced significant improvements in telecom infrastructure for Amarnath Yatra to ensure seamless mobile connectivity for pilgrims. In collaboration with major telecom operators, including Airtel, BSNL, and Reliance Jio, the infrastructure has been upgraded to provide continuous coverage along the yatra routes, according to an official release. To ensure seamless mobile connectivity, a total of 82 sites (Airtel, RJIL and BSNL) will be



active, an official release said. "A total of 31 new sites have been installed along the Yatra routes, increasing the total number from 51 in 2023 to 82 in 2024. This enhancement aims to provide seamless mobile connectivity to the pilgrims and public," it

said. The routes from Lakhampur to Qazigund and from Qazigund to Pahalgam and Baltal are fully covered with 2G, 3G, 4G, including 5G technology, at many places for pilgrims and the public. Further, some key points of SIM distribution centres have been added to extend telecom facilitation to pilgrims, it said. "The DoT remains committed to ensure a smooth and connected experience for all participants of the Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2024, leveraging advanced telecom technologies to support this important pilgrimage," the release said.

Migratory birds, crows suspected in spread of bird flu to Kerala farms

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Migratory birds and crows from the forests in Kerala are suspected to be the carriers of the avian influenza virus, causing its spread to domestic duck and poultry farms in the state, according to a study by a government-appointed panel of experts. The panel submitted its report to state Animal Husbandry Minister J Chinchurani on Monday. The team was appointed in view of rising cases of bird flu in the state, particularly in Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts, causing

heavy losses to duck and poultry farmers. The minister said that the government will carefully review the report's recommendations and take appropriate action. The expert team included specialists from the Animal Husbandry Department and scientists from the Veterinary University. "The team found that the disease may have spread through the movement of birds from one place to another. These birds were likely infected by migratory birds and also spread the disease through their sale," a government release, quoting the study, said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Macron makes it

From the UK to Iran and now France, progressive voices and inclusive thinking is making a comeback

France has just about managed to keep the ultra-right at bay. ultra rightwingers have lost to the liberals in the snap poll ordered by French President Emmanuel Macron. France has a rich history of liberalism and social progressivism, yet in recent years, the country has seen a rise in far-right nationalism. However recent elections and political movements indicate a resurgence of progressive values. A left-wing alliance secured the most seats in the French parliament after tactical voting in Sunday's second-round election thwarted Marine Le Pen's far-right party. But the victory of the Left is not decisive. France now faces political uncertainty, as no party achieved an absolute majority in the National Assembly. President Emmanuel Macron's gamble seems to have worked as he had ordered a snap poll and decided to go to elections despite his waning popularity. He has championed a centrist approach that blends liberal economic policies with progressive social reforms. His administration has focused on addressing climate change, promoting gender equality, and fostering a more inclusive society. His surprise win, despite predictions to the contrary, suggests that people across the globe are moving towards liberal values and giving them prominence over reactionary forces.



This shift could have far-reaching implications for the European Union and beyond. However, to take a pragmatic approach, France has just about managed to defeat the far right who went on a rampage after the elections did not go in their favour as was widely expected. In the time to come, the challenges for President Macron may multiply as no one has secured a simple majority in the lower house of 577 seats. So now France enters the uncharted waters of coalition politics. The new government would be anything but stable and may give right-wingers a chance to discredit it. President Macron would face several significant challenges. Politically, he would need to navigate a fragmented landscape with diverse parties, address low public trust, and manage frequent protests. Economically, tackling inequality, unemployment, and high public debt while balancing social spending demands would be critical. Right now, France is struggling to pull back its economy from crisis. So far annual growth has been 0.7 per cent in 2024 after a significant slowdown in the second half of 2023 but may gain momentum in 2025 (1.3 per cent). Socially, issues like immigration integration, pension reforms, and the housing crisis would require careful attention. Finally, Macron would have to address sensitive cultural issues, including secularism, religious freedom, and debates around national identity and multiculturalism. To effectively tackle the far right, President Macron would have to focus on reducing socioeconomic disparities to address the economic grievances that fuel extremism.

for support jobs and how many were forcibly taken for active combat, remains a matter of conjecture. The tact of enlisting 'mercenaries' is an old and convenient practice, as besides the relatively low levels of accountability, they also come with the plausible option of deniability. Under the International Criminal Court and the International Humanitarian Law, the status of 'mercenary' does not constitute a specific crime. But they are not entitled to the status of 'prisoner of war' and its necessities. The idea is to discourage mercenaries as material greed-based and amoral entities as opposed to soldiers of the nation who are driven by a sense of national purpose, patriotism, and professional excellence. To qualify as 'mercenaries', six criteria need to be fulfilled. Firstly, the person is specially recruited internally/abroad. Secondly, the belligerent participates in conflict. Thirdly, he/she is motivated by private gain, as promised by one side in the conflict. Fourthly, they are not national, resident or interested party in the said conflict. Fifthly, they do not belong to the militaries of either side. Sixthly and lastly, they have not been sent by a non-interested state on any official duty as a member of their military. Therefore, it could be pre-

PICTALK



The chariots of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra prepared for annual Rath Yatra festival, in Puri PTI

Paving the way for India's own Green Silicon Valley

Climate change offers an opportunity to create an international market for green products, capital and goods through cooperation and collaboration

Growth, Employment and Climate Change, the trifecta of modern economic challenges, have rekindled the interest of policymakers in bringing back the craft of industrial policymaking right at the centre of the discussion table. Ominous estimates highlight climate change as a critical factor negatively impacting growth and employment, whereby ~18% of GDP and labour productivity equivalent to 72 million jobs might be lost, therefore the argument by Nicholas Stern and Joseph E. Stiglitz that "the only long-run growth trajectory is a green trajectory" echoes loudly for adaptation by industrial policymakers globally. Fashionably rechristened as Green Industrial Policy, the craft embeds within itself a series of government intervention measures (supply and demand focussed subsidies, regulations, incentives and standards) that aim at achieving economic development while simultaneously cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Globally leading nations have com-



different elements of the Green Industrial Policy craft for building national competitive advantage towards catalysing economic growth, increasing skilled employment and climate action: **Japan:** Introduced five policy tools of Grant funding, Tax incentive, Guidance policy on transition finance, Regulatory reforms and international collaboration, targeting over 18 trillion yen for fourteen green growth sectors such as wind power, nuclear power, mobility & battery etc. **The US:** manufacturing, strengthening national security through supply chain resilience and accelerating the energy transition by supply and demand side spending and tax cuts of ~\$400 billion that aims to create ~1.5 million jobs.

India has made some formidable moves towards a green future by focusing on domestic market formation and localization of components. Its Long Term-Low Emission Development Strategy submitted at COP27 articulates seven transitions to low-carbon development such as electricity systems, transport systems, sustainable urbanization etc. The production-linked incentive schemes in renewable energy equipment space and technology-focused national missions on hydrogen and energy storage are steps in the right direction that can be aptly followed by a broader green industrialisation policy for catalysing investments in manufacturing of decarbonisation technologies which are foundational in the short run can trigger the Schumpeterian process of innovation and discovery in the medium term towards high-carbon growth and employment. In this regard, the thrust on clean energy

entrepreneurship through industrial policy and a green R & D policy can foster breakthrough innovations and patents that can create and monetise new solutions. Japan and Korea have acknowledged this potential of startups as open innovation resources and introduced industrial policy support that encourages them to partner with larger conglomerates to propel the innovativeness of the economy at large and compete with their European, Chinese and American competitors. Green startups with their agility and Conglomerates with their market power and experience can aspire to create our own green Silicon Valley. Climate change offers an opportunity to create an international market for green products, capital and goods through international cooperation and collaboration. These initiatives can catalyse a virtuous cycle of growth, employment and carbon neutrality. (The writer is a Chevening Scholar and an International Development expert; views are personal)



SAIRAM SUBRAMANIAN

Indians dying on the Russian frontline

The presence of Indian nationals on the Russian side of the Ukraine conflict raises broader questions about the ethics of foreign combatant recruitment.



BHOPINDER SINGH

The issue of Indians fighting along with the Russian forces in the Ukraine War is particularly piquant, given India's historic relations with the Soviet Union earlier and Russia now. The fact that many had claimed to have been 'forced' to fight had forced the Indian Government to intervene. It is a claim that hasn't been conclusively confirmed as the Indian Embassy was aware of many Indians having signed up for support jobs in the Russian Army. Pending confirmation that their terms of service had been unfairly and involuntarily extended to fight on the frontline, the Indian authorities had formally sought their discharge. It further advised Indians to "exercise caution" and "stay away from this conflict" - diplomate for dissuading Indians from joining any Russian Army, in any capacity, given the situation. But as it routinely happens e.g., as it happened with advisories to Indian students to leave Ukraine before the full-fledged assault, some heeded the call and some didn't, till the situation became desperate and inextricable for them. The Russians have been particularly keen to swell their ranks with foreigners given the heavy loss of lives in the bloody stalemate and the accompanying sense of fatigue and despondency amongst its combatants.

The inclusion of private militias like the 'Wagner Army' is under that impulse. But the inclusion of individual foreigners is a formalized initiative that can be traced back to Law 29 March 1998 'On Military Obligation and Military Service' - which has since then been made increasingly attractive and lenient to attract new intake. Talks of individuals from Central Asian Countries (for the Soviet Union), Cuba, Afghanistan, Nepal, Syria, Somalia etc., have been doing the rounds. For these foreign inductees, besides the relatively lucrative salary (\$2000-\$3000), the additional lure of Russian citizenship is dangled. Estimated to be numbering in thousands, BBC reported that as of last year's end, 254 foreigners had been killed in the conflict. How many of them had enlisted



for support jobs and how many were forcibly taken for active combat, remains a matter of conjecture.

The tact of enlisting 'mercenaries' is an old and convenient practice, as besides the relatively low levels of accountability, they also come with the plausible option of deniability. Under the International Criminal Court and the International Humanitarian Law, the status of 'mercenary' does not constitute a specific crime. But they are not entitled to the status of 'prisoner of war' and its necessities. The idea is to discourage mercenaries as material greed-based and amoral entities as opposed to soldiers of the nation who are driven by a sense of national purpose, patriotism, and professional excellence. To qualify as 'mercenaries', six criteria need to be fulfilled. Firstly, the person is specially recruited internally/abroad. Secondly, the belligerent participates in conflict. Thirdly, he/she is motivated by private gain, as promised by one side in the conflict. Fourthly, they are not national, resident or interested party in the said conflict. Fifthly, they do not belong to the militaries of either side. Sixthly and lastly, they have not been sent by a non-interested state on any official duty as a member of their military. Therefore, it could be pre-



THE RUSSIANS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY KEEN TO SWELL THEIR RANKS WITH FOREIGNERS GIVEN THE HEAVY LOSS OF LIVES IN THE BLOODY STALEMATE AND THE ACCOMPANYING SENSE OF FATIGUE AND DESPONDENCY AMONGST ITS COMBATANTS

sumed some Indians who are unfortunately caught in a form of combat that they probably had not imagined whilst signing up, and may still qualify as 'mercenary'.

Such a scenario does not reflect well on the nation as it is suggestive of limited job opportunities domestically and therefore suggests societal desperation which is understandable for broken nations like Somalia or Syria, but not India. Sadly, portents of 'cannon fodder' or even 'human trafficking' are rife, but given the opaqueness that surrounds the Russian reality, nothing can be confirmed. Such times birth human trafficking networks that paint a very different picture to recruit the gullible when the truth is starkly different.

There have been gut-wrenching pleas from some Indians beseeching the Indian authorities to secure their release, with some losing their lives, soon after that. The Indian External Affairs Minister is believed to have reiterated his concern to his Russian counterpart during a recent bilateral in Astana, Kazakhstan. To the query, if S Jaishankar had taken up the issue of stranded Indians, he assured, "Very clearly and strongly... several Indians have been pressed into service with the Russian Army. Only when they come back will we know the full cir-

cumstances. But whatever the circumstances are, to us it is unacceptable that Indian citizens find themselves in the army of another country in a warzone. I told him that we seek their cooperation and that they are our friend and partners. We have to find a way so that these people can return to India as quickly and effectively as possible." Thankfully, despite the ostensibly pro-Ukraine position taken by Delhi, it has maintained a parallel and strong relation with Russia, replete with non-linear moves as part of its 'strategic independence'. However, while the government had initiated the needful from Russian authorities, there is a reciprocal expectation of Indians abroad to heed advisories, and not wait for situations to deteriorate.

No right-thinking country would encourage its citizens to partake in conflicts given the diversity of complex geopolitical and societal ramifications, amongst which guaranteeing their safety would be paramount. For Russians, foreign recruitment makes practical sense - for Indians to be availing the same, reflects poorly.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HOPE FOR INDIA'S FUTURE

Madam — Observing Rahul Gandhi's political trajectory reveals his focused objectives: welfare for the poor, social justice, MSME development, and job creation. Once dismissed with derisive labels, he now stands as a pivotal opposition figure and a national benefactor. In Parliament, he champions crucial issues like poverty rights, constitutional protection, and unemployment, spotlighting concerns from the Agniveer scheme to NEET. We trust he will persist in combating corruption for India's bright future.

Rahul Gandhi's tenure as Leader of the Opposition has been marked by a transformation from skepticism to significance. Initially dismissed, he has emerged as a pivotal voice, advocating for the marginalized and pressing critical issues in Parliament. His agenda emphasizes welfare for the poor, social justice, MSME development, and job creation. Gandhi's relentless pursuit of transparency and accountability has kept the government accountable on issues ranging from poverty alleviation to constitutional protection. His proactive stance on national challenges like unemployment and inflation underscores his commitment to India's future, positioning him as a proactive and influential leader in the opposition ranks.

Masood Ahmad |Barabanki

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE BUDGET

Madam — Amidst anticipation of the upcoming budget session, national attention is fixated on its contents. India Inc. hopes to retain production incentives, while salary earners seek raised exemption limits and improved tax slabs. The common man yearns for relief from economic hardships, and farmers seek guaranteed minimum returns. Senior citizens anticipate travel benefits and healthcare subsidies. Supporters are poised, their lists ready, crucial for the government's survival. The budget's essence lies in who gains and by how much from this vul-

Implications of Iran's election



The untimely demise of Iran's conservative President Ebrahim Raisi has necessitated an election amidst regional tensions,

nerable government. The common man eagerly anticipates budgetary relief through increased exemption limits, revised tax slabs, and measures to alleviate everyday financial burdens. Expectations include provisions for healthcare subsidies, travel benefits for senior citizens, and incentives supporting livelihood stability, reflecting hopes for tangible improvements in quality of life.

AG Rajmohan |Anantpur

KEIR STARMER'S VISION FOR CHANGE

Madam — Apropos, "Now we get to work, Starmer to cabinet," The Pioneer, July 7. The British election results that led to Labour leader Keir Starmer's entry into 10 Downing Street mark a pivotal moment in the country's politics, promising to steer the nation through the turbulent aftermath of 14 years of Conservative governance. The enormity of Labour's victory cannot be overstated. Achieving a massive majority in Parliament, Labour has been given a clear mandate to implement change. His

exacerbated by the Gaza conflict and disputes over Iran's nuclear program. India anticipates evolving bilateral ties under reformist President-elect Pezeshkian. Despite historical ties spanning language, culture, and commerce, both nations face a crucial juncture. With shared roots and significant strategic interests, India and Iran navigate a relationship poised for new dynamics.

The future of Iran under liberal leadership holds promise for significant domestic and international shifts. Potential reforms could ease tensions, particularly regarding Iran's nuclear program, fostering better relations with the West. Internally, liberal policies may encourage socio-economic progress and cultural openness, reshaping Iran's global image and regional dynamics. Dimple Wadhawan Kanpur

Dimple Wadhawan |Kanpur

acknowledgment of the public's lack of trust in politics is a refreshing departure from the often defensive posture of recent administrations. His promise to heal this mistrust through actions rather than words is a step in the right direction.

The British public has grown cynical after enduring repeated scandals, including the infamous Downing Street parties during the Covid-19 lockdowns, which eroded confidence in government integrity. Economically, Mr Starmer inherits a nation grappling with significant challenges.

The tax burden is at its highest since the post-World War II era, and public services, particularly the National Health Service, are under immense strain. His government's ability to deliver on ambitious promises, such as green spending initiatives and public service improvements, will be a key measure of success.

N Sadhasiva Reddy |Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

Embracing life's challenges with a grateful heart leads to a profound awakening



RAVI VALLURI

Almighty divinity, through the prowess of nature, and the resplendent and ever-mutating cosmos is eternally showering bounties on humans. However, the human mind is not wakeful or grateful to accept this materiality. A question of attitude is primarily and predominantly our attitude which reinforces gratitude within our personalities. The word gratitude strikes its roots in the word the Latin word gratis, meaning to be thankful. It is always sagacious to recite a short prayer before a meal. Language is no trammel. Annadata Sukhi Bhava. By remembrance of these lines (Sanskrit), we express our gratefulness and indebtedness to the agrarian community and the cook for producing and preparing the meal respectively. Body: a divine instrument Nature has gifted us with something incomparable and priceless, the human body. We have been provided with a supercomputer of a brain.

Prowess of the breath Next humans are blissfully unmindful of the power of our breath. It can be likened to a cell phone which nature has provided to connect us with divinity. Breath is perhaps the most potent form of effervescence and pizzazz of our personalities. Humans are insensible to the fact that ninety per cent of toxins get expatriated from our bodies through the potency of breath. If we delve deep into the ancient practices like pranayama or the unique rhythmic technique of Sudarshan Kriya (imparted in various bouquets of courses of the Art of Living) the primacy of breath is under-



stood by us. An inestimable nun Aeon's ago lived an exalted and celebrated Zen nun. There were far and few like her. It was believed that few women could attain the venerable state like this pious lady. Once she had undertaken an arduous pilgrimage and arrived at a village as the sun sank in the horizon.

In all humility, she begged for lodgings for the night. However, the villagers slammed their doors and were unwilling to accommodate her in the village. They were opposed to the tenets of the Zen school of thought. They thought it to be exceedingly revolutionary. Thus, the clichéd and conformist individuals were unwilling to accept the nun into their fold even for a night. The traditionalists banished her from the village and she was compelled to wage the battle against inclement weather out in the cold. At the stroke of midnight, she woke up abruptly, unearthed the cherry tree which fed her ravenous body with sweet fruits, talking to the full moon which lightened up the sky.

Immediately she was engulfed with waves of emotions and suffused with love and affection for all those who had exiled and expatriated her from the village. She experienced the quintessential silence of an awakened one. She was extremely grateful to the villagers who had not accommodated her, to the cherry tree that fed her, the meditative silence that encompassed her body, all of which had wily nicely contributed to her awakening, an almost celestial spectacle. "Thus, a stock individual, a savant, a sage or a nun becomes a Buddha the moment he/she accepts all that life brings with its variegated, paradoxical situations.

The one who accepts these situations which gratitude and gratefulness, without admonishing anyone or carping verily becomes an awakened one." - The Buddha. "Good men and bad men differ radically. Bad men never appreciate kindness shown them, but wise men appreciate and are grateful. Wise men try to express their appreciation and gratitude by some return of kindness, not only to their benefactor, but to everyone else," said Gautama Buddha.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living)

The cost of freebies and the legal quagmire



UTTAM GUPTA

Despite a Supreme Court ruling highlighting the impact of freebies on election fairness, political parties continue to leverage public funds for electoral gain



In the Maharashtra Budget for 2024-25 presented by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, the BJP-led MahaYuti has announced financial assistance of Rs 1,500 per month for eligible women between 21 to 60 years of age, a stipend up to Rs.10,000 per month for youth in industrial and non-industrial sectors, electricity bill waiver for farmers etc. Unambiguously, these are freebies - an acronym for something given by the State free of charge - aimed at garnering votes during the State assembly elections later this year.

In a July 2013 order in S Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors, the Supreme Court (SC) had said that the distribution of freebies of any kind influences all people; that "It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree". Yet, it had held that promises in the election manifesto cannot be construed as "corrupt practice" under the Representation of People Act (RPA), or any other prevailing law and, hence, distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through the passage of Appropriation Acts in the state assembly. In the same order, it directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) "to frame guidelines that could govern the contents of the election manifesto of all the recognized political parties as when it had acted while framing guidelines for general conduct of the candidates, meetings, processions, polling day, etc". Further "this can also be included in the model code of conduct - under a separate head for guidelines for election manifesto - for guidance of political parties and candidates". The ECI never came out with any such guidelines. Emboldened by ECI inaction, the political parties who in the past, were placing freebies in a corner of their manifestos, have started catapulting them to the centre stage.

Now, freebies hold the key to winning elections. In February 2020, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by Arvind Kejriwal mesmerized Delhi, voters, by promising free or heavily subsidized electricity and free water, free bus rides for women, free Wi-Fi, and so on. In 2022 in Punjab, AAP promised free electrici-



NOW, FREEBIES HOLD THE KEY TO WINNING ELECTIONS. IN FEBRUARY 2020, THE AAM AADMI PARTY (AAP) LED BY ARVIND KEJRIWAL MESMERISED DELHI, VOTERS, BY PROMISING FREE OR HEAVILY SUBSIDISED ELECTRICITY AND FREE WATER, FREE BUS RIDES FOR WOMEN, FREE WI-FI, AND SO ON

ty to each household for consumption up to 300 units per month, waiver of all outstanding power bills, Rs 1000 per month to every woman aged 18 or above etc. The party won the state with a thumping majority. In Uttar Pradesh also in 2022, BJP promised 20 million smartphones for poor students, two free LPG cylinders every year, Rs 100,000/- for the marriage of girls from poor families, and so on. Meanwhile, the matter came up before the SC through a public interest litigation (PIL).

On January 25, 2022, it observed "This is no doubt a serious issue. Budget for freebies is going above the regular budget". It also reiterated that "this disturbs the level playing field". On August 3, 2022, it gave a sense that it is for Parliament, besides the ECI, to take the initiative to enact a law on curbing freebies. It also sought suggestions on the composition of a committee that could go into the issue "dispassionately" and make recommendations.

But, the above decisions haven't been acted upon. Although, on its part, the ECI had sent out questionnaires asking parties to give 'specifics' of what they intend to promise voters, financial impact and how this will be funded, there hasn't been any follow-up. Meanwhile, the freebies continue to proliferate. In Karnataka elections in May 2023, the grand old party (GOP) promised five guarantees viz. Gruha Jyoti, Gruha Lakshmi, Sakhi programme, Yuva Nidhi, and Anna Bhagya. The trend continued during elections in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana held in November/December 2023. While, in Rajasthan, Congress promised Rs 10,000 every year to the female head of the family under the Gruha Lakshmi Yojana, in MP, BJP increased the grant to Rs 1,250 per month under Ladli

Behna Yojana; the amount to be hiked to Rs 3,000 per month. Additionally, in MP, under Ladli Lakshmi Yojana, the BJP promised girls Rs 200,000/- till they get married. In Chhattisgarh, it promised Rs 12,000 per year to married women under the 'Mahtari Vandan Scheme'.

In Telangana, the GOP beat all promising 10 grams of gold besides Rs 100,000/- cash to women getting married. In the run-up to the general elections, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on December 23, 2023 supply of free foodgrain under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to over 800 million persons, Congress gave ten guarantees in its manifesto "Nyay Patra" released in April, 2024. Meanwhile, in Delhi, Kejriwal promised Rs 1000 per month to all women above the age of 18 years under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana (MMSY). For State elections later this year, parties are readying to give another round of big doles.

As mentioned earlier, the BJP-led MahaYuti has already announced a bountiful package for Maharashtra. For others viz. Haryana, and Jharkhand, parties will follow suit.

The SC assertion on January 25, 2022 "Budget for freebies is going above the regular budget" is confirmed by facts on ground zero. Whereas, in Delhi, these cost the exchequer around Rs 12,500 crore annually, in Punjab the impact is close to Rs 20,000 crore.

In Karnataka, at over Rs 60,000 crore, the cost of five guarantees exceeds the existing fiscal deficit. Redeeming the guarantees promised in GOP's "Nyay Patra" could cost the Central Government a mammoth around Rs 46,00,000 crore.

In Maharashtra, Rs 1,500 per month to eligible women alone

would cost Rs 46,000 crore a year. When the top court says freebies are bad, why doesn't it ban them? A big deterrent is none other than the SC order of July 2013 which says "... it can't be construed as corrupt practice..."

Within the meaning of section 123(1)(A) of the RPA, 1951, the expression 'bribery' has been defined to mean any gift, offer or promise by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent of any gratification with the object of inducing an elector as a reward to his candidature. The irony is, that when a candidate uses his own pocket money to bribe the voter, it is treated as corrupt practice, but when the party on whose symbol he is seeking election bribes voters using 'public money', the top court doesn't treat it that way.

The Union Government's standards of financial propriety lay down inter alia that "no authority shall exercise its powers of sanctioning expenditure to pass an order which will be directly or indirectly, to its advantage; and the expenditure from public moneys should not be incurred for the benefit of a particular person or a section of the people unless a claim for the amount could be enforced in a court of law or the expenditure is in pursuance of a recognized policy or custom".

The reckless spending of the taxpayer's money on freebies is neither a recognized policy/custom nor it is sanctioned in a court of law. It is a blatant financial irregularity that amounts to bribing voters using public money solely to gain electoral advantage. The SC should change its stance to recognize this and force the Parliament to enact a law if it feels existing laws don't provide for it.

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

Transforming healthcare with digital technologies

The health-tech sector is poised for exponential growth, reshaping the future of healthcare for all its citizens

Digital technologies are anticipated to offer swift and personalized clinical services to each patient through their handheld devices. New Age Technologies (NATs), including Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), mobile technologies, cloud computing, Big Data, and 5G, are becoming essential tools in the realm of "Smart Health." Smart Health refers to an interconnected healthcare system that utilizes NATs for clinical analysis, treatment, medical setups, and hospital management. Examples of Smart Healthcare systems include surgical robots, RFID-based supply chains, and integrated health management platforms or Health-stacks. These Smart



CHARRU MALHOTRA

Healthcare systems provide real-time connectivity to doctors, reduce treatment costs, and offer predictive, personalized information to patients. For example, IoT-based wearable smart devices can track patients' progress, help manage medical emergencies, and promptly notify healthcare providers. India's National Health Policy 2017 aims to achieve "Universal Health Coverage for all citizens," grad-

ually transitioning from fragmented healthcare systems to a holistic approach using digital technologies.

The Ayushman Bharat scheme, launched in September 2018, is a notable nationwide public health insurance program that provides health coverage of up to 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization through the 'Abha-ID' for each patient. Additionally, the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), launched on August 15, 2020, aims to create an integrated healthcare system linking practitioners and patients digitally, allowing real-time access to health records. Driven by these national initiatives, along with the rise of health startups, increased

healthcare spending, and growing demand for high-quality healthcare services, the health-tech sector in India is experiencing significant growth.

According to recent reports, the health-tech industry in India is expected to reach \$6.5 billion by 2024 and \$78.4 billion by 2033, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 28.67% during this period. India has already implemented initiatives such as the National Health Portal and the Health Management Information System (HMIS), with several state-level initiatives as well. Programs like the CoWIN Vaccine Platform, the Aarogya Setu contact tracing app, and the eSanjeevani National Telemedicine Service Platform



deserve special mention. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, private equity firms are increasingly investing in health tech companies. The health startup ecosystem in India primarily consists of six segments: telemedicine, pharmacy, fitness, wellness, IT healthcare, and home healthcare. Leading telemedicine startups such as Practo, Img, mFINE, iCliniq, Digi-Doctor, and myUpchar are reporting impressive increases in tele-consultations.

These systems provide information on health indicators, identify individuals, verify them, and connect their health records with informed consent. However, the adoption of these technologies presents significant technical, legal, and socio-economic challenges. There is a lack of a cohesive and robust legal and regulatory framework, particularly in the health-tech domain. Security in smart healthcare is crucial, as it is an ecosystem susceptible to attacks or infiltration by individuals or hackers. The privacy of patients' sensitive health data requires an extra layer of protection beyond what is currently available through India's Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. Data interoperability and dig-

ital connectivity are essential for the seamless exchange of health data. The emerging 5G communication network in India can address this gap, but technological constraints hinder the widespread adoption of in-home health monitoring services. Healthcare specialists also face challenges such as limited access to and adaptability to digital technologies. These issues are further compounded by inadequate logistics support, a shortage of skilled manpower, and a tech-resistant attitude among various stakeholders. Drawing inspiration from the globally recognized Unified Payment Interface (UPI), a digital public infrastructure (DPI) for healthcare should be made accessible to all. Our anganwadi workers, in partic-

ular, should be supported by additional tech-savvy personnel. Capacity building for our healthcare providers and ensuring their access to digital devices and connectivity should be prioritized through common service centers (CSCs) and Public Health Centers (PHCs). Additionally, it is time for India to expand the scope of its Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, by including special provisions for handling the sensitive health data of patients. With these efforts, every Indian will not only have easy access to but also trust the "Digital Doctor in their pocket."

(The writer is a professor at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New-Delhi; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Torrent Power arm to set up solar projects to supply power to ARS Steels

Torrent Power's subsidiary Torrent Urja 14 (TU14) will set up solar projects of up to 50 MW to supply clean power to ARS Steels & Alloy International (ARS), a BSE filing said on Monday. As per the Subscription and Shareholders' Agreement (SSSA) signed on Monday, ARS will also have an equity stake in the TU14 -- an arm of Torrent Power. The SSSA has been signed by Torrent Power, ARS and TU14 for the supply of power from by development of up to 50 MW solar power generating projects in Tamil Nadu through open access from the project of TU14 to the production units of ARS, the filing said. "Significant terms of SSSA include that ARS shall at all times during the subsistence of the power supply and offtake agreement hold not less than 26 per cent of the aggregate equity shares of TU14," Torrent Power said. Torrent Power is into generation, transmission and distribution of power. The company is also engaged in the manufacturing and supply of power cables.



Gold rises Rs 100; silver rallies Rs 870 amid strong global cues

Gold prices rose Rs 100 to Rs 73,410 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with strong global trend, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal closed at Rs 73,310 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also rallied Rs 870 to Rs 94,270 per kg. It had settled at Rs 93,400 per kg in the previous session. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are quoted at Rs 73,410 per 10 grams, up by Rs 100 from the Friday's afternoon price. "Gold prices at Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) traded lower amid risk-averse sentiment and profit booking after surging in the week gone by," Diip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was US\$ 2,373 per ounce, up US\$ 10 per ounce from the previous close. "Gold and silver prices rose significantly as the dollar retreated amidst mixed jobs data, increase in rate cut expectations and geo-political updates."



PM to chair NITI Aayog Governing Council meet on July 27

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair NITI Aayog's ninth Governing Council meeting on July 27, which will discuss the 'Viksit Bharat@2047' document to make India a developed nation, a senior government official said on Monday. The council, the apex body of NITI Aayog, includes all state chief ministers, lieutenant governors of Union Territories, and several Union ministers. Modi is the Chairman of NITI Aayog. NITI Aayog's Governing Council will meet on July 27. "Ahead of the Council meeting, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will likely give a glimpse of the Viksit Bharat vision and action plan in the Budget on July 23," the official said. A vision document is being prepared for India to become a developed economy of US\$ 30 trillion by 2047, the 100th year of its independence. In 2023, NITI Aayog was entrusted with the task of consolidating the 10 sectoral thematic visions into a combined vision for Viksit Bharat @2047.



IBM to launch GenAI Innovation Center in Kochi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech giant IBM on Monday announced the launch of its GenAI Innovation Center in Kochi which, it said, will enable enterprises, startups, and partners to explore and build generative AI technology. The centre will accelerate AI innovation, boost productivity and strengthen GenAI expertise in India, the company said in a release. "As organisations transition from AI experimentation to deployment for adding business value, they often find AI projects too complex or difficult to integrate due to limited skills or expertise," it said. According to the release, the centre would provide organisations with access to IBM experts and technologies geared to help build, scale and accelerate adoption of enterprise-grade AI.

SBI report: Time to push divestment of state-owned banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government should go ahead with divestment of public sector banks (PSBs) as they are in good condition, SBI said in its research report on Monday. The report also pitched for the consolidation of existing government-owned banks. "As banks are in good condition, the government should take stance on divestment of PSBs," the report titled 'Prelude to Union Budget 2024-25' said. With regard to the privatisation of IDBI Bank, it said the government and Life Insurance Corporation of India are selling an almost 61 per cent stake in the lender. "They invited bids from buyers in October 2022. In January 2023, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) received



The report also recommended that the government should tweak the tax on deposit interest and make flat tax treatment across the maturity ladder in line with mutual fund and equity markets.

several expressions of interest for the IDBI Bank stake on offer. We expect the government to clarify this in the Budget," it said. Presently, the government owns over 45 per cent stake in

across the maturity ladder in line with mutual fund and equity markets. "Household net financial savings has declined to 5.3 per cent of GDP in FY23 and is expected to be 5.4 per cent in FY24. If we make deposit rate attractive in line with MFs, then this could push up household financial savings and CASA," it said. As this amount will be in the hands of depositors, the report said, it could unleash additional spending and thereby, more GST revenue to the government. "Increase in bank deposits will bring not only stability in core deposit base and financial system but also financial stability in household savings as the banking system is better regulated and having a superior trust as compared to other alternatives with high volatility/risk," it said.

'India's high public debt offers limited space for welfare spending'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's high public debt offers limited fiscal space to undertake welfare measures which can help stimulate the economy, a foreign brokerage said on Monday. In a report that comes weeks ahead of the presentation of the budget, Goldman Sachs said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman may continue on the fiscal consolidation roadmap, sticking to the 5.1 per cent fiscal deficit target announced in the interim budget. It said investors are expecting from the budget some relaxation in fiscal consolidation path and a shift in focus to welfare spending from capital expenditure. However, the same is not plausible, the brokerage hinted.

"There is limited fiscal space in our view to stimulate the economy given high public debt, (and) India's infrastructure upgrades have created long-term positive growth spillovers which policymakers may not be willing to give up," it reasoned. It said that the final fiscal deficit target may also be lowered from the present 5.1 per cent, and Sitharaman may further reduce the number to 4.5 per cent in FY26. Even if there is "some expenditure allocation" towards welfare spending, it may not require a reduction in capex given the Rs 2.1 lakh crore dividend transfer from the Reserve Bank, it said. There is a limited fiscal space for stimulus in FY25, it said, pointing out that interest expense constitutes a large share at 5.4 per cent of GDP in the general government's budget. "Our fiscal impulse calculations also show that general government fiscal policy has been a drag on growth since FY22 and will remain so in FY25 and FY26 given the fiscal consolidation target of the central government," it said. Capex grew at a healthy 31 per cent between FY21-24, giving a boost to growth, it said. The brokerage said the upcoming budget may go beyond just fiscal numbers, and lay emphasis on job creation.



Skoda gears up to introduce new Kodiaq, Octavia in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Czech carmaker Skoda is looking to drive in new models, including the latest version of its premium SUV Kodiaq, in India to bolster its presence in the country. The automaker has already announced plans to introduce a sub-4 meter compact SUV in the country early next year. Skoda already has a presence in the mid-sized SUV segment with Kushaq. In an interaction with PTI,

Skoda Auto India Brand Director Petr Janeba said the auto brand is also looking to re-introduce premium sedan Octavia in the market later this year. He stated the test mules of the new Kodiaq would probably be reaching Indian shores by the end of this year and the model could be introduced by the end of this year. Janeba noted that Skoda has a huge portfolio of cars globally but in India, it wants to introduce models "which have a big chance to be successful".

Markets end on flat note amid muted trade

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended almost flat on Monday amid a lacklustre trade as investors preferred to stay on the sidelines in the absence of any fresh trigger. Weak cues from Asian markets also added to the muted trend in domestic equities. After beginning the trade on a weak note, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 36.22 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 79,960.38. During the day, it went lower by 264.77 points or 0.33 per cent to 79,731.83. The NSE Nifty dipped 3.30

points or 0.01 per cent to 24,320.55. Among the Sensex pack, Titan, Adani Ports, Tata



Steel, JSW Steel, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were the biggest laggards.

ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle, HCL Technologies and Tata Motors were among the gainers. "The market is turning to a consolidation phase due to the absence of major triggers to support the current premium

valuation in the near term, prompting investors to book some profits. The earnings season is around the corner, and the initial expectation is subdued," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.22 per cent while midcap dipped 0.14 per cent. Among the indices, consumer durables tanked 1.46 per cent, metal (0.80 per cent), telecommunication (0.78 per cent), services (0.69 per cent), auto (0.63 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.53 per cent).

SEBI puts SK Finance's Rs 2,200 cr IPO in abeyance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has kept in abeyance the proposed initial share sale of vehicle finance and business loan-focused non-bank lender SK Finance. Without disclosing the reason SEBI said the "issuance of observations (has been) kept in abeyance" regarding the IPO of SK Finance,

an update showed on the regulator's website on Monday. The Jaipur-based lender had filed its preliminary papers with SEBI in May. According to the draft papers, the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of SK Finance is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to Rs 1,700 crore by promoters and investor shareholders.



Securitisation volumes surge 17 pc to Rs 45,000 cr: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Securitisation volumes rose 17 per cent to Rs 45,000 crore in the April-June quarter of this fiscal compared to the year-ago period, a report said on Monday. The report by domestic rating agency Crisil said the latest quarterly figure is adjusted for the exit of a large housing finance company, though it did not mention the name of the lender. In March, the RBI asked

IIFL to cease a slew of activities including securitisation, which seems to have impacted the volume. There was also a growth in the number of lenders accessing the market, wherein a lender bundles a bunch of future receivables and sells it to other to manage its funding needs, the report said. It said 95 originators, including NBFCs and banks, tapped the market to diversify funding sources, compared with 80 in the previous fiscal. Banks were

also more active in the market as originators, with transaction volumes reaching Rs 8,500 crore in the first quarter against Rs 10,000 crore for the entire FY24. "With banks now maintaining higher risk weights on credit exposure to NBFCs, availability of bank funding at optimal cost will be a key monitorable for NBFCs, making it imperative for them to diversify their resource raising beyond bank loans," Crisil's senior director Ajit Velonije said.

'Two-wheeler sales volume growth to continue'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The two-wheeler industry is expected to sustain a steady volume growth this fiscal driven by improved domestic sales and good traction in executive and premium segment motorcycles, a report said on Monday. According to CareEdge Ratings, post-Covid, sales volume of two-wheelers had consistently declined during FY20, FY21 and FY22 before starting to recover from FY23, with sales momentum continuing in FY24 as well. "CareEdge Ratings anti-

pates two-wheeler sales volume growth to continue in FY25 and it would be more driven by improved domestic sales, launch of CNG powered two-wheelers and good traction in executive and premium segment motorcycles," said Hardik Shah, Director at CareEdge Ratings. The growth in the two-wheeler segment in FY25 is also expected to be aided by the likely interest rate cuts in the second half of FY25, strong demand for new model launches coupled with recovery in exports from its low base



and favourable monsoon which is likely to improve rural consumer sentiment and income levels, said Arti Roy, Associate Director at CareEdge

Ratings. In FY23, the Indian two-wheeler industry recorded sales of 19.51 million units, an 8 per cent growth compared to the previous fiscal year's 18.01 million units. In FY24, the industry continued its upward trajectory, achieving 9.8 per cent growth with a total sales volume of 21.43 million units. However, this was still short of the peak sales volume recorded in FY19, when annual sales volume had reached 24.46 million units, it said. During FY24, the domestic two-wheeler industry witnessed total sales volume of 17.97 million units, reflecting a growth rate of 13 per cent, while the exports volume experienced a decline of 5 per cent.

Budget should focus on tax relief to boost consumption

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Budget FY25 should focus on offering relief to taxpayers, especially in the lower income brackets, to stimulate consumption, industry players suggested. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the full Budget for fiscal 2024-25 on July 23 which will be the first major policy document of the new government. The industry also urged the finance minister to lower corporate tax, phase out tax exemptions, and broaden tax base to boost economic growth. "Rationalise and simplify the tax system to improve compliance and promote investment.

Labour min rebuts Citigroup's report on employment in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The labour ministry on Monday rebutted a recent report by Citigroup which forecast that India will struggle to create sufficient employment opportunities even with a 7 per cent growth rate. The ministry in a statement said the report "fails to account for the comprehensive and positive employment data available from official sources such as Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) and the Reserve Bank of India's KLEMS data." The recent research report by Citigroup on employment in India, quoted by some of the print and electronic media, forecast that India will struggle to create sufficient employment opportunities even with a 7 per cent growth rate. Ministry of Labour and Employment strongly rebuts



The recent research report by Citigroup on employment in India, quoted by some of the print and electronic media, forecast that India will struggle to create sufficient employment opportunities even with a 7 per cent growth rate.

such reports which do not analyse all official data sources available in the public domain, it said. According to PLFS and RBI's KLEMS data, India has generated more than 8 crore (80 million) employment opportunities from 2017-18 to 2021-22. This translates to an average of over 2 crore (20 million) employment per year, despite the fact that the world economy was hit by COVID-19 pandemic during 2020-21 which contradicts Citigroup's assertion of India's inability to generate sufficient employment. This significant employment creation demonstrates the effectiveness of various government initiatives aimed at boosting employment across sectors, the statement added.

Employment in 27 sectors rises 3.31%

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The number of persons employed in 27 sectors, including agriculture, trade and financial services, increased by 3.31 per cent year-on-year to 59.66 crore in 2022-23, according to data published by the RBI on Monday. During 2021-22, the employment in these 27 sectors stood at 57.75 crore. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has placed on its website an update on 'Measuring Productivity at the Industry Level-The India KLEMS [Capital (K), Labour (L), Energy (E), Material (M) and Services (S)] Database'. The database covers 27 industries comprising the entire Indian economy. It comprises the Data Manual 2024 and time-series data on productivity for 27

industries covering the period 1980-81 to 2022-23. The 'agriculture, hunting,

forestry and fishing' had employed 25.3 crore individuals, up from 24.82 crore in 2021-22.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (RAJ) CIRCLE, SANGAREDDY
Tender Notice
#NT No.1150/RAJ/SR/TS/2024-25 Dated: 04-07-2024
No. of works: 1 Work Name of work: 1 Work in Yadadri-Drongli District Total ECV Value Rs. 802 Lakhs
Download of Tender Documents and submission of Bid documents From 09-07-2024 at 8 PM to 23-07-2024 at 3:30 PM
Technical bid opening 23-07-2024 at 4 PM Price bid opening 26-07-2024 at 4 PM
Contact Number 833822275
Tender documents will be available in e-procurement market place in between: From 09-07-2024 at 8 PM to 23-07-2024 at 3:30 PM. Details can be seen by login into www.tenders.telangana.gov.in
DPR No. 64-DPC/AGENCY/ADT/1024-25 Sd/- Superintending Engineer (R & B) Circle Sangareddy

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL OFFICER, PANCHAYATI RAJ MAHABUBNAGAR
Tender Notice
#NT No. TO/Tender/59 to 87/2024-25 Dated: 06.07.2024
No. of works (28) Calling the works under XV Finance Commission, FCR, MRR/FOI/ 2021-22 & 2022-23, SDF, STSCF, CDP & NHM Grants in Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Nirmal & Wanaparthy Districts.
Estimate Cost Rs. 1962.07 Lakhs. Tender documents can be had from e-procurement market from 09.07.2024 to 30.07.2024 for each tender with minimum (7) working days to participate from date of upload. Other details can be had from e-procurement market place @https://tenders.telangana.gov.in; email id: sa_pr_nbs@telangana.gov.in Further details can be had from the office of the Superintending Engineer/Regional office PR Circle Mahabubnagar. REGIONAL OFFICER (R & B) MAHABUBNAGAR.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTICE
#NT No. EE/05/Div-XI/RJNR/GHMC/2024-25 Date: 08.07.2024
Name of Work: For 1 no work of Laying of CC road in Rajendranagar Circle-11, GHMC.
Estimate Amount / ECV: Rs. 50.00 Lakhs. Downloading Start Date & Time: 09-07-2024 at 2.30 PM. Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bid: 18-07-2024 at 2.45 PM.
Name & Address of EE/SE: Executive Engineer, Rajendranagar, Div. No.11, GHMC.
Cell No.: 9989930608, e-mail id-ee11.ghmc2@gmail.com Sd/- Executive Engineer
R.O.No: 1614-PP/CLAD/DT/1024-25, Dt. 08-07-2024

'I could play a thousand characters, but not rona-dhona laced mommy ones'

Actress Kitu Gidwani is frequently praised for her in-demand roles. During a brief telephonic conversation, *The Pioneer* spoke with her about her most recent Teleplay *Time Please* and the ageism prevalent in the industry.

TEJAL SINHA

Keeping up with her sass to date is none other than Kitu Gidwani. One who has been an avid Doordarshan viewer would recall seeing her effortlessly essay Jane Austen's Lydia Bennet in *Trishna* (1985), the hugely popular Indian adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Moving forward, projects like *Saahil*, *Swabhimaan*, *Shaktimaan* and then working alongside Kamal Haasan in *Aalavandhan*, brought the veteran actress to a whole different picture. *Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na*, *Fashion*, *Wedding Pulav*, *Ok Jaanu*, *Fitrat* and *Ghost Stories* have been a few of her much-acclaimed projects, creating an image of hers more than just as a "Television actor".

And to her, the journey has been no less than an educational, interesting and quite fulfilling one. These days, the *Shaktimaan* fame is seen in Zee Theatre's teleplay *Time Please* and the project was a challenge for her, which eventually intrigued her enough to get onboard for the project. "I am a theatre actress, and it wasn't easy to shoot a whole teleplay in just three days. It was quite challenging. The challenge was that the director, Homi Wadia, thought I would not be able to do the play in just three days. I wanted to prove him wrong! Finally, he did say, 'Yes, you did it very well!' We had to learn so many lines. It was not easy because I'm not a Hindi-speaking person in real life. The only other time I had to do this kind of work was during *Swabhimaan*, where we would do 10 scenes a day and just memorise scene after scene. I would have liked more time to shoot, but budgets were tight. So, it was a challenge but quite rewarding in the end."

In the teleplay, she's seen playing an opinionated woman, Manini, who thinks she knows everything about life. Sharing in more details on the same, she says, "When she meets this boy from a totally different social stratum, her defenses go down and she realises her life is a bit of a mess. It's always interesting to play a character that has ups and downs and comes to a new understanding. In real life, we rarely come to new realisations; we just stick to the same ideas until we die."

Having been in the industry for so long, she believes that over the years, now one gets to play diverse characters, which is very exciting, especially for an older woman. "You don't necessarily have to play a mother's role. I was

offered a role where I play a normal woman from a poor strata who is in touch with a big don! It's a very exciting role, full of emotion, drama and crime," says the *Fashion* fame. While many feel that as time passes, age becomes a barrier for one, especially an actress, she has a different perspective on it. "I think the older an actress gets, the better she gets. However, there is definitely a lack of roles for older women and I don't understand why. I feel like maybe the directors are scared to cast older women in their films and TV projects. There's a lot of ageism. If a 50-year-old Shah Rukh Khan can play a young man, then why can't an older woman be sexy and play interesting roles? I look as good today as I did 20 years ago. I'm doing the same activities, you know. It's ridiculous that people don't write roles for older women because older women are much more interesting. I'm much more interested now than when I was in my twenties! Older women are treated very unfairly. Acting is not just about looks and a youthful body."

Acting, she says, is just not about your soul, your spirit, your eyes, the way you speak and the way you emote. That's what an actor is! "Women should be empowered at every age of their lives. I don't believe in retiring at all. Today, we have more roles for older women, but only in a small amount. It's not like in the West, where older women are playing fantastic roles, whether it's Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, Helen Mirren, or Judi Dench. In India, we just discard women once they pass a certain age. It's completely ridiculous. We treat older women like have-beens. The loss is society's, not the women's."

Over the years, beyond any doubt, she has portrayed diverse characters. However, there have been roles that she has turned down too. For instance, "I have said no to the role of a mother who sits in the background, weeps copiously and is portrayed as a hero. There is nothing to build on here. They might as well take some two-dimensional actresses for that. But there are not many projects I have said no to. I mean, unless it's for a daily soap. That I refuse all the time."

Today, for her, it doesn't matter what type of character she's supposed to play, as long as it's a well-rounded human being. "I could play a comedic role—a bank robber, a detective, a drug dealer, a politician—I could play a thousand different characters. It doesn't matter. Anything apart from a rona-dhona-laced mother's character is okay with me."

According to *Dance of the Wind* fame, playing 'mean' characters is just like playing a good one. "It doesn't matter; as long as you play it well and if the audience believes it, you've succeeded. There is no taboo about playing mean characters! You cannot play a good character all the time because the world is full of mean people. So why should you not play a mean character? Where would a hero be without a villain?"

Also known for her portrayal of multiple characters in television shows, she exclusively speaks out on a concluding note, "I don't watch televisions. There may be some projects that are good, but definitely, it's been in a black hole for the last 20 years."



I FEEL LIKE MAYBE THE DIRECTORS ARE SCARED TO CAST OLDER WOMEN IN THEIR PROJECTS. THERE'S A LOT OF AGEISM. IF A 50-YEAR-OLD SHAH RUKH KHAN CAN PLAY A YOUNG MAN, THEN WHY CAN'T AN OLDER WOMAN BE SEXY AND PLAY INTERESTING ROLES?

Popping the 'triangle of death' pimples? Here's the dark side of it!

The human face has various zones that are more sensitive and prone to complications when it comes to skin issues, and one of the most critical areas is known as the "Triangle of Death." This term may sound dramatic, but it underscores the significant health risks associated with improperly treating skin problems in this region.



WHAT IS THE TRIANGLE OF DEATH?
The Triangle of Death refers to the area of the face that encompasses the bridge of the nose to the corners of the mouth, forming a triangle. This area is medically significant because it is densely populated with blood vessels that directly connect to the brain. The veins in this region do not have valves, meaning any infection here can easily spread to the brain, leading to severe complications such as cavernous sinus thrombosis, meningitis, or brain abscess.

WHY IS IT DANGEROUS TO POP A PIMPLE IN THIS AREA?

Popping pimples is generally discouraged by dermatologists due to the risk of infection and scarring. However, doing so within the Triangle of Death carries additional, more severe risks. The blood vessels in this area drain into the cavernous sinus, a large vein at the base of the brain, and an infection here can spread to the brain, causing life-threatening conditions. Squeezing or popping a pimple can introduce bacteria from the skin's surface into the bloodstream, potentially leading to serious infections such as meningitis or a brain abscess. One of the most severe risks is cavernous sinus thrombosis, a rare condition where a blood clot forms in the cavernous sinus, potentially causing stroke-like symptoms, vision loss, and other neurological complications, and it is often fatal if not treated promptly. Additionally, popping pimples can lead to permanent scarring and hyperpigmentation, particularly in sensitive areas like the face.

CAUSES OF PIMPLES IN THE TRIANGLE OF DEATH

Pimples, also known as acne, can occur due to several factors, including hormonal fluctuations, bacterial infection, excess sebum production, and diet and lifestyle. Hormonal changes during puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, or conditions like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) can increase oil production in the skin, leading to clogged pores and pimples. The bacterium *Propionibacterium acnes* (P. acnes) is commonly associated with acne, and when pores are clogged, this bacterium can multiply and cause inflammation. Overactive sebaceous glands can produce too much oil, clogging pores and creating an environment conducive to acne. Additionally, diets high in refined sugars and dairy products, stress, lack of sleep, and poor skincare habits can all contribute to the development of acne.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treating pimples within the Triangle of Death requires caution. Recommended approaches include using topical treatments with benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, or retinoids to reduce acne by killing bacteria, drying excess oil, and promoting cell turnover. For severe cases, a dermatologist may prescribe oral antibiotics, hormonal treatments like birth control pills, or isotretinoin (Accutane). Professional extraction by a dermatologist is advisable for pimple

removal, as they use sterile techniques to minimize the risk of infection and scarring. Maintaining a regular skincare routine with gentle cleansing, moisturising, and non-comedogenic products can help prevent acne. Additionally, identifying and avoiding triggers such as certain foods, stress, and poor hygiene practices can also help manage acne.

PRECAUTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Hands off: Avoid touching or picking at pimples, especially within the Triangle of Death. This reduces the risk of introducing bacteria into the pores and bloodstream.

Seek professional help: If acne is persistent or severe, seek the help of a dermatologist. They can provide effective treatments and advice tailored to your skin type and condition.

Cleanliness and hygiene: Regularly wash your face with a gentle cleanser, avoid harsh scrubbing, and keep your hands and face clean to reduce the risk of infections.

Healthy lifestyle: A balanced diet, adequate hydration, regular exercise, and stress management can all contribute to healthier skin and fewer acne breakouts.

While the Triangle of Death may seem like an exaggerated term, it aptly highlights the potential dangers associated with popping pimples in this area. Understanding the risks and adopting safer skincare practices can help prevent serious health complications and ensure your skin remains healthy. Always prioritise professional medical advice and treatments over DIY methods to mitigate risks effectively.

(The author, Dr Sunil Kumar Prabhu, is a Consultant-Dermatologist and Aesthetic Physician, at Aster RV Hospital.)

FROM BUILDING HOUSES TO BREAKING BATTLES

Bboy Pappu is here for 'breathing' and 'breaking' dance

AARTI SREENATH

A few names stand out in the breaking world, like Bboy Pappu. His journey, marked by resilience and an undying passion for the art form, shines as a beacon of hope for Manipur's breaking culture. Despite the challenges, his story is one of perseverance and unyielding dedication.

Reflecting on the current state of breaking, Pappu Khundrakpam acknowledges the progress but also points out the limited improvement. "There has been an increase, a rise, but there is very little improvement," he says. When asked about the program *Red Bull BC One* and its impact on breaking culture, Pappu highlights its motivational benefits. "Because there is *BC One*, we want to practice every day. We have motivation because of this," he shares.

His excitement about



BBOY PAPPU KHUNDRAKPAM, ALSO KNOWN AS PAPPU, BEGINS BY EXCLUSIVELY EXPRESSING HIS EXCITEMENT FOR THE COMPETITION AND HIS BREAKING PATH. PAPPU IS GETTING READY FOR THE RED BULL BC ONE FINALS!



opportunities brought by *BC One* is palpable. "Yes, we have been waiting for this chance and I am very excited," he says with immense excitement. However, he also notes the lack of recent competitions, mentioning the absence of breaking battles. "In recent times, there haven't been many competitions in my hometown. There are no battles happening here. We can't publicly have 'breaking battles', so we have to go outside and perform. This is a struggle," he explains.

Despite these hardships, Pappu and his peers remain committed to their craft. When asked about their motivation and how they promote breaking in states like Manipur, Pappu's response is resolute. "We are Red Bull. We keep waiting for battles and we are now preparing for them," he states, emphasising their unwavering dedication.

Balancing his pursuits in engineering and breaking, Pappu has clear personal goals. "Both of them are my priorities. I also want to become an engineer. I used to work before and I want to invest and grow in order to do well in that field too," he says, showcasing his ambition and determination.

Looking ahead, the breaking star has a hopeful vision for breaking in Manipur. "I do see people doing their best; children are also actively participating. With this spirit, I think my vision for Manipur's breaking popularity will become a reality," he concludes. He notes the growing interest among young kids, who have started teaching

others, and mentions an upcoming small battle in Manipur as a sign of progress. "There will be progress," he affirms, filled with optimism.

Bboy Pappu's story is a testament to the power of passion and perseverance. His commitment to breaking, despite the obstacles, inspires a new generation of dancers in Manipur. As he continues to balance his dual pursuits, his vision for the future of breaking in his state is one of hope and growth.

At Shah Ali Banda Road, Charminar, Kalyan Jewellers celebrated the grand launch of their 260th showroom. Asaduddin Owaisi, the head of AIMIM, gave the rally its start.

● Reena agarwal

● Anand agarwal Anand dadu Sahil Gupta

● Sakshe A Gupta

● Dhvani

● Manvi

● Rashi

● Roshni

PARTY

Radiant Repute declared the launch of its most recent project. It is poised to completely transform how people view themselves and showcase their individual identities to the world.

● Ishita

● Rajita

● Yasmin

Photos by - SV Chary

The 75th Continuing Medical Education meeting under the "Preserve the Uterus" program was sponsored by the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India and global pharmaceutical firm Bayer on July 7 at Hotel ITC. Senior representatives from FOGSI, Bayer and the Mumbai Obstetrics & Gynecological Society (MOGS) were present at the ceremony with great honour.

Director Maruti introduced Hyderabad's biggest musical jam junction Pakka Regional in an effort to support local musicians. He and producer SKN unveiled the event poster at Banjara Hills' Prasad Labs.

● Maruti

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24

NANCY

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- Expecting a baby
- Without clothing
- Similar
- Eat soup with this
- Reply
- A large furry animal
- A snake's noise
- Overtakes
- A dentist repairs these
- Living
- A game of jumping a rope

DOWN

- Sets of two
- The number of players in a cricket team
- Smell with this
- A rope loop

SOLUTION

E	X	P	L	O	R	E	D	I	N
H	I	L	E	C	A	L	E	S	
A	R	E							
S	M	A							
T	U	N	E	S					
T	R	A							
D	E	A	R	T					
E	L	A							
E	D	I	R	E					



SOUTH KOREAN ACTOR LIKELY TO PLAY VILLAIN IN SPIRIT

Anticipation is soaring for Prabhas' upcoming film *Spirit*, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga of *Animal* fame, marking the superstar's 25th cinematic outing since its announcement in 2021. The latest buzz reveals that South Korean-American actor Ma Dong-seok, renowned for his roles in *Train to Busan* and *Eternals*, among others, is set to play the antagonist in this highly anticipated thriller. Ma Dong-seok, also known as Don Lee, has garnered acclaim for his commanding presence and martial arts prowess, having portrayed memorable characters in both South Korean blockbusters and Hollywood hits. The inclusion of Korean stunt choreographers further underscores the film's ambition to appeal to a pan-Asian audience. While details are yet to be officially confirmed by the makers, the prospect of Ma Dong-seok

sharing screen space with Prabhas has already stirred excitement among fans worldwide. Sandeep Reddy Vanga has previously hinted at unveiling the first look of *Spirit* on October 23, 2024, coinciding with Prabhas' birthday, adding to the fervor surrounding the project. *Spirit* promises to deliver a gripping narrative centered around a dedicated police officer, featuring Prabhas in a compelling, hard-hitting role. Produced by T-Series and Sandeep Vanga, the film is slated for release in multiple languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Japanese, Chinese and Korean, aiming to captivate audiences across diverse cultural landscapes.



SKN: Celebrating passion and success in Tollywood

July 8 marks a milestone for Sreenivas Kumar, affectionately known as SKN in the Telugu film industry, as he celebrates his birthday amidst acclaim for his prolific career. From humble beginnings as a journalist to becoming one of Tollywood's prominent producers, SKN's journey is a testament to perseverance and passion. Starting his career on a website and later joining TV9, SKN transitioned into the role of a successful PRO before venturing into production. His collaboration with UV Creations on films like *Mahabubhavudu* and *Prathi Roju Pandage* laid the foundation for his eventual leap into production. Partnering with director Maruthi, SKN co-founded Good Cinema Group, further establishing his influence in the industry. Their collaboration bore fruit with the Vijay Deverakonda starrer *Taxiwaala*, a pivotal moment that propelled SKN's career to new heights. His subsequent projects with Maruthi, Geetha Arts and UV Creations solidified his reputation as a producer with a keen eye for success. Last year, SKN's production of the blockbuster *Baby*, directed by Sai Rajesh, crossed the 100 crore mark, showcasing his prowess as a solo producer. Known for his dynamic speeches and impactful presence at movie events, SKN has garnered a strong following on social media, bolstered by his charismatic persona and philanthropic efforts. Looking ahead, SKN remains committed to pushing boundaries with ambitious projects. His upcoming ventures include the Hindi remake of *Baby* titled *Cult Bomma* and a collaboration with acclaimed director Sandeep Raj. With projects like Rashmika Mandanna's *The Girlfriend* and the eagerly anticipated *Raja Saab* featuring Prabhas, SKN continues to shape the landscape of Tollywood with his innovative vision. As SKN celebrates another year of life, he stands as a beacon of inspiration in Tollywood, embodying the spirit of passion, perseverance, and success.



MANCHU MANOJ INTRODUCES DAUGHTER 'DEVASENA SHOBHA MM' TO WORLD

In a heartwarming moment of joy and gratitude, actor Manchu Manoj shared a glimpse of his newborn daughter, 'Devasena Shobha MM', with the world. Named in honour of his late mother-in-law and Lord Subramaniam Swamy's wife, the announcement was met with utter delight from fans and well-wishers alike. Accompanied by his wife Mounika Bhuma Manchu, the couple expressed deep appreciation for their families and friends who have been unwavering pillars of support throughout their journey. This special occasion marks a milestone for both the Manchu and Bhuma families, celebrated with immense love and gratitude.

"We are grateful beyond words for the love and blessings showered upon us. 'Devasena Shobha MM' brings immense joy into our lives, and we are thankful to everyone who has stood by us through thick and thin," shared Manchu Manoj, visibly touched by the outpouring of affection from their circle.

As the couple embarks on this new chapter, their heartfelt appreciation resonates with fans, friends and the entire film fraternity. The introduction of 'Devasena Shobha MM' is not just a moment for the Manchu and Bhuma families but a cherished occasion for their extended community, marking a beautiful beginning filled with love and happiness.

Vijaya Bhaskar's Usha Parinayam releasing on Aug 2

Renowned for his creative finesse in Telugu cinema, director K Vijaya Bhaskar is set to charm audiences once again with his latest offering, *Usha Parinayam*. Known for classics like *Nuvve Kavali*, *Manmadhudu* and *Malleeswari*, Vijaya Bhaskar returns with a heartwarming family entertainer subtitled 'Love is Beautiful'. Produced under Vijaya Bhaskar Kraft, the film stars Vijaya Bhaskar's son Sree Kamal in the lead role, alongside Telugu debutante Tanvi Akaanksha as the heroine. Promising a blend of new-age romance and timeless emotions, the film is poised to resonate with audiences of all ages. The eagerly awaited *Usha Parinayam* is slated to hit screens on August 2, as confirmed by the director himself. Speaking about the film, Vijaya Bhaskar expressed, "This is a beautiful love story filled with emotions that will resonate with everyone. For me, this film encapsulates the essence of love and promises to be a delightful treat for moviegoers."

With its recently released songs and teaser garnering positive responses, *Usha Parinayam* is set to captivate audiences with its heartfelt narrative and captivating performances.



Meet hilarious duo Chatur & Vithur from Ari

Ari emerges as an eagerly anticipated film centered on the concept of Arishadvarga and the magnificence of Lord Krishna. 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 Primatea, Anasuya Bharadwaj, Sai Kumar and Srikanth Iyengar in pivotal roles.

Now, on Monday, the makers unveiled the characters of the hilarious duo Chatur and Vithur from the film. Directed by Jayashankar, *Ari* is gearing up for its theatrical release.

Ram Charan wraps up shooting for Game Changer

Ram Charan's upcoming film, *Game Changer*, has been a topic of great anticipation among moviegoers ever since its announcement. Despite facing various challenges and delays during production, the film has now completed shooting, as confirmed by the actor himself through BTS pictures shared on social media.

Taking to Instagram, Ram Charan posted snapshots from the film's first and last shooting days, alongside helicopters that play a significant role in the movie. His caption read, "THE GAME IS ABOUT TO CHANGE! #GAMECHANGER That's a wrap! See you at the cinemas."

Directed by S Shankar, *Game Changer* casts Ram Charan in the role of Ram Nandan, an IAS officer dedicated to combating corruption in

politics and advocating for fair elections. The film promises to be a gripping political thriller, supported by a stellar ensemble including Kiara Advani, Anjali, SJ Suryah, Srikanth, Jayaram, Sunil and Samuthirakani.

Earlier this year, the makers released the film's first single, *Jaragandi*, on Ram Charan's birthday, which received widespread acclaim for its energetic composition featuring Ram Charan and Kiara Advani.

With S Thaman handling the music and Tirru on cinematography, *Game Changer* boasts a reported budget of Rs. 200 crore, ensuring high production value and thrilling action sequences. While the official release date is yet to be announced, speculations suggest the film may hit theatres in September or October this year. As excitement mounts for its release, *Game Changer* is poised to deliver an engaging cinematic experience, showcasing Ram Charan in a role that promises to redefine the genre of political thrillers.



Shanmukha first look hints at a divine social thriller

Sapbro Productions proudly announces the release of the first look of their upcoming film *Shanmukha*, featuring a stellar cast including Aadi Saikumar, Avika Gor, Ariyana Glory, Chirag Jani and Shanmugam Sappani. This cinematic endeavour promises to captivate audiences with its thrilling narrative centered around the character Surya, portrayed by Aadi Saikumar.

Shanmukha is set to deliver an edge-of-your-seat experience, blending elements of mystery and suspense against a backdrop of divine intrigue. The story delves deep into centuries-old secrets, unveiling a new saga in the cinematic universe of *Shanmukha*. The film's commitment to excellence is underscored by the involvement of top-notch technicians, music directors, cinematographers and a high-end CG VFX team, ensuring a visually immersive experience.

Renowned music director Ravi Basrur, celebrated for his work in blockbusters like *KGF Chapter 1 and 2* and *Salaar*, joins the project to create a captivating musical landscape. *Shanmukha* is poised to feature three standout songs that are expected to



make a significant impact on the audio charts.

Penned by talented writer Sathish Akethi, the screenplay delivers a power-

ful message relevant to contemporary audiences. Aadi Saikumar's portrayal of Surya promises to be a highlight, supported by the stellar performances of Chirag Jani and the entire cast.

Director and producer Shanmugam Sappani expressed his pride and gratitude for the dedicated efforts of the team, working tirelessly to bring this ambitious project to fruition. With a substantial portion of the film featuring advanced CGI, *Shanmukha* aims to set new visual standards in filmmaking. "I am thankful to our co-producers, Tulasiram Sappani and Ramesh Yadav, for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey," added Shanmugam Sappani, emphasizing the collaborative effort behind the film.

As Sapbro Productions gears up for the release of *Shanmukha* before winter this year, audiences can expect a cinematic spectacle that pushes the boundaries of storytelling. Stay tuned for more updates, including the official release date, as Sapbro Productions continues its legacy of delivering innovative and compelling cinema to audiences worldwide.

Third single Amma Lalo Ram Bhajana from AAY out now

G2 Pictures, renowned for their successful productions, presents their upcoming film *AAY* starring the dynamic Narne Nithiin and the stunning Nayan Sarika, directed by debutant filmmaker Anji K Maniputhra. This highly anticipated project is produced by Bunny Vas and Vidya Koppineedi, promising an engaging entertainment experience that has already piqued audience interest with its intriguing promotional campaign.

The latest update from *AAY* comes in the form of its third single, *Amma Lalo Ram Bhajana*, which is now available for audiences. Aptly referred to as the *Srinivasuni Song*, this piece beautifully narrates the story of Srinivasa Kalyanam through the traditional art form of Burra Katha. It eloquently weaves together elements of rich tradition and culture, depicted vividly in its lyrical video. Director Anji K Maniputhra's lyrical prowess



shines through in the song's composition, capturing the essence of the age-old tale. Penchal Das' soulful vocals and Ajay Arasada's enchanting musi-

cal arrangement add a magical dimension to the *Burra Katha* narrative, promising a deeply resonant experience for listeners.

With previous releases already becoming chart-busters and gaining popularity across social media platforms through reels and shorts, *AAY* is shaping up to be the ultimate fun entertainer of the season. Scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on Independence Day, August 15, the film promises to deliver wholesome family entertainment against the picturesque backdrop of Godavari.

Presented by the esteemed Allu Aravind, *AAY* brings together top-notch talents including art direction by Kiran Kumar Manne, cinematography by Sameer Kalyani, and music composed by Ram Miryala.

As anticipation builds, audiences can look forward to more exciting updates from this ambitious project in the days to come.

INDIA EYE IMPROVED BOWLING SHOW IN FINAL WOMEN'S T20I AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Desperate to level the three-match series after the second game was washed out, India would hope weather doesn't play spoilsport, besides eyeing a much-improved bowling effort in the final women's T20I against South Africa here on Tuesday.

India are trailing the three-match series 0-1 after losing the opener by 12 runs. Their problems compounded after the second game here on Sunday was washed out midway due to persistent drizzle.

And with 30 to 40 per cent of rain forecast for Tuesday, the Indians are left on the mercy of weather gods.

In both the matches, the Indian bowlers cut a sorry figure as South Africa amassed 189 for 9 and 177 for 6 respectively.

Barring Pooja Vastrakar, who picked up two wickets each in both the games, and spinner Deepti Sharma, most of the Indian bowlers failed to shine against the Proteas women.

Renuka Singh leaked runs in

the first game and was subsequently replaced by Sajeevan Sajana in the second T20I but the latter also didn't her cause.

Shreyanka Patil and Radha Yadav picked up a wicket each on Sunday but continued to leak runs.

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur would want her bowlers to pull up their socks with the series at stake.

On the batting front, it has been a decent show by the Indians in the first game. The likes of Jemimah Rodrigues (53 not out), Smriti Mandhana (46), Harmanpreet (35), Shafali Verma (18) and Daylan Hemalatha (14) all making double digit scores.

Uma Chetry, who made her T20I debut on Sunday, is likely to persisted with as Harmanpreet and the team management would like to see her exploits with the bat.

South Africa, on the other hand, has been rock solid with the bat with Tazmin Brits, who hit consecutive half-centuries, leading the charge.

Besides Brits, skipper Laura Wolvaardt, Marizanne Kapp



and Anneke Bosch have contributed with the bat as well for the visitors.

South Africa's only concern is Chloe Tryon, who has scored identical 12 runs in the two games.

And with the upcoming T20 World Cup in Bangladesh in mind, Tryon will be desperate to prove her detractors wrong.

TEAMS (FROM):

India Women: Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Smriti Mandhana(vc), Uma Chetry(wk), Richa Ghosh(wk), Dayalan Hemalatha, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Sajeevan Sajana, Deepti Sharma, Asha Sobhana, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Shabnam Shakil, Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav.

South Africa Women: Laura Wolvaardt(c), Tazmin Brits, Mieke de Ridder(wk), Sinalo Jafta(wk), Anneke Bosch, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Marizanne Kapp, Sune Luus, Chloe Tryon, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Eliz-Mari Marx, Nonkululeko Mlaba and Tumi Sekhukhune.



Mentor Yuvraj was very happy when I got out for duck, he must be proud now: Abhishek Sharma

PTI ■ HARARE

India opener Abhishek Sharma has revealed that his mentor Yuvraj Singh was delighted when he got out for a duck on his T20I debut against Zimbabwe here as the swashbuckling former all-rounder, for reasons best known to him, felt it was a "good start".

Making his India debut, Abhishek was out on duck as the Men in Blue lost the first T20I against hosts Zimbabwe by 13 runs on Saturday. But the 23-year-old came back strongly to set the stage ablaze with a blistering maiden century (a 47-ball 100) to fashion India's 100-run win in the second game a day later.

"I spoke to him yesterday (Saturday) also, and I don't know why he was very happy when I got out on zero. He said that's a good start but he must be very happy and proud just like my family," Abhishek said in a video posted by BCCI.

He credited the hero of India's 2011 World Cup triumph for not only helping him hone his skills on the cricket field but also supporting him in his life away from the field.

"It's all because of him as well, the hard work he has put in (shaping) me. (For) two-three years, he has worked really hard not only on my cricket but off the field (life) as well." After Sunday's game, Abhishek called Yuvraj, who couldn't be happier for the youngster.

"Well done very proud, you

deserve it. Many more (such innings) to come this is just the start," Yuvraj said.

Since there was no rest day in between the first two games, the visitors didn't get a lot of time to think about the opening loss and that worked in India's favour as they levelled the five-match series 1-1.

"We lost yesterday but I felt, today is my day and I should take the match to the end, the positive was that we didn't have much time to think about the next game," he pointed out.

Abhishek combined with Ruturaj Gaikwad (77 not out off 47 ball) for a match-winning 137-run stand for the second wicket. "I was in a flow, and just wanted to express myself. I spoke to Ritu as well, he said the same thing that 'don't think much about the balls and hit what you think you can'," he said.

He once again thanked India skipper on the tour and his Punjab teammate Shubman Gill for lending him his bat.

"Special thanks to Shubman who timely gave me his bat, this was a much-needed innings for me and the team."

"This has been going on from U-14 times. Whenever I play with his bat I have done well, today also, the same happened."

"I played with his bat only, which I got after a lot of difficulty, he doesn't give it easily. That is like my last option when I feel I have to play with his bat for a comeback," he quipped.

Have been living a dream for past few days, filled with gratitude: Bumrah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he has been "living a dream" for the past few days as he expressed gratitude for the stupendous reception that he and the rest of his teammates got for winning the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean.

The 30-year-old, who picked up 15 wickets in the mega-event that concluded on June 29 in Barbados, was a key figure in India's second overall and first in 17 years world trophy in the shortest format. He was adjudged Tournament Player of his performance.

"I am so thankful for the last few



days. I've been living a dream and it has filled me with happiness and gratitude." Bumrah posted on X, along with a video of him enjoying the rapturous homecoming that included a breakfast meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a victory parade attended by lakhs of fans in Mumbai.

The 42-second clip featured the audio of Virat Kohli's speech during the felicitation function after the parade last Thursday where the champion batter had lauded Bumrah's contribution. The fast bowler had combined with all-rounder Hardik Pandya to turn it around wonderfully for India in the final.

The two were brought in for their second spell in the match at a time

when South Africa needed 30 off 30 balls. They wreaked havoc to ensure that the Proteas eventually fell short by seven runs.

Kohli had called Bumrah a "once in a generation" player during the speech at the Wankhede Stadium, prompting the assembled crowd to chant the bowler's name in appreciation.

"What I would like everyone to do is to applaud a guy who brought us back into games again, and again, and again. It was phenomenal. He is a once in a generation bowler. I am so glad he plays for us," Kohli, who retired from T20 Internationals at the end of the World Cup, had said.

Bumrah was welcomed with flower petals after arriving at his Ahmedabad home recently.



Jayasuriya named Sri Lanka's interim coach ahead of limited-overs series against India

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Former captain Sanath Jayasuriya was on Monday named the interim head coach of Sri Lanka's cricket team ahead of this month's white-ball home series against India with the country's board saying that he is "well-positioned" to guide the side till a "permanent solution" is found in the next few months.

The Indian team will be touring Sri Lanka for three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs, starting July 27. Jayasuriya, who has also served as a chief selector in the past, will continue in the post till Sri Lanka's Test tour to England in August-September, comprising three games.

"Sri Lanka Cricket wishes to announce the appointment of Mr. Sanath Jayasuriya as the 'Interim Head Coach' of the national team. He will function in the position until the completion of Sri Lanka's tour of England in September 2024," the SLC said in a statement.

The 55-year-old, a swashbuckling opener in his prime, was named for the interim post after Englishman Chris Silverwood resigned last week as Sri Lanka head coach.

Silverwood stepped down in the wake of the country's disastrous T20 World Cup campaign, during which it was ousted from the league stage itself.

One of the most attacking batters of his time, Jayasuriya had recently been a consultant for the team during this year's T20 World Cup in the USA and Caribbean.

"Jayasuriya is currently serving as the full-time 'Cricket Consultant' of Sri Lanka Cricket. His new appointment comes into immediate effect." "Sanath with his wealth of international cricketing experience is well positioned to guide the national team, until we find a permanent solution," said SLC CEO Ashley De Silva.

Jayasuriya featured in 110 Tests between 1991 and 2007, scoring 6973 runs at an average of 40.07, with the help of 14 centuries and 31 fifties. In the 445 ODIs he played, the left-hander struck 13,430 runs at an average of 32.36, with 28 hundreds and 68 half centuries.

He was a key member of the Sri Lankan team that won 1996 ODI World Cup. He also served as Member of Parliament from 2010-15.

Maldives' tourism body invites T20 world champ Indian team to celebrate trophy there

PTI ■ MALE

The recently-crowned T20 world champion Indian cricket team has been invited to celebrate its triumph in Maldives by the country's tourism association and its marketing and public relations corporation.

The Rohit Sharma-led Indian team won the trophy in Barbados after beating South Africa by seven runs in the final on June 29.

"Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) in collaboration with the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) have jointly extended a special and open invitation to the Indian National Cricket Team," the two bodies said in a joint statement.

Ibrahim Shiuree, the CEO and Managing Director of MMPRC, and Ahmed Nazeer, Secretary General of MATI, said they look forward to



hosting the team, which returned to India on Thursday last week.

It was welcomed by frenzied fans in both Delhi and Mumbai, which also played host to a victory parade featuring lakhs of supporters.

"We would be honoured to host you and ensure that your stay is filled with memorable moments, relaxation, and bespoke experiences," Shiuree and Nazeer said in the joint statement.

They said the invitation also highlights the strong and long-standing cultural and sporting ties between the Maldives and India.

Cricketers Ashwin buys team in Global Chess League

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has become a co-owner of the American Gambits, a new team which will feature in the second edition of the Global Chess League, a joint venture between Tech Mahindra and the International Chess Federation.

The League on Monday unveiled the six franchises for the second edition to be played in London from October 3 to 12.

American Gambits, owned by prominent business leaders Prachura PP, Venkat K Narayana and Ashwin, will replace Chingari Gulf Titans.

"We're thrilled to introduce the American Gambits to the chess world. With a blend of strategic brilliance and unwavering determination, our team aims to redefine the game. As co-owner, I'm excited to witness their journey and contribute to their success," Ashwin was

quoted as saying in a media release.

The five other franchise -- Alpine SG Pipers, PBG Alaskan Knights, Ganges Grandmasters, defending champions

Triveni Continental Kings and Mumbai Masters will return for a second season.

Sameer Pathak, CEO, Global Chess League, said, "We are thrilled to welcome the teams for the second season of the Global Chess League. We have found the right partners to strengthen the league's global reach and look forward to bringing an exciting season of chess to fans worldwide."

"The teams made season one a huge success and we believe that their impact and popularity will continue to expand in the world of chess."

The players will compete in a unique joint team format consisting of six players, including two top women chess players and a prodigy player per team.

Adding to the excitement and anticipation among fans, this innovative format will be aired on major OTT and broadcast platforms worldwide.

In the tournament, each team will play a total of 10 matches in a double round-robin format, with the winner of each match being decided in a best-of-six board scoring system.

Each team will play 10 matches across black and white pieces. The sides will play five matches, with all six players in each team initially playing with the white or black pieces against their opponents, followed by a reverse round in which the entire team will play five matches with the reversed colour pieces against the same opponent.

The winning team for every match will be determined by the points aggregated from wins and draws across all six games played in the match. The top two sides will advance to the final round.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian women's cricket team fielding coach Munish Bali lauded Uma Chetry for her fielding skills, and said the young wicket-keeper is a "truly hard-working cricketer".

Chetry, 21, made her T20 International debut against South Africa in the abandoned second game of the three-match series here on Sunday, and inflicted a stumping off Deepti Sharma's bowling to get rid of a well-settled Tanzim Brits. This was after Chetry had earlier missed a similar chance against Brits as she collected the ball ahead of the stumps.

But Bali backed the youngster and recalled how she had bravely fielded at the short-leg during the Test match against South Africa last week.

"I was happy when she was handed her debut cap. During the Test, she fielded for around 70-80 overs -- she is a brave girl," he said during the post-match press conference.

"Standing at the short-leg is not easy. She got hit by the ball, but she stood there in pain. She has great attitude and is a truly hard-

Chetry is a truly hard-working cricketer: Indian women's fielding coach Bali

working cricketer. I was so happy for her to have stumped Brits." Rain washed out the second T20I between India and South Africa with the tourists setting the hosts a target of 178 to level the series.

Despite some slip-ups on the field, Bali was overall content with the team's effort. "It's difficult to grip the ball when it's drizzling. But still, we fielded very well.

We are working on it (fielding) and it's in progress as we keep getting better slowly. "No one drops catches intentionally. The players have been practising hard during our (training) sessions, giving their best. At times, things click, and sometimes, it doesn't. Errors happen during matches. So, we keep telling them to keep giving their best and results will follow," he said.

Bali also praised the bowling effort of spinner Deepti Sharma, who returned with with figures



of 2 for 20. "She (Deepti) is an experienced bowler. Having played all three formats, she knows where her strength lies, and she keeps backing herself. Also, her experience of bowling at the death is immense, which makes her a truly good bowler."

I TRY TO BE PRESENT IN THE GAME AND DO THE BEST I CAN: ANNEKE BOSCH: Meanwhile, South Africa all-rounder Anneke Bosch is not bothered about her selection for the T20 World Cup in Bangladesh in October. "... But, you still cannot be sure if you will get a chance or not and it's never guaranteed," said Bosch, who scored a 32-ball 40 on and shared a 38-run stand with Brits on Sunday. "So, it helps, but I don't focus on that too much. I try to be present in the game and try to do the best I can at that moment. Whatever is meant to be, it will be."