

TELANGANA BUDGET 2024-25

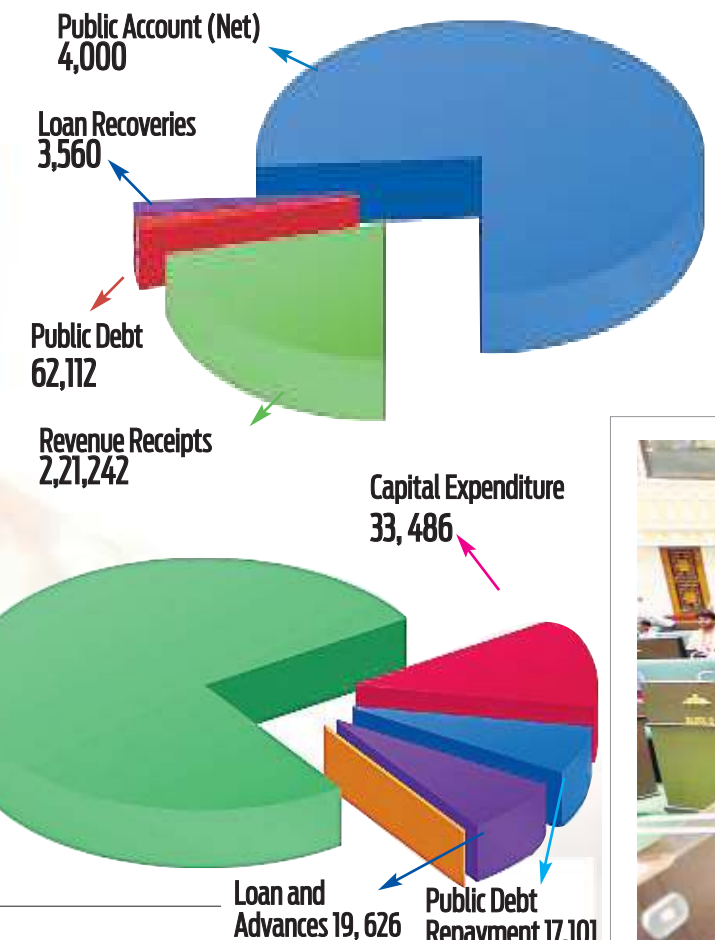
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TG BUDGET SEES HIGHEST EVER ALLOCATION FOR AGRICULTURE

VIKRA 'MARK' Budget

₹ 2,91,159 CR

Telangana recorded a growth rate of 7.4 per cent during 2023-24 against the national growth rate of 7.6 per cent: Bhatti



PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka presented the Telangana State Budget amounting to Rs 2,91,159 crore for 2024-25, focusing on agriculture and trying to fulfil the six guarantees of the Congress government. Presenting the first full Budget of the Congress government in the Assembly, Bhatti pegged revenue and capital expenditure at Rs 2,20,945 crore and Rs 33,487 crore respectively. The one hour 48 minute speech of the Deputy CM had 10 quotations from Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Nelson Mandela and Dr BR Ambedkar. In February, the Finance Minister had presented a Rs 2.75 lakh crore vote-on-account

Budget, while the current budget size is Rs 2.90 lakh crore. Public debt is estimated at Rs 52,112 crore and debt repayment is Rs 17,101 crore. Bhatti revealed that Telangana recorded a growth rate of 7.4 per cent during 2023-24 against the national growth rate of 7.6 per cent. At current prices, Telangana's 2023-24 Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has been estimated at Rs 14,63,963 crore, 11.9 per cent higher than that of the previous year. In 2023-24, the services sector contributed 65.7 per cent, industrial sector 18.5 per cent, while agriculture and allied sectors



Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka presenting Budget on Thursday in the Assembly

Progress on 6 guarantees to Telangana

- Mahalakshmi scheme**
 - 2500 Monthly financial assistance for women
 - Free bus travel for women across the state
 - LPG cylinder at Rs. 500
- Rythu Bharosa**
 - 15,000 per year for farmers & tenant farmers
 - 12,000 per year for farm labourers
 - 500 bonus for paddy crop
- Yuva Vikasam**
 - Vidya Bharosa Card worth Rs. 5 lakh for students
 - Telangana International School in every Mandal
- Indiramma Indlu**
 - Land for house & 5 lakhs for construction for those who don't have own house
 - 250 sq. yard land for all the activists of Telangana movement
- Gruha Jyothi**
 - 200 units of free electricity for every household
- Cheyutha**
 - 24000 per month pension to the elderly.
 - 210 lakhs Rajiv Aarogyasri insurance

State expects more from liquor, property registration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The Telangana Government's budget is expecting more revenue from liquor and from stamps and registration. The state expects Rs 18,228.82 crore from stamps and registration in FY25 which was around Rs 14,295.56 crore in FY24. The government has already mooted increasing stamp duty or registration charges but is yet to roll it out. The excise income expected is Rs 25,617.53 crore in FY25 which was Rs 20,298.89 crore in FY24. The state expects income from taxes on sales and trade to go up to Rs 33449.22 crore. The state is planning to raise non-tax revenue of Rs 35208.44 crore. Last year, non-tax revenue was Rs 23819.50 crore.

Services sector grew 10.1% in TG, accounts for 65.7% of GSDP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The economic survey report released by the Telangana government says that the secondary sector in Telangana grew by 10.1% between 2022-23 (FRE) and 2023-24 (AE) at current prices, with the manufacturing sub-sector clocking a growth rate of 9.6% in the same period.

Per capita income in TG Rs 3.47 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
As per the Economic Survey Report of Telangana, in 2023-24, the Per Capita Income (PCI) at current prices in Telangana is Rs 3.47 lakh. This is Rs 1.64 lakh higher than the national per capita income of Rs 1.83 lakh in 2023-24. Even though there was variation in the Per Capita Income (PCI) of 33 districts, all districts in the state had a higher Per Capita Income than the country's PCI in 2022-23 (Rs 1,69,496). The PCI of Rangareddy (Rs 9,46,862), the district with the

PANCHAYAT RAJ

Panchayat Raj and Rural Development share increased from Rs. 23,997 crores in FY24 to Rs. 29,816 crores to FY25



IRRIGATION

Irrigation budget decreased from Rs29784 in FY24 to Rs22301 in FY25



EDUCATION

Education Budget increased from Rs19472crore in FY24 to 21,292crore in FY25



HOUSING

Housing budget Increased from Rs. 1,723 crores FY24 to Rs. 9,184 crores in FY25



MUNICIPAL

Municipal Administration & Urban Development Increased from Rs. 7,441 in FY24 crores to Rs. 15,594 crores in FY25



This budget is a guarantee for the six promises. It is not about flashy numbers, it is a budget based on real figures. Despite the Centre's discrimination and the financial destruction wrought by previous governments, this budget has been formulated to fulfil the hopes of Telangana. - CM Revanth Reddy

What is the government's agricultural policy, industrial policy, IT policy, or policy for the poor? There is no clarity in this budget. It sounds more like a platform speech than a budget speech. It sounded more like "storytelling" rather than a well-structured financial plan. - Ex CM KCR

Six Guarantees + Telangana Budget = Gadida Guddu. The budget presented by the Congress government appears to be nothing more than a debt document. They have raised their hands when it comes to implementing the six guarantees. Once again, it seems like they have placed a burden on the people of Telangana. - Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar

Govt taking more loans than BRS admin: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Former Minister Harish Rao criticised the state government's budget, accusing it of self-praise and misplaced blame and failing to meet the hopes of the people by not allocating funds for promised schemes. He highlighted the absence of allocations for the six guarantees and claimed that the budget lacks a clear direction for development, effectively taking the state backward. Harish questioned the sincerity of the government's election promises.

Two Jharkhand MLAs disqualified under anti-defection law

PNS ■ RANCHI
Jharkhand Assembly Speaker's Tribunal on Thursday disqualified two legislators under anti-defection law with effect from July 26, an official said. The order disqualifying JMM's Lobin Hembrom and Congress's Jai Prakash Bhai Patel

TG Congress MPs stage protest in Delhi against Union Budget

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Congress MPs from Telangana staged a dharna in New Delhi alleging that the Centre did 'injustice' to Telangana in its budget. The Congress MPs from Telangana, Mallu Ravi, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy,

Department wise Budget 2024-25
(Rs.in crore)

Table with 3 columns: Department, 2023-24 R.E., 2024-25 B.E. Includes departments like Agriculture & Cooperation, Animal Husbandry, Backward Class Welfare, etc. Grand Total: 2,32,017 (2023-24) vs 2,91,159 (2024-25).

Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka used inspirational quotations from Socrates, Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru to Nelsan Mandela to assert the government's commitment to the holistic progress of Telangana state. We generally see Union Finance Ministers using quotations from great people. They confine to one, two or three. But Bhatti aptly quoted 10 such motivational words to drive home his point.



Rs 1,500 crore to beautify Musi river
Musi Project will be a model for entire country: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Congress government allocated Rs 1,500 crore for its flagship Musi Riverfront Development Project. Introducing the budget for the year 2024-25 on Thursday in the Telangana Legislative Assembly, Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said the Musi Riverfront Development Project is one of the

main priorities of the Congress Government. This project aims to revive the ecosystem around the Musi River and 110 km of urban area, Bhatti said. He said that through the Musi Riverfront Development Project the government can effectively solve the complex problems of water management. He said that infrastructure can be improved in an environmentally friendly manner.

He said that as part of the Musi Riverfront Development Project, recreation zones, people's plazas, children theme parks and entertainment zones will be developed. The main aims of the project are establishment of economic zones, improvement of living standards, protection of heritage and culture, improving the image of the city and improvement of infrastructure etc, he

said. "We have already taken up a socio economic/employment survey using 33 teams of the Revenue Department. The development of the Musi will be done on the lines of the Thames Riverfront Project in London. This project will be a milestone in the history of Hyderabad and it will be an apt model for replication across the country," Bhatti said.



HEALTH

Govt allocates Rs 11,468 crore for health sector



ENVIRONMENT

Funds boost to environment. gov't gives Rs 1,064 crore for environment and forests



'Budget will transform Hyd into world-class city'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy welcomed the 2024-25 Telangana Budget presented by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka in the Assembly on Thursday. He said the budget demonstrates a clear vision for Hyderabad's transformation into a world-class city.



pronged approach, addressing key areas like infrastructure, transportation, disaster management and environmental rejuvenation," he said.

Uttam emphasised that the budgetary allocations and well-defined projects addressing key challenges reflect the Congress government's commitment to enhancing the quality of life of Hyderabad's residents and solidifying its position as a leading economic and cultural hub.

"The Telangana budget has placed Hyderabad in the forefront of its development agenda, allocating a substantial Rs 10,000 crore to transform the state capital into a modern, citizen-centric metropolis. The budget outlines a multi-

He said the Congress Government proposes to expand Metro Rail by constructing 78.4 km of five extended corridors with an outlay of Rs 24,042 crore. This will connect key areas, including the Old City and RGI Airport, providing people with an efficient mode of transportation. The budget also proposes to develop Nagole, LB Nagar and Chandrayanagutta stations as interchanges enhancing connectivity.

It is just gas & trash: KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao said the state budget was presented as a colourful picture but failed to address important issues and policies. He described the budget as "Platform Speech," "Story Telling" and "Gas and Trash." KCR came to the media point for the first time after the formation of Telangana and also attended House for the first time as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP). He said there is no guarantee in the budget for any section of the public and no new welfare scheme.



and come out with clear policies on sectors like industries, IT and agriculture," he added. Dubbing it as an 'anti-poor' budget, KCR said his party will launch a campaign against the state government and its budget. He said that although the BRS wanted to give at least six months to the new government, the Congress admin failed to come out with a policy forcing the opposition to attack it. "Bhatti's budget speech was a political speech. There is no proper electricity

supply in the state. The government has neglected Yadavas and fishermen. We gave the government six months. After seeing the budget, it is clear that the government has no policy. What is its IT and industrial policy? Not a single new welfare scheme has been announced. We will take time to task on this budget," KCR said. "The budget has dashed the hopes of the people. Many restrictions have been imposed on the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

Budget promises are like donkey's egg: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Asking whether the Telangana's Congress government is "Congress + state budget = Donkey egg and six guarantees + state budget = donkey's egg," the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said the budget proves that all the promises made by the Congress is as true as a donkey laying an egg.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Sanjay asked Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka to explain whether he presented a finance budget or a debt budget? "Bhatti is raising hands saying that they will not implement the assurances given by the Congress government as there are debts. Why didn't the government allot funds for all the six guarantees knowing that the state has debts? Is the Congress government blaming the Centre to avoid discussion on the six guarantees? It is surprising that the Congress government failed to show in the budget from where they will raise revenue," Sanjay said. He asked whether the Revanth government is planning to sell government lands at throwaway prices.

Services sector...

Continued from page 1

In 2023-24 (AE), the services sector accounted for 65.7% of Telangana's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices, making it the most dominant sector in the state's economy. The state's mining sector is witnessing significant growth, with the SCCL achieving a new milestone by producing 70.02 MTs of coal during 2023-24, an increase of 4.3% compared to the 67.14 MTs of

coal mined during 2022-23. In order to encourage tourism in the state, the government has established a consultative committee to develop eco-tourism circuits within the state. The aim of the government is to establish Telangana as a leading ecotourism destination by leveraging its diverse natural landscapes and biodiversity. So far, 12 destinations have been identified. During 2023-24, a total of 2,677 units with an investment of Rs 28,126 crore with employment potential of 84,929 jobs were approved. The TG-iPASS has been highly praised nationwide and the Centre has recognized it as one of the best practices under the Ease of Doing Business initiative.

State expects more from ...

Continued from page 1

A major chunk of it came from leasing ORR. However, the state government didn't disclose how it intends to earn Rs 35,208 crore non-tax revenue. The grant-in-aid from the Centre was only Rs 9729.91 crore in FY24. However, the Congress government is hopeful of raising Rs 21,636.15 crore in FY 25.

Two Jharkhand...

Continued from page 1

from the House came on the eve of the assembly's six-day monsoon session beginning on Friday. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the BJP had initiated proceedings under the anti-defection law against Hembrom and Patel respectively in the Speaker's Tribunal. Hembrom contested independently from the Rajmahal Lok Sabha seat, challenging JMM's official candidate, Vijay Hansdak. Patel joined the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha polls and contested from Hazaribag seat.

Govt taking more loans than...

Continued from page 1

noting that the budget shows no commitment to the figures promised. He pointed out the lack of fund allotment for the six guarantees that were supposed to be implemented within 100 days. He criticized the first budget of the new government for being devoid of any clear direction and failing to mention the promised 2,00,000 jobs in a year. Harish highlighted the current administration's plans to raise Rs 57,000 crore - Rs 17,000 crore more than the

BRS government - and accused the budget of ignoring the six guarantees entirely. He expressed disappointment over the budget allocation for the Mahalakshmi scheme and questioned the absence of the promised Rs 4,000 pension and the Rs 5 lakh education guarantee card for students. Harish also pointed out the missing allocations for new ration cards, the job calendar, the Rs 4,000 unemployment allowance and the Rs 12,000 promised to autorick workers. He criticized the budget for

TG Congress...

Continued from page 1

Ramasahayam Raghuram Reddy, Kadiam Kavya and Suresh Shetkar took part in the dharna on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Mallu Ravi said that they are writing letters to Prime Minister Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman explaining the losses suffered by Telangana. Mallu Ravi said that they are not opposing allocations to AP; however, they are appealing to the Centre to allocate funds for Telangana too. He said the BRS and the BJP compromised regarding Telangana's interests and added that they will fight

in Parliament till Telangana gets justice. He said the Union Budget's assurances and allocations are limited to Andhra Pradesh only. Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy said that BJP MPs failed to gain the confidence of the people. Justice has not been done to Telangana even though two Union Ministers are from Telangana, he said. He asked the Centre to explain why it allotted funds to AP only now even though the issues were mentioned in the AP Division Act? He said that Modi is allocating funds to the states of Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu to protect his seat.

VIKRA 'MARK'...

Continued from page 1

contributed 15.8 per cent to Telangana's Gross State Value Added (GVA). The per capita income of Telangana was Rs 3,47,229 in 2023-24, Rs 1,64,063 higher than the national per capita income of Rs 1,83,236. "The substantial rise in debt relative to income growth suggests heavy dependence on borrowing to fund expenditure, potentially endangering fiscal sustainability. The persistent rise in debt far outstripping income gains suggests that without stringent fiscal reforms, Telangana's financial health could be at risk, necessitating measures to balance expenditure with revenue

generation and reduce dependence on borrowing," Bhatti said. He also said that when the Congress government took over in December 2023, the state had a loan burden of Rs 6,71,757 crore. Since then, the government has raised loans of Rs 35,118 crore and repaid loans of Rs 42,892 crore. "In effect, we have repaid a higher amount of Rs 7,774 crore than the loans we have taken, demonstrating our sincerity towards the people. The BRS admin reduced the government to such a sorry state that loans had to be taken to repay loans," the Finance Minister said. He also said that despite the extremely difficult finan-

cial situation, the government has not ignored public welfare and is spending Rs 34,579 crore on various schemes. "We introduced the Mahalakshmi Scheme which provides free transport to women in TGSRIC buses. We are also providing free electricity up to 200 units, assistance to farmers under Rythu Bharosa, subsidy on rice, etc. We have also made a capital expenditure of Rs 19,456 crore," he said. The Finance Minister also made major allocations to implement poll promises in agriculture, Backward Classes welfare, panchayat raj and rural development, municipal administration and urban development.

Per capita income in TG...

Continued from page 1

The data reveals significant variations across the region. Hyderabad and districts around it stand out, with the highest per capita districts reflecting its status as a major economic hub. In contrast, districts like Vikarabad, Kumuram Bheem and Jagtial have lower Per Capita Income, indicating comparatively lesser development or lower levels of industrialisation. These variations underscore the diverse economic landscape of Telangana with disparities in income levels across districts determined by industrialisation, agricultural productivity and infrastructure development.

In 2023-24, Telangana's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices is Rs 14.64 lakh crore, which increased by 11.9%. Telangana's Agriculture and Allied sectors achieved a year-on-year growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) (current prices) of 4% between 2022-23 and 2023-24. Since the sector employs 47.3% of the state's population, its success is crucial to improving living standards in Telangana. The Industrial sector in Telangana achieved a growth of 10.1% in 2023-24. The Services sector, the primary contributor to the state's economic growth, witnessed a remarkable 14.6% increase in GVA at current prices in 2023-24. Telangana has seen a rise in Per Capita

Income from Rs. 1,24,104 in 2014-15 to Rs. 3,47,299 in 2023-24. However, during the same period, Telangana's total debt surged from Rs. 72,658 crore to Rs. 6,71,757 crore, an increase of over 824.5%. As a result, per capita debt also rose significantly, from Rs. 20,251 to Rs. 1,76,360. The sharp increase in debt compared to income growth indicates heavy reliance on borrowing to cover expenses, which could jeopardise fiscal stability. As per economic survey The continuous rise in debt far outpacing income gains underscores the need for strict fiscal reforms to balance spending with revenue generation and reduce dependence on borrowing to ensure long-term economic stability.

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Govt allots Rs 10,000 cr for development of Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress government has proposed Rs 10,000 crore for Hyderabad City describing Hyderabad City as the centre of growth in Telangana. Introducing the budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said the integrated growth of Hyderabad would enable the government to mobilize resources for the state's development. He said that keeping this in view, the government has proposed a never before proposed amount of Rs 10,000 crore for the development of Hyderabad.

Introducing the budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said the integrated growth of Hyderabad would enable the government to mobilize resources for the state's development.

He said the government has proposed Rs 3065 crore for the GHMC, Rs 500 crore for the HMDA, Rs 3385 crore for HYDRA, Rs 100 crore for providing Metro connection to RGI Airport, Rs 200 crore for ORR, Rs 500 crore for the Hyderabad Metro, Rs 500 crore

for the Old City Metro, Rs 1,500 crore for the Musi Development Project and Rs 1525 crore for the Regional Ring Road (RRR) in the budget. Bhatti said that there are a large number of big firms and IT companies around Hyderabad. Employees work-

ing in these companies have to travel long distances to reach their workplace. If their homes are closer to their workplace it would be a relief to them. It will lessen the traffic on roads. Areas on the outskirts of Hyderabad have the potential to develop into self-sustainable areas and will reduce the pressure on civic bodies. "It is our aim to promote satellite townships around Hyderabad. We will encourage the construction of affordable houses at reasonable rates. We will try to provide facilities like parks, community halls, commercial centres, schools etc in these townships," Bhatti said.

This is the first full-fledged Budget of the Congress party, that gave statehood to Telangana and also after the division of the united Andhra Pradesh

Policy for every dept, says Sridhar Babu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Reacting to KCR's statements that there is no policy in the budget, IT Minister Sridhar Babu said that there will be policy for everything in one-year timeframe. In a chat with mediapersons in the Assembly lobby, Sridhar Babu said that every department will have a clear policy. "We have come to power eight months ago and three months have gone in elections. We will come out with it."

When asked to react on the non-tax revenues, Sridhar Babu said that the opponents may try to sabotage their plans. He asked

"Why didn't KCR talk about the Central budget and lack of allocations to the State".

On the sidelines, Sridhar Babu released a statement, criticising the Central budget announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, particularly targeting the proposal to raise Rs 50,000 crore through the disinvestment of public sector undertakings (PSUs).



On the sidelines, Sridhar Babu released a statement, criticising the Central budget announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, particularly targeting the proposal to raise Rs 50,000 crore through the disinvestment of public sector undertakings (PSUs). Sridhar Babu likened this to selling one's own children, highlighting that it was the Congress governments that established these PSUs. In his statement, Sridhar Babu pointed out that the BJP government, instead of establishing new PSUs, is seeking to profit by selling stakes in the already profitable ones. He noted that, excluding banks, the annual profits of PSUs amount to Rs 2,64,000 crore. He mentioned that it was the late Indira Gandhi who nationalised banks to make them accessible to the poor and last year alone, these banks contributed Rs 2.11 lakh crore in dividends to the Modi government.

Sridhar Babu condemned the sale of stakes in profit-making entities, describing it as selling valuable assets to the private sector at low prices. He stated that even PSUs currently running at a loss possess significant assets whose value exceeds their debts. Despite this, the Modi government's aggressive push for disinvestment is a betrayal of the Indian people, he added.



Teachers welcome budget, but expect more

Despite the Telangana government allocating more budget to the education sector compared to the previous decade, experts pointed out that the amount is still insufficient to develop and provide quality education across the State. The government has allocated Rs 21,292 crore to the sector compared to the previous government that had allocated Rs 19,093 crore for the sector thereby denoting a rise of 11.3 per cent this year. Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka stated that Rs 500 crore will be allocated for the infrastructure development in universities, Rs 100 crore is proposed for Osmania University and Rs 100 crore for Women's University. The balance is proposed for infrastructure facilities of Kakatiya and other universities. Apart from that a collaboration with Tata Technologies Limited to upgrade 65 government ITIs and implementation of six new long-term courses where 5,860 students will be trained each year were announced. About 31,200 students will be trained each year. However, experts are not satisfied with the allocations as many aspects in the sector were sidelined. Dr Krishna Reddy Chittedi, Associate Professor, School of Economics, University of Hyderabad said, "Over the past decade, the weakening of the education system has disappointed people. However, despite the current government allocating a massive increase in budget allocations to the sector, it is still not sufficient. Although some funds have been allocated for the universities' infrastructure, the absence of modern research equipment and materials in State universities is a significant disappointment. In regards to govt schools, majority of them lack basic infrastructure, including toilets and more funds are needed in this regard for their renovation."



TG public debt to touch Rs 4.5 lakh crore by Fy 25

Telangana's total outstanding public debt may cross Rs 4,50,910 crore at the end of FY25 while the debt to GDP ratio will remain at 27.4%. The debt which is at 4,01,148 crore in FY24 is going to touch Rs 4,50,910 crore in FY25. As per the budget estimates, the Congress government proposed to raise Rs 57,112 crore through open market borrowings, Rs 3,900 crore from the Union government and Rs 1,000 crore from other loans. The total open market borrowings would be Rs 3,58,541 crore as per Budget estimates for FY24, which was Rs 31,45,46 crore in FY24. Loans from the Central government last year was Rs 18,057 crore while in FY25, it is estimated at Rs 21,559 crore. The loans from autonomous bodies are slightly less from Rs 13,095 crore in FY24 to Rs 11,098 crore in FY25. There is a decline in securities that is small savings and provident fund etc which was Rs 20,673 crore in FY24 to Rs 20,162 crore in FY25. The reserve funds and deposits loan is pegged at Rs 39,558 crore in FY25 against Rs 35,473 crore in FY24.

BRS scores self-goal on Centre's budget 'injustice'

SNCN ACHARYULLU ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS scored a self-goal by cornering Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on the issue of the 'injustice' done to Telangana in the Union Budget.

Political observers think that BRS Working President KT Rama Rao himself put his father BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao in trouble. Fortunately, KCR was not in the Assembly at that time. If KCR had been there he would have got into trouble while responding to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's challenge.

KTR suggested to Chief

Minister Revanth Reddy in the Assembly to go on an indefinite hunger strike along with his Cabinet Ministers in New Delhi to exert pressure on the Centre to do 'justice' to Telangana.

Reacting to this, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he was ready to launch a fast unto death in New Delhi to pressure the Centre to do 'justice' to Telangana if opposition leader K. Chandrasekhar Rao joins him.

This statement of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy shocked the BRS. Political observers think that in the past former Minister G. Jagadish Reddy of the BRS had reacted to the allegations against the BRS admin made by the Congress gov-

ernment in the Assembly on the power purchase issue by challenging the government to order an inquiry. The government immediately said that it will order a judicial inquiry into the issue.

It may be recalled that the judicial commission issued notices to former Chief Minister KCR and he went to court on the issue. The government is saying that they appointed a judicial commission as per the demand of the former BRS minister who handled the power portfolio in the BRS government.

The BRS thus lost an opportunity to criticise the Congress government saying that it appointed the judicial commission due to political vindictiveness.



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Members of Students' Federation of India (SFI) on Thursday raised objections and expressed dissatisfaction on the Budget allocation by Telangana government for the education sector.

According to SFI members, only 7.3 per cent of the Budget was presented by the State government for the education sec-

SFI raises objections on Budget for education

tor. As stated in the manifesto of the Congress government, 'Telangana model international schools have to be set up in every mandal, but there is no impetus for it in this Budget. Also, they mentioned there would be gurukula school for every two villages. There is no discussion about it. Apart from this, how can the development of universities be possible in the State with just Rs 50 crore. In

this regard, we have planned to stage a dharna on Friday across the State," said T Nagaraju, Secretary of SFI

"Apart from this, we feel that these funds are not sufficient for filling vacancies, mid-day meals, co-educational schools, new buildings, libraries and providing basic facilities in schools. There is no minimum fund even for the construction of a gurukula."

Doctors call for increase in incentives for rural services

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Health Medical and Family Welfare department has been allocated a Budget of Rs 11,468 crore for the year 2024-25.

The amount is Rs 32 crore less than Rs 11,500 crore proposed in the

account budget in February this year. While presenting the Budget, Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said, "The current medical system is not adequate to meet the needs of the people and the sector has largely been neglected. The previous government could not even pay timely salaries to doctors, nurses and other government and contractual employees. Even the prestigious Osmania Hospital has been completely neglected."

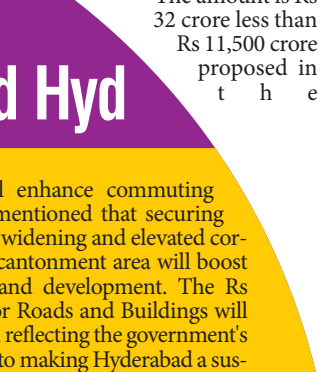
Besides bragging that they succeeded in getting new medical colleges, they have not provided any amenities, necessary resources and facilities to these colleges.

He further said, "To make health services accessible to all citizens through modern technology, we are introducing a system of issuing a digital health profile card to everyone with a unique identification number. This new dig-

ital approach initiated by the government will make a citizen's health information available at one place. With this, the diagnosis can be made easily, and treatment can be started promptly."

Reacting to the health Budget, Dr Kiran Madala, State Secretary General of Telangana Teaching Doctors Association said, "As per the Budget, the cost of treatment under the Arogyasri Scheme have been revised, which is good."

However, the government should consider providing incentives to doctors who are serving in the peripheral areas of the State. These are highly qualified professors who lose out on 30-40,000 or roughly 20% of the salary that they could earn in Hyderabad.



Allocation for Minority welfare welcomed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions Society (TMREIS) on Thursday lauded the State's budget allocation for minority welfare.

Mohammed Faheemuddin Qureshi, vice-chairman and president of TMREIS, commended Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu for proposing Rs 3,003 crore for minority welfare in the State Budget on Thursday.

Qureshi further said that the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman allocated only Rs 3,183 crore for minority welfare across India. Criticising the Union Budget, the TMREIS president said, "If we add the minority Budget of Congress-ruled states like Telangana, Karnataka, and Himachal Pradesh, it would be three times the Budget of the Central Ministry of Minority Affairs."



Experts disappointed over allocation for environment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Environmentalists expressed disappointment on the environment budget allocated by the Telangana government. Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka allocated Rs 1,064 crore for forests and environment on Thursday.

The Finance Minister also stated that the Telangana government has launched Vajrotsava Vana Mahotsavam programme with a target of planting 20,02 crore trees this year. To pressure families cohabiting in the forests, the compensation for people who lost their lives in human-animal conflict increased from Rs five lakh to Rs 10 lakh.

Apart from that seven forest areas in Telangana-Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Vikarabad - Ananthagiri Circuit, Kanakagiri in Khammam, Kuntala falls in Adilabad, Kinnersani in Kothagudem, Pakala and Eturnagaram Circuit are identified for eco-tourism.

Pakala and Eturnagaram Circuit are identified for eco-tourism. NSV Sarath Chandra, an environmentalist, said, "There is a general trend of reduced environmental related allocations in the budget. Restoration of water bodies, lakes, wetlands through budget allocation is the need of the hour, especially with the start of monsoon season. This could significantly address the problem of urban flooding in Hyderabad, Warangal and other cities. It should also have considered allocation of funding for tertiary education centres and government medical colleges to focus on climate health issues."

CREDAI: Focus on building 'Bangaru TG' and elevating Brand Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Reacting to the 2024-25 Telangana State budget unveiled by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Thursday, the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) President V Rajashekhar Reddy appreciated the substantial allocations for infrastructure projects. He highlighted Rs 1,525 crore for the Regional Ring Road, Rs 1,500 crore for the Musi River cleansing project and Rs 3,385 crore for Metro Water Works.

Reddy appreciated the focus on skill development through the 'Telangana Skill University' and commended the government's efforts to promote 'Brand Hyderabad' and attract investments.

Secretary of CREDAI Hyderabad, Jagannath Rao, said that the Budget represents a transformative phase for Hyderabad's infrastructure and real estate. The Rs 500 crore each for the Hyderabad Metro Rail Project extension and the Old City Metro will improve public transportation and connectivity. The Rs 50 crore for the Multi-Modal Transport System

(MMTS) will enhance commuting options. He mentioned that securing land for road-widening and elevated corridors in the cantonment area will boost connectivity and development. The Rs 5,790 crore for Roads and Buildings will create growth, reflecting the government's commitment to making Hyderabad a sustainable urban centre.

Rao concluded by stating that CREDAI Hyderabad remains committed to collaborating with the government and stakeholders to ensure the successful execution of these projects.



SALES VALUE SOARS 27%, WHILE TRANSACTIONS RISE 11%

Hyd homebuyers opt for bigger, costlier homes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A report by Square Yards has revealed that homebuyers in Hyderabad are opting for bigger homes. The city witnessed a commendable growth in registered home sales transactions both annually (11 per cent) and sequentially (4 per cent) during the April-June 2024 period. A total of 19,574 transactions were recorded in IGR, underscoring the city's vibrant real estate activity.

In the June 2024 quarter, the registered sales value surged to Rs 11,953 crore, marking a robust 27 per cent increase from the same period last year. The average registered home sales value in Hyderabad climbed to Rs 61 lakh, reflecting a 15 per cent annual growth. In line with this trend, the share of transactions for properties priced between Rs 50 lakh-1 crore increased to 28 per cent in the June quarter, up



from 21 per cent during the same period the previous year. Additionally, the share of transactions for properties priced between Rs 1-2 crore nearly doubled, rising to 14 per cent from 8 per cent in the same period.

This shift towards more expensive properties coincides with a preference for larger homes, with 45 per cent of transactions being for apart-

ments between 1,000-1,500 sq.ft. in size, and 37 per cent for those between 1,500-2,000 sq.ft., up from 31 per cent same period last year. During this period, the total area of homes sold reached 29 million square feet, 15 per cent higher as compared to previous year.

Debyan Bhattacharya, Principal Partner & Sales Director, Square Yards said, "The Hyderabad property market is on a remarkable upward trajectory. Our latest figures show an 11 per cent annual increase in registered transactions and a substantial 27 per cent rise in registered home sales value for the June quarter. This growth reflects a strong appetite among homebuyers for premium and spacious properties, particularly those from reputable developers such as Prestige and Brigade offering high-quality amenities."

He further added, "As the city's expanding IT sector continues to drive residential demand, we're seeing increased interest from not only end-users but also investors, drawn by attractive returns. Looking ahead, we anticipate that both demand and supply will continue to strengthen, solidifying Hyderabad's position as a leading residential real estate hub not only in the southern region but across India."

Nehru Zoological Park celebrates Intl Tiger Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad celebrated International Tiger Day and World Nature Day on its premises with the daylong events such as drawing, painting, quiz and elocution competitions for school students on Thursday. A total 685 students from seven government schools and 31 private schools participated in the competitions while 10 participants participated in photography.

Sunil S Hiremath, Director (FAC) and Curator, Nehru Zoological park, Hyderabad expressed his gratitude to all the students and the schools for showing interest and coming forward to participate in the Wildlife Education and awareness programmes. A Nagamani, Deputy Curator, Nehru Zoological Park, appreciated and congratulated the participants for making this awareness programme a grand success. A Satish Babu, Assistant Curator-1, Amruthamma, Assistant Curator-2, B Laxman, Assistant Curator-3, Madhavilatha, Dyro, HM Hanifulla, PRO and others participated in the programme.

Farmers in trouble as there is no pumping in Kaleshwaram: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) visited the LMD reservoir in Karimnagar and expressed deep concern over the issues affecting Telangana's agricultural sector.

He criticized the state of water management and the handling of the Kaleshwaram Project. He said that the Kaleshwaram Project launched by KCR was designed to tap the thousands of TMCs of water that were being wasted every year.

He emphasized that the project, the largest multi-stage lift irrigation project in the world, has transformed Telangana into a major granary, rivalling Punjab and Haryana. However, he noted that a 'minor incident' at Medigadda was exaggerated, leading to unfounded claims that the project is a failure.

KTR accused the Revanthe government of playing with the lives of millions of farmers in the last eight months. He pointed out that last year, the LMD reservoir had over 12 TMCs of water on the same day thanks to timely pumping.



BRS leaders, led by party working president KT Rama Rao, visiting Kaleshwaram project on Thursday

This year, despite low rainfall, the government has not taken any decision regarding pumping, resulting in millions of cusecs of water getting wasted at Medigadda.

KTR demanded immediate action to start water pumping to fill all reservoirs, including LMD, Mid Manair, Yellampalli and SRSP. He stressed that farmers are distressed because the government has not started pumping water due to political vendetta. He warned that the government might later blame insufficient rainfall to justify the harm done to farmers and the public. KTR emphasized the need to activate the pumps at Kannepalli to fill all reservoirs.

He noted that out of a total capacity of 140 TMCs in the reservoirs, not even 35 TMCs is currently filled. He urged the government to pump water extensively from Medigadda and fill 50 TMCs in Mallanna Sagar and 15 TMCs in Kondapochamma Sagar, which would also address Hyderabad's drinking water issues. KTR accused the government of playing down these things to defame KCR and said the baseless claims that Medigadda.

Sub-registrar in ACB net

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A woman sub-registrar in Warangal district of Telangana was caught by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 80,000 bribe.

The sub-registrar in Parkal of Warangal district "demanded and accepted" the bribe amount of Rs 80,000 through a private document writer from a complainant for doing an official favour, a release from ACB said here. The official favour was to process the work of registration of gift deeds and sale deeds pertaining to the complainant and his brother, it said.

Collector directs officials to conduct administrative task through e-office

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In an effort to enhance administrative efficiency and embrace technological advancement, District Collector K Shashanka has directed to carry out administrative activities through e-office systems. The order was issued during a review meeting held on Thursday at the Rangareddy district integrated office building.

During the meeting, Collector Shashanka emphasised that all district officers must transition to e-office for managing files and documentation. He stressed the impor-



District Collector K Shashanka holding a review meeting with officials in Shadnagar on Friday

tance of developing computer skills and integrating technology into daily operations to streamline processes. To facil-

itate this transition, Shashanka instructed the creation of bulk email IDs for various departments, including District Rural Development, Agriculture, Fisheries, Panchayat, Horticulture, Women and Child Welfare, Minority Welfare, Social Welfare, Panchayat Raj, and Mepma. He underscored the need for urgent action and proper training to ensure that all officers are proficient with the new system.

The meeting was attended by District Additional Collectors Pratima Singh, District Revenue Officer Sangeta, and other district officials.

One Maoist killed in 'exchange of fire' with police

PNS ■ BHADADRI KOTHAGUEDEM

A Maoist was killed in an exchange of fire between around 10 ultras and the police in a forest area bordering Bhadradri-Kothagudem and Mulugu districts of Telangana on Thursday, police said. Police personnel were combing the forest area when they were allegedly "fired" upon by the members of the banned CPI-Maoist. The police's retaliatory fire resulted in the death of one Maoist, they said. "One body and two weapons were recovered



from the spot," a senior police official said. Around 10 ultras were said to have been spotted and they fled from the place after the exchange of fire, the official said, adding that the search operation is still on.

The incident happened in forest area at Damarathogu under Gundala mandal in the district. In a media release issued by CPI-Maoist Bhadradri-Kothagudem-Alluri Sitamaraju division secretary Azad, the Maoist action team member Nallamuri Ashok alias Vijender (34) died in an exchange of fire between Grayhands teams and Naxal.

Non-stop drizzle blanket Hyderabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has been experiencing continuous light to moderate rains with heavy cool breezes at night. Hyderabad has seen non-stop light to moderate drizzle all day on Thursday, causing traffic problems under cloudy weather.

Adilabad, Asifabad, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Mancherial, Jagtial, and Peddapalli have faced continuous rains, while Vikarabad and Rangareddy saw light drizzles, according to the Telangana Weatherman.

TGSPDCL engineers asked to provide quality power

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Secretary of Energy for the Government of Telangana and CMD of TGTRANSCO & TGGENCO, Ronald Rose, along with Musharraf Faruqui, CMD of TGSPDCL, conducted a surprise inspection of the TGSPDCL District Stores in Sangareddy on Thursday. Ronald Rose directed the staff to maintain sufficient material stocks for timely execution of all construction, operation and maintenance works.

During the inspection, Ronald Rose critically reviewed the stock of major materials and issued directives to the Director of Operations at TGSPDCL to plan ahead and ensure there is enough rolling stock of essential equipment like distribution transformers, energy meters, poles and conductors to handle emergencies.



Secretary of Energy Ronald Rose, along with CMD Musharraf Faruqui seen inspecting district stores

He specifically instructed the Superintendent Engineer of Operations in Sangareddy to appoint feeder-wise nodal officers. These officers will closely monitor the power supply on every 11KV feeder to ensure immediate rectification of any issues, with responsibility fixed for any negligence or lapses.

In light of the ongoing kharif season and the need to provide reliable power to the farming community, the Secretary directed that failed distribution transformers be replaced within 24 hours in cities and towns and within 48 hours in rural areas.

Govt school teachers flay Union budget

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the release of the Union budget on Tuesday, several teachers from Telangana have raised their concerns for sidelining pension in the budget.

Myana Pavan Kumar, State Vice-President of Telangana State Contributory Pension Scheme Employees Union, said that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's budget for the year 2024-25 has disappointed the working teachers due to the lack of mention of old pensions. He criticised the absence of the old pension system in the budget as a disappointment to the employees and teachers.

"While six per cent of the budget should be allocated for the education sector, in the current budget only 3.25 per cent of the funds have been allocated and the government has acted as if the education

sector is not a priority. Not only in the new tax system, but also the old tax system should be revised to exempt up to Rs 7 lakh without any tax and at least Rs one lakh should be exempted as a standard deduction so that the middle class employees can benefit from the old pension immediately."

M Ravindar, Additional General Secretary of the Telangana Progressive Teachers Federation (TPTF), said, "Income tax proposals are cheating the wage earners by increasing the tax burden by juggling numbers. Last year, in the new regime, tax exemption was applied for income of Rs 7 lakh, but in today's budget, that exemption was removed and the standard deduction was increased to Rs 75,000, thereby cheating the employees."

Falsely labelled tablets seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Drug Control Administration on Thursday seized drugs labeled falsely from a medical store at Medchal. Officials seized Clamnil-CCM Tablets (Calcium Citrate Maleate, Cholecalciferol and Folic Acid Tablets) circulating in the market. These tablets were manufactured under a 'food license (FSSAI license)' and falsely claimed to be a food product/nutraceutical.

As per the label, the seized item was classified as drug The product 'Clamnil-CCM Tablets' must be manufactured only under a 'drug license' issued under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, adhering strictly to the 'Good Manufacturing Practices' (GMP) outlined in Schedule-M of the Drugs Rules.

Food Safety Commission flags violations in supermarket

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Food Safety Commission conducted inspections on Thursday at Ratnadeep Supermarket at Boduppal and a roadside hotel in Secunderabad, and found multiple violations.

According to the Task force, a complaint was received on the FoSCoS app regarding Ratnadeep Supermarket at Aakruthi Township at Boduppal.

The concerned Food Safety Officer inspected the premises and identified several violations as per the FSSAI Act such as, spoiled onions. The FSSAI license copy was not displayed at a prominent place. Medical fitness certificates were not available for food handlers. No FoSTaC trained supervisor was available on the premises.

Officials stated that a notice will be issued to the premises and further action will be



Food Safety Commission Inspector inspecting Ratnadeep Supermarket at Boduppal in Hyderabad on Thursday

taken accordingly.

Another complaint was received on the FoSCoS app concerning Sri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy Tiffin Centre at Ramplly, Secunderabad. The Food Safety Officer inspected the premises and found the following violations as per the FSSAI Act and found out that Food items were directly exposed to dust particles.

Irrigation officials told to plug breach on Peddavagu bund

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao on Thursday directed the Irrigation authorities to carry out repairs to the Peddavagu Project on a war-footing. The Peddavagu bund recently developed breach.

Meanwhile, the Irrigation officials have prepared an estimate for Rs 3.5 crore for carrying out temporary repairs to the project and plugging the breach to the bund and for construction of an approach canal. On a request from Agriculture Minister, Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy assured the former that funds would be released for undertaking repairs to the project.

On account of receiving unprecedented inflows into Peddavagu Project recently, the project anicut developed breach.

Need to prevent spread of dengue stressed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi emphasised the importance of efforts in preventing dengue. She participated as the chief guest at an awareness programme held at Film Club Venkateswara Colony on Thursday for students who volunteered to help prevent dengue.

Addressing the gathering, Mayor Vijayalakshmi stressed that these student volunteers should be fully educated about dengue prevention in their respective colonies. Keeping the environment clean is crucial in preventing the spread of dengue. She advised residents to maintain clean and hygienic surroundings.

Vijayalakshmi also urged students to ensure that water does not stagnate in air coolers, tires, and plant pots at



Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi interacting with the volunteers at an awareness programme in Hyderabad on Thursday.

home. She encouraged volunteers to educate colony residents to observe every Friday as a dry day. Additionally, teachers in schools should explain the necessary steps to be taken for maintaining cleanliness and preventing mosquito breeding during the morning prayers, she added.

The Mayor stressed the need to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in stagnated water and mentioned that the GHMC has taken extensive measures to control mosquito populations. She noted that the success of any program relies on the active participation of the community, ensuring that future generations are informed and prepared.

IT RETURNS TO BE SUBMITTED BEFORE JULY 31

Taxpayers told not to make any false claims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Joint Commissioner of Income Tax department Ashish Kumar Shukla suggested that taxpayers should not make any false claims and file the Income Tax returns (ITR) as per the rules. The Income Tax department officials briefed drawing and disbursing officers, zonal and circle officers, establishment clerks of various departments of GHMC about ITR filing, responsibilities of taxpayers, tax evasion, false refund claims as per IT norms and income-filing on Thursday.

He said that all types of income details should be given in the income filing and documents related to exemptions and deductions should be submitted to the DDO. Do not give any wrong details. Similarly, it is advised to cross-check while filing ITR. Income tax returns can be filed in the new/old regime.

"The ITR should be submitted before July 31 and the documentation should be properly submitted in the ITR submission. The respective DDOs should examine the total income, deductions etc, in relation to the employees. Properly ITR filing and submission is suggested. If there are any doubts.

MLA goes hammer and tongs against Union Budget

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Local legislator Veerlapalli Shankar has voiced his disappointment over the Union budget failing to allocate funds to Telangana.

In a media conference held at the MLA's camp office on Thursday, Shankar criticised the Central government showed callousness to extending financial support to Telangana.

"How reasonable is it for the



Center to allocate not even a single rupee to Telangana in the budget when the people have given eight Lok Sabha seats to the Central government?"

He condemned the disparity in fund allocation, noting that states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh received 10 per cent more funds than other states. "The central government has

shown complete discrimination against Telangana," he stated. Shankar highlighted the injustice meted out to Telangana State which has been contributing Rs 1 lakh crore to the Center, but receiving nothing in return.

Shankar also highlighted technical issues in the farmer loan waiver during a review meeting with bank and Agriculture department officials at the camp office on Thursday.

INDIA CORNER

Indo-Bangla border centre in Assam's Salmara reopens after 4 yrs

The border trade and immigration centre along the India-Bangladesh boundary, closed for the last four years since the outbreak of COVID-19, reopened formally on Thursday in Assam's South Salmara district, an official said. Mankachar's AIUFD MLA Aminul Islam along with senior district officials were present on the occasion. Islam said the closure of the centre had led to great difficulties for students, traders and even patients coming for medical treatment from the neighbouring country to the state. During the last four years, the people from the lower and central part of Assam had to go to Bangladesh either via Meghalaya's Dawki or through Kolkata, which caused immense inconvenience to them, he said. Assam has two immigration centres for Bangladesh - one at Sutarkandi in Karimganj district, which was also closed during the pandemic but later reopened, and the other at Mankachar.



Flight delays impacted 11 lakh passengers this year till May

As many as 11 lakh passengers were impacted by flight delays this year till May, and airlines shelled out nearly Rs 13 crore for providing facilities to them, according to the Civil Aviation Ministry. In 2023, as many as 22.51 lakh passengers were impacted due to flight delays and carriers spent over Rs 26.53 crore for them. The count stood at 14.83 lakh in 2022, and the amount shelled out by airlines in this regard stood at more than Rs 15.87 crore. The data was provided in a written reply to the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol on Thursday. As per the data for this year till May, the flight delays hit 11 lakh passengers, and airlines spent a little over Rs 12.85 crore to provide facilities to them. In 2021, as many as 8.03 lakh passengers were impacted and the amount spent by airlines stood at Rs 3.91 crore.



Term 'stray' will no longer be used for cows in Rajasthan: Minister

The term 'stray' will no longer be used for cows in Rajasthan, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Minister Joram Kumawat has said. Replying to a debate on the grant demand of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department in the Rajasthan Assembly on Wednesday night, Kumawat said that from now on the term 'nirashrit' (destitute) will be used to refer to stray cows. The minister said that "the state government is committed to making cattle rearers economically self-reliant by 'developing valuable animal wealth and increasing livestock production'. The state government is also working sensitively for the protection and promotion of cows and bulls," he added. Following the discussion, the assembly passed the grant demands of the department by voice vote. Kumawat said that Chief Minister Animal Husbandry Development Fund will be constituted in the state with a provision of Rs 250 crore.



JAISHANKAR MEETS CHINA'S WANG IN LAOS

EAM: Ensure 'full respect' for LAC and past agreements

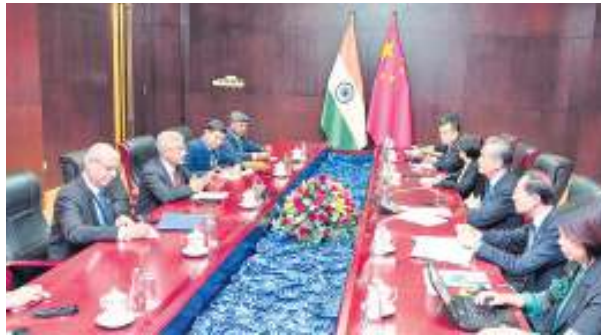
PNS ■ VIENTIANE (LAOS)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Thursday met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi here and emphasised the need to ensure "full respect" for the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and past agreements to stabilise the bilateral ties.

The two leaders, who met for the second time this month, also agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process.

"Met with CPC Politburo member and FM Wang Yi in Vientiane today. Continued our ongoing discussions about our bilateral relationship. The state of the border will necessarily be reflected on the state of our ties," Jaishankar said in a post on X after meeting with Wang on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings here.

The Jaishankar-Wang talks



came amid the dragging border row in eastern Ladakh that entered its fifth year in May.

"Agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process. Must ensure full respect for the LAC and past agreements. It is in our mutual interest to stabilise our ties. We should approach the immediate issues with a sense of purpose and

urgency," he added.

The two leaders met earlier this month in the Kazakh capital city of Astana on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in

Agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process. Must ensure full respect for the LAC and past agreements. It is in our mutual interest to stabilise our ties

a standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points. The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

Four women die after giving birth to healthy babies

PNS ■ DAMOH

Four women who gave birth to healthy babies on the same day at the district hospital at Damoh in Madhya Pradesh have died over the last three weeks, prompting an inquiry.

After one of the women died at the Jabalpur Medical College and Hospital during treatment on Wednesday, her family members protested, bringing all four cases to the fore.

Lakshmi Chaurasia (29), Harshna Kori (30), Nisha Parveen (28) and Huma Khan (30) were admitted to the district hospital here for delivery on July 4, officials said.

Chaurasia's relatives claimed that the doctors had said she would have a normal delivery, but at the eleventh hour they opted for a caesarean section.

After giving birth, she complained of severe pain in the stomach and died at night on July 4, said her husband Sachin, accusing the hospital staff of negligence.

PM MODI TO BJP MPS FROM MAHARASHTRA

Counter opposition propaganda against govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked BJP MPs from poll-bound Maharashtra to step up public contact and counter the opposition propaganda against the government.

Modi met members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra and also spoke to first time members about their experience in Parliament.

The BJP has four first term Lok Sabha members - Murlidhar Mohol, Anup Dhote, Hemant Savara and Smita Wagh.

The prime minister asked the BJP MPs to take the schemes and initiatives announced in the Union Budget to the masses and stub out the opposition attempts to spread misinformation about the government, a parliamentary source said.



"The prime minister also asked us to outstrip the opposition propaganda against the government and reach out to every voter at the booth level," a BJP MP who attended the meeting said.

Union ministers and senior BJP leaders Nitin Gadkari and Piyush Goyal were also present at the meeting on Thursday afternoon.

The BJP managed to win nine of the 28 seats it contested in the recent Lok Sabha elections. In the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections, the BJP had won 23 seats.

BJP ally Shiv Sena, led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, won seven seats out of the 15 it had contested, while Ait Pawar-led NCP emerged victorious on one of the four seats it had put candidates on.

The assembly elections in Maharashtra are scheduled to be held in September-October and the BJP has announced that it will contest the polls along with its allies Shiv Sena and NCP.

Tri-services on threshold major reform: CDS Anil

Hails Kargil bravehearts on eve of 25th anniversary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Kargil Vijay Diwas, CDS Gen Anil Chauhan said Thursday the sacrifices made by soldiers in the 1999 war will "not go in vain" and asserted that the tri-services are on the "threshold of a major reform".

The chief of defence staff has conveyed his felicitations and wishes to all ranks of the armed forces on the occasion of the 25 years of the Kargil war, the defence ministry said in a statement.

Gen Chauhan underlined that the "tri-services are on the threshold of a major reform, that range from organisational, structural, conceptual to cultural".



"The underlying aim of these reforms is to improve fighting efficiency and keep the armed forces battle-ready at all times. We must be prepared to shed obsolete practices and adopt new ones. The shape and contour of reforms must reflect the uniqueness of the Indian environment and challenges," he

said. Recalling the valour of Kargil bravehearts, Chauhan stressed that the "lessons learnt by shedding blood must not be forgotten, the mistakes must not be repeated, and the right lessons must be reinforced".

In his message, the CDS also underscored that the supreme sacrifices made by the bravehearts in the Kargil War would not go in vain.

"It will continue to inspire and motivate future generations of not only soldiers but also the youth of the nation," he said.

Highlighting the uniqueness of the Kargil War, the general said, there were lessons in the war for not only the military but for all those who deal with national security.

Stoppage of trains subject to traffic justification, operational feasibility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trains are operated and stoppages are provided as per network requirements, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, adding that stoppage of trains is an ongoing process subject to traffic justification and operational feasibility.



He was replying to a question on not having any stoppage for 11 pairs of trains in the Malappuram district (Kerala) on the Shornur-Mangalore line.

Vaishnaw's response came when M P Abdussamad Samadani, a Member of Parliament from the Indian Union Muslim League, asked, "Whether the government is aware of the difficulties faced by passengers due to 11 pairs of trains not having any stoppage in the Malappuram district on the Shornur-Mangalore line."

"As the Railway network straddles across state/district

boundaries, trains are operated and stoppages are provided as per network requirements, across such boundaries. Important stations like Kuttippuram, Tirunnavaya, Tirur, Tanur, Parapanangadi and Vallikkunnu stations, located in the Malappuram district, are being served by 41 trains, 12 trains, 87 trains, 26 trains, 39 trains and 17 trains respectively," Vaishnaw said. He added, "Besides, stoppage of trains is an ongoing process on Indian Railways subject to traffic justification, operational feasibility, etc."

Budget took 'zero action' to restart wage growth: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday claimed that "stagnant wages" had dragged down consumption growth and disincentivised the private sector from investment, and said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman took "zero action" to restart wage growth.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the Economic Survey confirmed the "worst-kept secret of the non-biological PM's government" -- real wages were stagnating in rural areas.

"Stagnant wages have dragged down consumption growth and disincentivised the private sector from investment. It's directly responsible for the cycle of low GDP growth of the last decade," he said in a post on X.

The finance minister's budget has taken "zero action" to restart wage growth, Ramesh said.

INDIA ON US CRITICISM OF ITS TIES WITH RUSSIA
All countries have 'freedom of choice'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday rejected Washington's concerns over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Moscow as it asserted that all countries have the "freedom of choice" in a multipolar world and everyone should be mindful of such realities.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India has a long-standing relationship with Russia which is based on "mutuality of interests." "In a multipolar world, all countries have the freedom of choice. It is essential for everybody to be mind-

ful and appreciate such realities," he said. "India has a long-standing relationship with Russia that is based on mutuality of interests," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

His response came when asked about US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu's comments on Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia earlier this month.

Lu told a Congressional hearing on Tuesday that the US was disappointed by the "symbolism" and "timing" of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia.

The Biden administration official especially highlighted



that the Indian prime minister paid the visit to Moscow Washington was hosting a summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

"I share your concern about this visit...and we are trying very hard to communicate

those concerns directly to the Indians," Lu said after Republican Congressman Joe Wilson raised concerns about Modi's visit.

At the same time Lu, referred to Modi's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy in June.

On the outcomes of Modi's trip, Lu said: "We did not see any new major defence deals. We saw no major discussion of technology cooperation."

"In addition, you have Modi having said in front of Putin, on live television, his feeling that the war in Ukraine could

not be won on the battlefield and the pain that he felt watching the death of children in war." Following Modi's visit to Moscow on July 8 and 9, several other Biden administration officials expressed concerns over India's ties with Russia.

On July 11, speaking at an event, US ambassador Eric Garcetti too appeared to be critical of Modi's trip to Russia.

The US envoy said that "strategic autonomy" cannot apply in times of conflict and India and the US must work towards upholding principles when there is breach of rules-based order or violation of sovereign borders.

Employment rose to 64.33 crore over last six fiscal years: MoS Karandlaje

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The employment in the country increased by more than 35 per cent over the last six fiscal years to 64.33 crore as of March 2024, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

The total increase in employment from 2017-18 to 2023-24 is around 16.83 crore, Minister of State (MoS) for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje said in a reply to Rajya Sabha.

As per the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest KLEMS data, employment in the country increased to 64.33 crore in the year 2023-24 compared to 47.5 crore in 2017-18, she



added. The KLEMS (K: Capital, L: Labour, E: Energy, M: Materials and S: Services) database, published by the RBI, provides employment trends at all India levels.

The manufacturing sector (formal and informal entities)

saw an increase of 85 lakh employment opportunities from 2017-18 to 2023-23, the minister added.

On the issue of child labour, Karandlaje, in a separate reply said, it is an outcome of various social economic problems such as poverty, economic backwardness, lack of access to basic services, illiteracy, etc.

The government is pursuing a multipronged strategy to eliminate child labour and has taken comprehensive measures which include legislative actions, rehabilitation strategy, providing the right to free education and promoting general socio-economic development.

Security forces launch anti-tunnelling ops along International Border in Samba

PNS ■ JAMMU

Amid concerns about infiltration attempts by terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir, security forces have launched an operation along the International Border (IB) in the Samba sector to detect underground and cross-border tunnels, police said on Thursday.

Scores of police and security personnel equipped with specialised gear are meticulously scanning border areas, focusing on dense bushes and forested regions as part of this operation, the police said.

"A comprehensive anti-tunnel exercise has commenced to ascertain the pres-

ence of any cross-border tunnels," said a police officer involved in the operation.

The search operations also involve deployment of drones and is being conducted daily in response to the ongoing security threats posed by potential terrorist infiltrations, he said.

"Security forces are clearing dense bushy areas to eliminate the possibility of existence of tunnels," the officer added.

Police recently said that Pakistan-sponsored terrorists have infiltrated into Jammu and Kashmir via the International Border and have been involved in terrorist attacks in the region.

'Super-Jupiter' detected, could be coldest planet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A nearby "super-Jupiter" exoplanet -- about 12 light years away from Earth -- was detected and could be one of the coldest, according to an international study, including researchers from IIT Kanpur.

Estimating the temperature on the planet at two degrees Celsius, the authors said that Epsilon Indi Ab is colder than any other imaged exoplanet -- planets existing outside of our solar system. The closest one is Proxima Centauri b at about

four light years from Earth, according to NASA, the US space agency.

Images of Epsilon Indi Ab were captured using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.

Previously imaged exoplanets tend to be the youngest, hottest exoplanets that are still radiating much of the energy from when they first formed, according to the authors of the study published in the journal Nature.

As planets cool and contract over their lifetime, they become significantly fainter and, therefore, harder to image, they said.



The US space agency has confirmed the existence of about 5,000 of the billion exoplanets in our galaxy.

Orbiting the star Epsilon Indi A, Epsilon Indi Ab has been dubbed a "super-Jupiter".

"It is a little warmer and more massive, but is more sim-

ilar to Jupiter than any other planet that has been imaged so far," lead author Elisabeth Matthews of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, Germany, said.

The "back-and-forth wobbles" of the star Epsilon Indi A that the researchers observed suggested hints of a possible planetary body.

However, the planet did not match their modelled predictions, they said.

"It's about twice as massive, a little farther from its star, and has a different orbit than we expect-

ed. The cause of this discrepancy remains an open question," Matthews said.

The planet's atmosphere too was found to differ from the predictions. "The planet's atmosphere appears to have an unusual composition that indicates a high metal content and a different carbon-to-oxygen ratio than we see on our own solar system planets," study author Prashant Pathak, an assistant professor at the department of space, planetary and astronomical sciences and engineering (SPASE), IIT Kanpur, said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Reaching out

Netanyahu seeks support for Gaza war during US Congress speech, despite many senators skipping it

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called for US solidarity in his address to Congress, despite declining popularity and increasing opposition in his own country. In an address to the United States Congress, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to rally American lawmakers behind Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza. The speech, delivered amidst a backdrop of escalating violence and rising civilian casualties, underscored Netanyahu's determination to secure unwavering support from Israel's most powerful ally. He emphasised the existential threats faced by Israel from militant groups operating in Gaza, particularly Hamas. The Prime Minister framed the military actions as a necessary response to ongoing rocket attacks and acts of terrorism that have plagued Israeli communities. However, Netanyahu's speech did not address the mounting international concerns regarding human rights violations in the Palestinian territories. Reports from various human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have highlighted a range of human rights violations.



The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has been further exacerbated by a blockade that severely restricts the movement of people and goods, leading to shortages of essential supplies such as food, water, and medical care. The present Gaza offensive, which has gone over 250 days, has left a spree of death and destruction. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, at least 34,000 people have been killed, and more than 77,000 have been wounded in Israeli attacks. About 72 per cent of those killed are women and children. United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk has gone on record saying that a child in Gaza is killed or wounded 'every 10 minutes.'

Israel's actions violate international law and constitute collective punishment, disproportionately affecting innocent civilians and deepening the humanitarian crisis. The United States, as Israel's primary ally, plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This support has also placed the US under scrutiny, with calls for it to leverage its influence to promote peace and uphold human rights. The very weaponry provided by the US is being used by Israel against the civilian population in Palestine which is undergoing a horrendous time. There is growing advocacy within the US, both among the public and some members of Congress, for a more balanced approach. The US is urged to take a firm stand against human rights violations and to support diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a sustainable and just resolution to the conflict. A sustainable peace can only be achieved through a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. The US has a moral and strategic responsibility to advocate for human rights and justice in the region. The US can play a pivotal role in paving the lasting peace in the region by telling Netanyahu to comply with the UN directives on Gaza and stop bombing the civilian targets to minimise civilian casualties.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal falls from grace



K S TOMAR

The new coalition, dominated by the pro-India Nepali Congress, will now be led by the communist leader Oli who will have a daunting task of ensuring political stability

Politicians have been grabbing the power by following Machiavillan principle of showing complete disrespect to means, the morality and values. This is true of Pushpa Kamal Dahal who fell from the grace after facing humiliating defeat while seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament. Prachanda faced the worst type of humiliating defeat as he got 63 votes (Rashtrīya Swatantra Party-21, CPN(US)-10 and his party-32) as against 194 votes of new coalition combination of Nepali Congress (89 MPs) and Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (78 MPs) which also got support from other smaller parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Janata Samajwadi Party (Upendra faction) etc. in the house of 275 where majority mark was 138 only. Oli has staked claim after president Ram Chandra Poedel invited the political parties having strength to form the government.



In a positive move, Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, the Foreign Affairs Department chief and a Standing Committee member of the CPN-UML emphasized that CPN-UML believes that Nepal's progress or the welfare of its people can be achieved only by adopting a Pro-India stance. He made it clear that the party's chairman, KP Sharma Oli, is keen on taking Nepal-India relations to new heights thereby aligning with the requirement and urgency of the modern era.

Due to fragile nature of democracy in Nepal, unabated and persistent instability has been trademark of the government which is evident from 16 time change of guards in the span of 13 years thereby hitting the interests of the common people in the country besides pushing the country into financial crisis and debt liabilities especially huge loans advanced by China.

In a midnight swoop and a dramatic turn of events on July 9, a secret deal was clinched between two former Prime ministers viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepali and K.P.S. Oli of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) which sealed the fate of current PM, Pushpa

Kamal Dahal, Prachanda. In this manner, yet another coalition of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Nepali Congress came into existence today following the humiliating defeat of Prachanda, a diehard loyalist of China' on the floor of house. New regime will be headed by Ex PM, Oli which had preceded withdrawal of the support to current PM, on July 3, 2024 thereby reducing it into minority. The Janata Samajwadi party led by Ashok Rai having 7 PMs also withdrew the support and recalled three ministers from Prachanda government. The coalition government will be dominated by Pro India, Nepali Congress, though a die-hard communist leader, former PM, Oli will be heading it for a term of one half year which will be followed by a takeover by former PM, Deuba of Nepali congress as agreed by two coalition partners.

Foreign policy experts say that major factors responsible for the collapse of coalition of Prachanda-Oli, duo, included Power Struggle, style of functioning of prime minister, Policy Differences, Coalition Dynamics and Coalition Dynamics which may lead to more stable dispensation comprising of Nepali Congress, Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Janata Samajwadi party. Amidst the toppling game,



OLI AND DEUBA COMBINE WILL BE UNDER COMPULSION TO KEEP EQUI-DISTANCE WITH TWO REGIONAL POWERS VIZ INDIA AND CHINA WHICH HAVE GOT GEO-POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE AFFAIRS OF NEPAL

midnight power sharing agreement between two former Prime ministers, viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Nepali Congress and K.P.S. Oli chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) was signed on July 5, 2024 thereby leading to a sudden change of regime in Nepal. New coalition government of Oli and Deuba is bound to face multiple challenges which will be key to success otherwise its fallout could be mid-term polls. The fragile nature of the new government consisting of the communists (Pro China) and Nepali Congress (Pro India) having opposing ideologies could pose a major challenge to keep them in unison and amalgamated.

Oli and Deuba combine will be under compulsion to keep equi-distance with two regional powers viz. India and China which have got geo-political and strategic interests in the affairs of Nepal. Oli's previous stint as PM was marked by his extreme Anti India action of redrawing the map which had shown Indian territories including Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani as part of Nepal. It had exasperated India which rejected this misadventure thereby terming it as baseless besides being an attempt to spoil ties. Now, as dominant partner in the coalition, the onus of checking this tendency will lie on Deuba to prevail upon Oli to come

out of Anti-India mentality and protect age-old relations between two nations.

The communists regimes led by Prachanda always gave clear indications about the commitment to China which will expect new government to go ahead with Belt and Road (BRI) initiative especially when outgoing PM has approved the proposal which had been signed between two countries on May 12, 2017.

It will be an uphill task for Oli to stick to his predecessors' resolve to toe China's line about BRI as Nepali congress is totally opposed to it hence chances of any progress seem to be remote. It will be a test of the new government to deal with India's Agnipath scheme which is one of the major irritants so far. Nepal's border issues with India, including disputes over territories require a multifaceted approach.

Strengthening the Nepal-India Joint Boundary Commission to expedite the resolution of boundary issues through technical and diplomatic means may yield positive results. The survival of the coalition will depend solely on mutual trust of partners and balanced diplomatic strategy and refrain from offending two regional giants which had been lacking in the past.

(Writer is a senior journalist and a political analyst; views are personal)

PICTALK



Members of the State Disaster Management Authority perform rescue operation during a mock drill, in Prayagraj PTI

Union budget 2024: A major thrust on agriculture



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

The budget's focus on sustainable agriculture and innovation highlights the Government's commitment to support the farmers and ensuring food security

Union budget 2024 - a thrust on agriculture for a visit Bharat Biju Dharmapalan in the Union Budget 2024 presented by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, great emphasis has been placed on agriculture and space. Both are essential pillars for transforming our country into a developed nation.



The latter is futuristic, and the former is the lifeline of the present generation. No nation can survive without the farming community, and they are the 'Annadata'. In the changing global climate and environmental conditions, the traditional farming sector would not be sufficient to feed the population. The government has allocated Rs. 1,51,851 crores for the agricultural and allied sectors. Stress has been given to agricultural research to increase productivity and release 109 new high-yielding and climate-resilient varieties of 32 field and horticulture crops. Climate-resilient crops have become essential under the prevailing global climatic conditions. During the past few years, we have noticed changes in the climate in

various parts of the country. We had severe summers even in high altitudes of the Himalayas and a deficit in rain during the monsoons. This has badly affected the agricultural sector, where most of our crop cultivation is based on climatic patterns. Farmers are forced to grow temperate plants like apples and grapes in plains. People are even trying to grow rainfed crops like paddy in garden pots. Change in agricultural patterns is inevitable. Climate change affects agriculture in numerous ways. Heat stress triggers alterations in respiration and photosynthesis, resulting in a reduced life cycle and decreased plant yield. Additionally, higher temperatures can lead to increased evapotranspiration, necessitating more water for crops when water resources

are scarcer. Experiencing drought-like situations in several parts of the country due to climate changes has badly affected the soil health, making the farmland unhealthy for future farming. Moreover, the frequency and severity of droughts are expected to rise, particularly in regions that are already water-stressed. Drought conditions reduce crop yields and affect soil health, making it more difficult for future crops to grow. On the other hand, excessive rainfall and flooding, becoming more common, can destroy crops, erode soil, and wash away essential nutrients. Extreme weather patterns will not only affect crop productivity and microbial biodiversity, which keeps our planet healthy. In addition, it will expedite the emergence of new pests and diseases that may affect crop growth and productivity. The emergence of new diseases may even lead to a pandemic affecting several crop species across the globe. This may jeopardise our food security. Developing resilient crops for the next century is a challenging task. It requires significant investment in research and devel-

opment. Our laboratories in the agricultural universities need thorough transformation. They need to be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that can handle molecular breeding programmes and large crop phenomics facilities that can speed up the development of new crop varieties. Our scientific community should acknowledge the farmers and share the benefits of the genes taken from traditional varieties for developing resilient crops. By promoting healthy soils, biodiversity, and resilience, natural farming has the potential to support long-term food security and environmental health. Agriculture is not merely an occupation; it is the bedrock of our food supply and a critical component in balancing the health of our planet. So, we need to promote and incentivise our farmers who take up new technologies so that farming remains a viable and respected profession for youngsters.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BUDGET REACTIONS

Madam — Apropos the news headline "Less Tax, More Jobs" (July 24). Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman's 2024 Union budget should be the budget of the whole country, but the FM has presented it as if it is the NDA's budget. To make matters worse, taxpayers have to foot the bill for the NDA government's political survival. There is nothing wrong when the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi criticizes the NDA government's Union Budget, claiming it undermines India's federal structure. He highlights neglect towards other states and vows to advocate for equal justice. INDIA protests against the 'Kursi Bachao' Budget in Parliament.

Interestingly, FM Sitharaman, elected from Karnataka, provided nothing in the budget for her state, which is ruled by the Congress. In her Purvodaya scheme for the all-round development of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, only Bihar and Andhra Pradesh benefit significantly. For instance, Rs 11,500 crore was allocated to Bihar for flood mitigation, while West Bengal, one of the worst flood-affected states, is crying for help. Salaried employees in the new tax regime will save up to Rs 17,500 in income tax. Corporate tax rates on foreign companies were reduced to 25%. Family pensions were enhanced from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000. However, nearly 60 lakh EPF pensioners have been receiving Rs 920 to Rs 1000 per month since 1995 without any increase. The government deserves praise for exempting three cancer medicines from custom duties and allocating Rs 2.2 lakh crore to make housing more affordable. It's also commendable that FM Sitharaman has introduced an internship program similar to Congress' Nyay Patra. Overall it is a mix bag but could have addressed the pressing issues on priority.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Tragedy at Tribhuvan International Airport



It is deeply shocking that eighteen people have lost their lives in a deadly plane crash at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu. The plane, a twenty-year-old Bombardier CRJ-200 regional jet owned by the

private airline company Saurya Airlines, skidded off the runway and crashed. It seems that the aviation industry in Nepal has fallen short of both standards and expectations, failing to keep pace with other countries in terms of modernization and sophistication. It is a pity that Nepal has not learned any lessons from past incidents, leading to a continuing series of plane crashes.

The aviation sector is crucial for Nepal's tourism and businesses. It is high time that the government of Nepal, along with private airline owners, collaborate to revamp the deteriorating aviation sector. They must pay due attention to improving passenger safety, modernizing logistics and infrastructure, and introducing new jets to avoid future accidents. Path-breaking reforms are essential. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar, Bagrakote

CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS

Madam — The Telangana-cadre IAS officer Smita Sabharwal is being criticized for questioning the need for a disability quota in civil services. She asked the "rights activists" to examine why the policy was yet to be implemented in police services, foreign services, and the defense sector. By raising such questions, she violated the code of conduct for civil servants and is punishable under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and other relevant laws. Prominent coach and mentor of civil services aspirants in Hyderabad, Bala Latha Mallavarapu, challenged Smita to sit for the UPSC examination again and beat her score. The Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of Pankaj Kumar Srivastava, a 100 percent visually impaired candidate who cleared the Civil Services Examination in 2009 but was denied an appointment. This ruling marks a significant milestone in the fight for disability rights in India. Inappropriate remarks.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

BIDEN WITHDRAWS FROM THE RACE

Madam — Joe Biden Withdraws from Presidential Race. Accepting the views of prominent Democratic leaders, including former President Barack Obama, President Joe Biden has announced his withdrawal from the presidential race. Age is not on his side, and Donald Trump, after surviving an assassination attempt, has gained momentum. Vice President Kamala Harris is likely to take on the aging Donald Trump. In India, Kamala Harris' presumptive nomination elicited only lukewarm enthusiasm. During the 2019 election campaign, she criticised Prime Minister Modi's policies on Kashmir, saying, "We have to remind Kashmiris that they are not alone in the world." The possibility of tension in relations between the two countries, despite statements of warm friendship, cannot be ignored.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN BUDGET BALANCES FISCAL DISCIPLINE AND EMPLOYMENT

Union budget takes definitive steps to create jobs for India's youth



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The eleventh full-term budget under Modi 3.0 walks the fiscal discipline path, despite being a coalition government, he is heading. The surprise results from June 4th, which threw in a coalition government for Prime Minister Modi, perhaps for the first time in his career, did not stop his budget proposals, political with sound economics in the background. In the run-up to the budget, many had expected, that the Finance Act would be populist keeping in mind the state elections of Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand scheduled later this year. However what came out from Nirmala Sitharaman's tab, was a document that chose to focus on core areas of long-term growth and decent infrastructure spending, without giving in to populist demands. The key theme as highlighted by Government is Employment.

Questions have been raised in post-budget analysis regarding the feasibility of the schemes announced for creating lakhs of jobs for the youth of the country. The apprentice scheme promising a government stipend for lakhs of youth per year, in some of the largest companies of India, may only be a game changer if these young interns are attentively skilled to be formally absorbed into jobs, once their tenure is over. There are serious concerns regarding the abundant availability of a relatively unskilled workforce, hanging around in large offices, without learning any meaningful skills.

Similar questions have been raised regarding the EPFO-linked new job incentivisation scheme, which has various blindspots, possibly pushing a well-thought-out policy push into a dark corner. It may be said that the policy push is primarily to bring more youth employed in the informal sector within a formal standard workforce and instil a financial literacy discipline in them early on. However, this financial literacy falls flat when one looks at the changes made in the tax structures for any investor punting in the speculative equities market. The increased rate of capital gains tax and a general push to the new income tax regime, seem to be at cross purposes of the financial literacy programme, the government wants youth to undertake to avail of full benefits of INR 15,000, as a first month's salary subsidy. The earlier tax regimes instilled a sense



of financial responsibility for any youth entering the formal job sector, with several choosing at least one product, as a means to save and claim tax rebates in the future. This set them off for a long financial discipline path during their tenure as working professionals, which now seems to be slowly being eased out. The counter-argument the government may have is, that they want the consumer economy to grow first, led by the youth, who may be more willing to spend on food items, entertainment etc, with the monthly salaries they would be drawing in their new jobs. However, it prevents them from getting into a habit of savings, which are useful during rainy days or Covid type crises. Yes, the government, did well to maintain the fiscal discipline glide path, buoyed by a better than expected GDP growth, and lumpy dividend payouts from the central bank. Overall inflations, except for food are also within tolerable levels, giving the government, a cushion for spending on welfare projects, it feels are essential. Union budget 24-25 is an attempt woo back disgruntled voters.

The lesson BJP appears to have taken from the June 4 results is, that the youth are excited about huge temples, few smart glitzy trains, and cheap mobile data in their 'Made in India' phones, but they are increasingly getting anxious to earn money, have an engaging occupation, which feeds into their aspirational upwardly mobile lifestyle. Then there are pulls and pressures of coalition politics, with NDA's two partners TDP and JD(U) having their wish lists for catering to their core constituencies. A long-term dice has been rolled, perhaps NDA 3.0 with this budget has achieved the goldilocks balance.

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

Budget 2024: A blueprint for long-term growth



DEEPAK SOOD

The Union Budget 2024-25 reaffirms the Govt's dedication to long-term growth. India is well-positioned to harness its immense potential for rapid development



In a pivotal move aimed at strengthening India's economic prowess, the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 has made significant strides in assuring continuity of progressive reforms. There is cheer in the MSME, E-commerce and start-up worlds, which have been extended additional support as the country progresses on the road towards a Viksit Bharat. The Finance Minister made various announcements to empower the Garib, Mahila, Yuva and Kissan. The announcements made under this budget are timely and set to propel the Indian economy to new heights during the Amrit Kaal, enhancing its resilience in an ever-evolving global landscape.

A booster for MSMEs

The budget rightfully supports the bottom of the industrial pyramid by offering much-needed ease of credit for the MSME segment. India has 633.9 lakh MSMEs, where over 99% of them qualify as micro-enterprises that make up 630.5 lakh enterprises. One of the critical reasons why micro enterprises (with investments up to INR 10 million) do not graduate to being small or medium enterprises is the lack of access to formal credit. By doubling the MUDRA loan amounts and setting up new SIDBI branches, credit will now be more accessible to these organizations. Other steps (mandatory Trade Receivables Discounting System) have improved liquidity, while Industrial parks will provide the much-needed digital support that MSMEs usually cannot afford for growth. Additionally, the new credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs offers term loans without collateral or third-party guarantees, significantly easing the financial burden on small business owners and fos-

tering entrepreneurship. Such positive support for this crucial sector is bound to give it the confidence to shed its risk-averse nature and grow with ambition on the road to 2047.

Skilling and Job Creation

With this budget, the Government has responded positively to the need for job opportunities and skill development among youth in our country. The continued emphasis on skilling will allow training institutions and large corporations to participate in creating a pool of professionally trained manpower that would be readily absorbed by them and the larger MSME ecosystem, which is often strained for funds for training purposes. Meticulous implementation will, however, be key to setting the ball rolling in the right direction of creating jobs. Rural Economy

The rural economy

continued to receive support from the government, as strengthening this segment will be crucial for the sustained economic growth of the country. Budget 2024 had some big announcements for them that would increase productivity and food security in grains and oilseeds. Such measures will go a long way in creating new economic clusters that will support sustained growth. With 1 crore farmers to be trained in natural farming, marketing, certification, and brand-

ing, organic farming is all set to receive a big stimulus. The focus on addressing the impact of climate on our food basket showcases the government's long-term vision towards building resilience in the ecosystem.

Start-ups and E-Commerce

There is general cheer in the start-up ecosystem across India over the abolition of the angle tax, proposed in the budget. Angel tax, introduced in 2012, was imposed on the capital raised by unlisted companies through the issue of shares to Indian investors if the share price exceeded the fair market value (FMV) of the company. Traders and artisans using e-commerce sites got a lift up in this budget when TDS was not just reduced but TDS delays were decriminalized. E-commerce exports, \$2 billion now, are expected to be \$350 billion by 2030. With revised custom duties, the Government hopes to give the required fillip to these artisans/traders who sell their wares using websites, in line with its Make in India strategy.

Energy security

India is a fast-developing economy and our energy needs are rising rapidly. By encouraging private investment in setting up small nuclear energy reactors and encouraging R&D into newer forms of nuclear energy, the budget aims to achieve India's goals of energy security. With regular energy audits across

clusters, larger commercial thermal plants and a pumped storage policy, the budget aims to help India cope with the rising demand without missing a step. However, our green economy targets are very ambitious and much more needs to be done to ensure our transition to green fuels.

Digitization of Land Records

This one step is perhaps the most impactful step the budget has outlined for the growth of India's economy. Vast tracts of our land, especially in rural India, are often embroiled in disputes with no proper documentation. This is a key hurdle in land acquisition for major projects. By digitising these records across India, the Government will end middlemen and reduce the number of land cases in the legal system. Overall, the Union Budget 2024-25 reinforces the Government's commitment to sustained long-term growth.

With strategic investments and forward-looking policies, India is poised to navigate global challenges while harnessing its immense potential for socio-economic development. The road towards Viksit Bharat could have its set of challenges, especially given the global dynamics, but the sustained vision and progressive policy support will help realise the dream of a Viksit Bharat.

(The writer is secretary general of ASSOCHAM; views expressed are personal)

“THERE IS GENERAL CHEER IN THE START-UP ECOSYSTEM ACROSS INDIA OVER THE ABOLITION OF THE ANGEL TAX, PROPOSED IN THE BUDGET”

Commemorating 25 years of Kargil victory: A tribute to India's bravehearts

As we remember the 527 soldiers who laid down their lives, we celebrate the enduring legacy of their heroism and dedication to the nation

Visitors to Drass, a town situated at an altitude of 10,760 feet (3,279 metres) in India-administered Kashmir, are greeted with a signboard that says at -60 degrees Celsius on January 9, 1995, it was the second-coldest inhabited place on the planet. Drass, located in Kargil district, has an additional claim to fame. In the summer of 1999, it was on its western edge with rocky and barren Himalayan peaks that India and Pakistan fought their last war.



RAHUL KAMBLE

Pakistan had named its move to take over the control of Indian posts along the LoC as 'Operation Badr', India called its offensive 'Operation Vijay'. It was a war fought in the era of satellite news channels. The battles were broadcast directly to homes in both countries, making Drass and Kargil as a whole, a symbol of India's nationalism, inspiring a raft of jingoistic Bollywood movies. This July 26 is the 25th Kargil Vijay Divas. On this day in

1999, the Indian forces threw out the Pakistanis from the incursion points in the general area of Kargil, which they had illegally occupied, bringing to a close a two-month war. It was a tough war, fought on sheer grit and courage, as gutsy young officers, most of them in their twenties, led equally brave soldiers up naked rock faces and managed to evict the enemy within weeks. Names such as Tiger Hill, Tololing, Point 5140, Point 4700, Three Pimples, Chorbat La, Point 5203, Point 4875, Khalubar, and Jubar Top became household names across the country. On 26 July 1999, the Kargil conflict officially came to an end. The Indian Army announced the complete eviction of Pakistani intruders, but a price was paid

for it in blood and tears. We lost 527 of our brave soldiers; 1363 came back wounded. The Indian army has marked July 26 - the day the Kargil war ended - as "Vijay Diwas" (Victory Day). Every year for the past 25 years, the whole nation celebrates proudly on this day. Army also undertakes commemorative treks on the icy features, where our Braves became invincibles. What seemed an impossible task to the world, was accomplished in a mere 50 days, with all the features lost, back under our control. The '50 Day War' as it is fondly called, was a record in itself. Whenever the story of Kargil is told, it shall be incomplete without paying homage to the steely resolve and cold



courage of these young men who went to fight for their nation knowing that they might never return. Barely out of the academy, they fought against all odds, with single-minded devotion, and set new benchmarks in heroism. Their spirit and daring will be difficult to replicate. The war will always be remembered for its strategic and tac-

tical surprise, the self-imposed national strategy of restraint in keeping the war limited to the Kargil-Siachen sector, military strategy and planning, and the dedication, determination and daring junior leadership at the tactical level. In fiercely fought combat actions, on the most difficult terrain that gave immense advantage to the enemy, we were able to evict Pakistani troops from most of their surreptitiously occupied positions. The Pakistani leadership was forced to sue for a ceasefire and seek the withdrawal of its troops from the remaining areas. Operation Vijay - the Indian codename for the war - was a blend of strong and determined political, military and diplomatic actions, which enabled us to transform an

adverse situation into a military and diplomatic victory. As two prime ministers of Pakistan later acknowledged, 'Kargil war was Pakistan's biggest blunder and disaster'. A reflection on the Kargil War can never be complete without a mention of the brilliant junior leadership that we witnessed during battles. Such acts by young officers and men can never be forgotten. They make us proud. Commanding officers of many infantry battalions displayed steely resilience and single-minded devotion to duty. There were actions by young artillery forward observation officers and battery commanders who took over infantry companies when their company commander colleagues were killed. A victory in war is

achieved when battles are won. Battles are won when soldiers put duty before themselves. Soldiers who put their lives at stake in wars and war-like situations and expect nothing in return. But what the nation owes to them is recognition and gratitude. For every single brave deed noticed and recognized, many went unnoticed in the fog of war. These legendary tales deserve mention not only in our military history books but also in school textbooks to serve as inspiration for young people. This success shall not be taken for granted. With heights averaging 15000 feet, bone-chilling temperatures and a dominating hostility, the Kargil war in itself is a global legend.

(The author is freelance writer; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Govt eases norms for EPCG license holders

The government on Thursday eased certain norms for licence holders of the Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme as part of its ease of doing business efforts...



Amazon records biggest-ever Prime Day event in India

Amazon India - which hosted the 8th edition of its annual shopping fiesta Prime Day over the last weekend - on Thursday said it has received the highest engagement...



States propose new names for 22 airports, says Murlidhar

The civil aviation ministry on Thursday said it has received requests from 10 state governments with proposals for renaming 22 airports. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha...



Goyal sets US\$ 50 bn exports target for leather, footwear industry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has asked the leather and footwear industry to target USD 50 billion worth of exports by 2030.

Interacting with the industry here on Wednesday, the minister said the ministry will address the sector's concern over quality control orders (QCOs) to make the certification procedure smooth and flexible.



like the Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI), Council of Leather Exports (CLE), and Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI)...

Govt launches scheme to facilitate skill loans of up to Rs 7.5 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday launched the revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme to facilitate loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh with a guarantee from a government-promoted fund.



Banks, NBFCs, etc, have also been linked to the scheme, the minister said. Major milestone for MSDE with the launch of the Model Skill Loan Scheme.

advanced skillings, includes a range of eligible courses, collateral-free loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh; NBFCs, NBFC-MFIs, and Small Finance Banks also eligible lenders.

IDBI BANK PRIVATISATION RBI's nod expected soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The potential investors in IDBI Bank have received necessary security clearance from the Home Ministry and a nod from the Reserve Bank is expected to come in soon...

NHAI not facing any financial crises: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) is not facing any financial crises and has drawn up a plan to service its debt through improved inflows of toll revenue and asset monetisation...



last financial year and Rs 9,350 crore in July 2024," he added. NHAI's debt stands at Rs 3.35 lakh crore.

dated NHAI to raise funds since FY2023-24. "Thus, the debt reduction has started," he said. The minister also said that NHAI has drawn up a plan to service its debt through improved inflows of toll revenue and asset monetisation.

Rupee slides to fresh all-time low of 83.78 against dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee dropped by 7 paise to close at an all-time low of 83.78 against the US dollar on Thursday, dragged down by month-end dollar demand and foreign fund outflows.

may allow the rupee to weaken slightly to unwind the slightly real effective exchange rate and keep the currency competitive. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.72 and touched an intra-day high of 83.66 and a low of 83.78 against the dollar during the session.



Gold tumbles Rs 1,000 to 70,650 per 10 grams on sluggish demand, global cues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices continued to fall for the third day and tumbled Rs 1,000 to Rs 70,650 per 10 grams in the local market here on Thursday amid heavy selling by jewellers, triggered by a fall in rates in overseas markets.



and 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 1,000 each to Rs 70,650 per 10 grams and Rs 70,300 per 10 grams, respectively. Silver prices also fell sharply by Rs 3,500 to Rs 84,000 per kg.

The precious metal has declined Rs 5,000 per kg in the past three sessions since July 23 when it had fallen Rs 3,350 to end at Rs 72,300 per kg -- marking the biggest fall this year -- after the government on Tuesday decided to slash customs duties on a range of products, including gold and silver.

Adani Energy Solutions posted Rs 1,190 cr loss in Q1



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Adani Energy Solutions Ltd on Thursday reported a net loss of Rs 1,190.66 crore for the April-June quarter of 2024-25 mainly due to exceptional losses related to the divestment of an asset.

Markets extend losses for 5th session

METAL, BANK STOCKS MAJOR DRAG

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty stayed on the back foot for the fifth straight session on Thursday as investors offloaded metal, banking and finance stocks amid a lacklustre trend in global markets.



After a sharp fall in intra-day trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex managed to recover some of the lost ground to settle 109.08 points or 0.14 per cent lower at 80,039.80, as a sharp rally in Tata Motors and Larsen & Toubro restricted its fall.

India financial system looks stronger than in the past: RBI dy guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian financial system looks stronger than in the past and the country's economy is an outlier even as strong headwinds globally, Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao said.

Rao said the global financial system is facing strong headwinds from various quarters, including high levels of public debt, stretched asset valuations, economic and financial fragmentation, geopolitical tensions, and risks arising from increasing cyber threats



across the sectors," he said in the lecture on 'Climate Change -- The Emerging Challenge'. Rao said the global financial system is facing strong headwinds from various quarters, including high levels of public debt, stretched asset valuations, economic and financial fragmentation, geopolitical tensions, and risks arising from increasing cyber threats.

event held last week. He further said the Indian banking sector, in particular, has demonstrated significant improvement in key metrics such as capital adequacy, asset quality, and profitability, supported by robust macroeconomic fundamentals and business confidence.

Indian garment factories follow sustainable manufacturing practices: AEPC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian garment factories follow sustainable manufacturing practices by increasing the usage of renewable energy, and zero-liquid discharge, AEPC said on Thursday.



"Indian garment factories are by and large ESG (environmental, social, and governance) compliant. Indian garment factories are going high on usage of renewable energy, adoption of solar energy, zero liquid discharge," AEPC

Chairman Sudhir Sekhi said. He informed that India has come out with its own cotton brand in the name of Kasturi, which would enable global customers to track the entire textile value chain via traceability managed through block

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC), which has taken a big delegation to Tokyo for the India Tex Trends Fair, said the aim is to increase exports from India to Japan and to encourage and invite investment in the Indian ready-made garments (RMG) sector

EQT Private Cap Asia exits RBL Bank Sells entire stake for Rs 1,091 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

EQT Private Capital Asia, formerly known as Baring Private Equity Asia, on Thursday exited RBL Bank by selling its entire 7.89 per cent stake in the private sector lender for Rs 1,091 crore through an open market transaction.



Meanwhile, Societe Generale and Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore Pte bought 1,95,99,054 shares or 3.23 per cent stake in RBL Bank. The shares were purchased at an average price of Rs 228 apiece, taking the deal value to Rs 446.85 crore.

The scrip of RBL Bank fell 2.95 per cent to close at Rs 230.40 per piece on the BSE. Last week, RBL Bank reported a 29 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 372 crore for the June 2024 quarter.

FROM FICTION TO REALITY

Reliving slice of Julia Roberts' PIZZA MOMENT FROM EAT, PRAY, LOVE

AARTI SREENATH

Forget the postcard-perfectness of travel brochures. Close your eyes and imagine a world where wanderlust bleeds into wandering women. That is Jane Serena Chintha for you! Marketing whiz by day, intrepid explorer by wanderlust, she is a kaleidoscope of energy. She weaves well-being into everything she touches, even her wildly popular podcast, *Stay Sane with Jane*. Each episode is a captivating yarn woven with threads of laughter, heartwarming stories and maybe a tear or two—all straight from her travelogue of life. And let us not forget her viral reels! They are a visual feast, especially for her Telugu fans, taking them on breathtaking tours that leave you yearning to ditch the guidebook and get gloriously lost.

TRAVELOGUE

Buckle up, because Jane's just back from a European adventure and she is about to spill the wanderlust-inducing tea. Her latest escapade took her to the enchanting streets of Europe. "My recent trip to Europe was unforgettable. I spent two days in Barcelona and seven days in Italy," she recounts. "Among all the places I visited, Naples stood out the most. I absolutely loved Naples—the vibe, food and people. There is something raw and relatable about this city that makes it incredibly special. I felt a strange sense of belonging there, something I did not experience anywhere else during my travels. I would love to live in Naples someday, maybe for a year or two, to really soak in everything the city has to offer. It's a place that feels like home in a way no other place does."

Naples, with its bustling streets and never-ending energy, made a lasting impression on Jane. "Naples is incredibly lively, with streets that are always buzzing. You can see steam rising from little espresso cups at any time of day because the city never stops. Before my trip, I created a mood board for my European wardrobe. I wanted to radiate feminine energy, so I featured lots of whites, flowery dresses and skirts. I'm very happy with how my holiday wardrobe turned out."

Her travels are rich with cultural experiences and local interactions. One incident in Barcelona stands out. "When I first landed in Barcelona, I was very nervous since I didn't know the language. On my second morning, I went out to get coffee at a nearby café. I tried to stick my phone on someone's door to take a picture of myself and an older man came up to me and asked if he could take the picture for me. A sane person would probably say no and not give their phone to a stranger, especially with all the stories about pickpocketing in Barcelona. But I handed him my phone and ended up with some nice pictures! I also asked other tourists to take pictures of me because I was by myself and everyone was very sweet."

Her stay in Naples was made even more special by a local friend, who introduced her to the city's hidden gems. "I stayed with a friend and I'm so grateful for that, as it allowed me to discover the city through local eyes. They took me to a quaint little shop run by an elderly man named Mario. I never quite caught the shop's real name, but we called it Mario's. With its great-value drinks, especially the 1-euro spritz and a lively atmosphere of dancing and singing, Mario's quickly became a favourite spot. Those evenings spent there, soaking up the easy-going Neapolitan vibe, are memories I'll always treasure."

When asked about a unique place in India, her eyes light up. "Every state in India is culturally rich and uniquely distinct, but I have a special fondness for Hyderabad. After living there my entire life and taking time to travel and experience the world, I'd still choose to return and call it home. There is nothing about the city I dislike; it strikes the perfect balance between modernity and tradition. Hyderabadis, with their generous plates of *Biryani* and even bigger hearts, make the city feel like home in the most comforting way."

Jane prefers the coziness of Airbnbs when travelling solo, but hotels occasional-

ly find their way into her itinerary. "It's always important to check reviews before making a reservation, as they can be incredibly helpful. Also, make sure the place has all the essentials you need. I remember staying at a hotel in London that didn't provide fresh toiletries, which surprised me since I had always assumed that all hotels offered these basics."

For rejuvenation, Jane turns to serene landscapes of Scotland. "I live in Scotland, where the pace is relaxed and the scenery is calming. Sometimes, life here feels like it's straight out of a movie and I absolutely love it. When I feel the urge to escape, I head to the Highlands. There's something about the mountains that just revitalises me—taking a road trip through the Highlands is like a remedy for everything. Even though life can get a bit monotonous at times, the natural beauty here always brings back a sense of wonder."

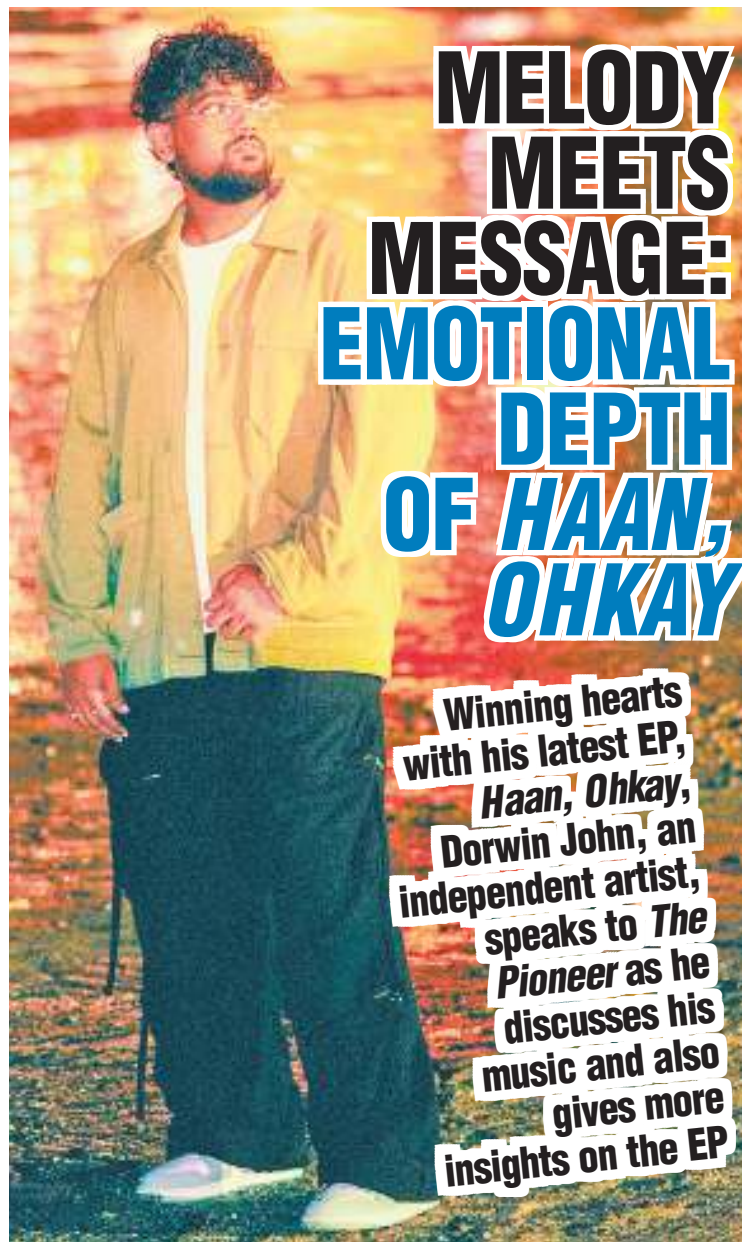
Her travels are filled with unexpected adventures and cultural surprises. "I've been travelling alone quite a bit recently, whether for work or vacations and booking an Airbnb can be pretty daunting. I've been nervous more times than I can count—like when I first arrived in Aberdeen, stayed in a tiny room in Barcelona, or rented a flat for myself in Scotland. It's a mix of fear and tranquility to be on your own like that. In those moments, I find comfort in praying to God and trusting that I'm protected and nothing will happen to me."

The content creator also shared a funny cultural misunderstanding she encountered in Scotland. "In the early days of settling into Scotland, I cooked chicken curry for my friends and later, my English friend decided to try making it himself. A month later, when we were both hungry and debating what to eat, he suddenly suggested chicken curry. I warned him it might take a while to cook, but he replied, 'No, I froze the chicken curry from last time. We can just eat that.' I was shocked! The idea of eating curry that was a month old was hard to digest, but he insisted it was perfectly fine since it was frozen. That was definitely my biggest culture shock."

Her European adventure was as much about food as it was about exploration. "You absolutely must try Neapolitan pizza. There's nothing like it! The first time I had it, I was incredibly hungry and my friend took me to the place where Julia Roberts had pizza in *Eat Pray Love*. It turned out to be the best pizza I've ever had. Plus, the food is incredibly affordable."

Reflecting on her travels, she says, "I think the trip was incredibly self-reflective. I learned a lot about myself, including the kind of holiday I enjoy and the lifestyle I prefer. Solo travel is something everyone should experience at least once. It's not only liberating but also offers valuable lessons about the world and about oneself."

When it comes to souvenirs, she has a charming habit. "Nothing strange so far, but I have a habit of picking up little gifts for friends and family when I travel. My family always encouraged me to bring something special for loved ones. I remember when my parents bought me a set of handcrafted pens during a trip to Agra to give to my friends at school. I keep that habit alive, collecting small souvenirs that I think my friends would enjoy. It struck me as odd that not everyone shares this practice; I felt a bit strange when a colleague returned from a holiday without a souvenir for me, haha. But then I realised, I was just raised a bit differently."



TEJAL SINHA

Winning hearts with his latest EP, Haan, Ohkay, Dorwin John, an independent artist, speaks to The Pioneer as he discusses his music and also gives more insights on the EP

Moze is all about finding your peace, chilling in your own space and just existing. The title track, *Haan, Ohkay*, is about embracing the good times and the bad times, no matter how rough it gets. It's about loving your people fiercely, flaws and all."

Visually, these tracks are strong. He pictured them in his head as he wrote them. All three came together in his living room; he wrote 'em down and recorded 'em fresh out of the oven. "For *Naksha*, I got stuck on the bridge for months, like a creative traffic jam. I finally broke through in Goa and finished the whole EP right after that trip. *Moze* was the first track I wrote for the EP. For all three, the writing process was like a burst of inspiration. I came up with the music first, then built the lyrics and vocals on top. Honestly, I wasn't sure about using "moze" at first, which means socks, but then I realised it's a unique metaphor for love, you know? The sound for *Moze* definitely draws on *Blink-182's* guitar vibes, but the drums are full-on drum and bass. I wasn't necessarily planning a drum and bass track, but it just fit, so I rolled with it."

Meanwhile, talking of the title track, it starts with that classic iMessage typing sound; you got to hear it! The whole track is this driving, four-on-the-floor groove. At first, the demo was called *Manzoor*, but he changed it because *Haan, Ohkay* is like the ultimate text-speak for acceptance in our generation. "It's catchy, simple and sticks in your head—perfect for a track name and the whole EP title. This one came together fast—I wrote it in two days, then spent a week polishing the production," enunciates the *Gaya Gaya* singer. "With *Haan, Ohkay*, I had a bigger vision and that somehow made working on all three tracks at once way smoother. It was like everything clicked. While I was finalising the production on *Moze*, I was already diving into the lyrics for *Naksha*. And by the time *Naksha* was shaped up, *Haan, Ohkay* was bubbling up in my head. It was this wild, mixed-up process, but it flowed great and totally opened my eyes to how I can create. This EP was my first big artistic statement."

His musical influence stretches beyond the boundaries of indie music. His extraordinary voice served as the soundtrack for Netflix India's official promotional film for the fifth and final season of the global blockbuster *Money Heist*, demonstrating his flexibility as a vocalist.

With his music constantly evolving, *Haan, Ohkay*, he says, was a big learning experience and he is already itching to explore new sounds. "I'm a huge admirer of artists who can blend genres seamlessly, so I might head down that path. Maybe some soulful electronic vibes, or even incorporate some traditional Indian instruments—who knows?"

New music, he says, is definitely on the horizon! Dorwin John's distinct blend of musicality and storytelling promises to captivate audiences all around the world as he continues to hone his craft and explore new creative frontiers. The EP is a compelling introduction to this budding musician, providing a glimpse into the aural cosmos he is about to build.

at a time when he realised that true love meant accepting people, flaws and everything else, making it the core message of the EP. Dorwin, who is only 24 years old, has already established himself in the Indian independent music scene. His intriguing melodies and unusual voice have earned him a devoted following, eager to witness his creative progression. Dorwin made a breakthrough in 2023 when he released his debut singles, *Aasha, Jaga De, Gaya Gaya* and *Parinaam*. These fascinating compositions have received over 1 million streams on Spotify alone, demonstrating his capacity to connect with listeners on a large scale.

The EP includes a compelling collection of tracks, including *Naksha, Moze* and the title track, *Haan, Ohkay*. Each track promises a distinct audio experience, bursting with Dorwin's trademark blend of current Indian music and poignant narration.

So, what are we waiting for? Let's bring to you some exclusive insights from the talented artist. "*Haan, Ohkay* came straight from the real stuff in my life," begins the *Parinaam* singer on a quick exclusive chat with *The Pioneer* as we discuss *Haan Ohkay*. Basically, there was

an idea of love and acceptance. *Naksha* is about being lost and searching for the right connection. Maybe even try to forget a bad one.

Reduce risk of hernia by managing constipation & urinary retention

There is an important relation between constipation, urinary retention, and chances of developing a hernia. It is important to manage constipation and urinary retention effectively to lower the risk of developing a hernia.

Understanding hernias and its relation to constipation and urinary retention

Hernia is a medical ailment in which an internal organ or other body tissue passes through a weak spot in the muscular wall or tissue area. Hernias typically occur in the abdomen and can cause serious pain or complications if not treated properly. Genetics, heavy lifting, obesity and disorders that increase intraabdominal pressure, such as constipation or urine retention, are all risk factors for hernia development. Hernias and constipation or urinary retention are related as both constipation and urinary retention are conditions that elevate intra-abdominal pressure. Efforts or attempts during defecation exert too much pressure on the walls of the abdomen, which might lead to a hernia. In a chronic state, constipation will cause repeated efforts; an enlarged prostate in males and similar dysfunctions of the pelvic floor in females may have similar effects, with urinary retention.

1- Managing constipation

• DIETARY ADJUSTMENTS

- 1. High fibre:** Eating a fibre-rich diet helps in maintaining bulky, soft stool consistency, which is easier to evacuate. Natural sources of fibre are fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.
- 2. Stay hydrated:** Adequate hydration is a simple way that constipation can easily be avoided. Water is required to keep the stool soft and for passage through the intestines.
- 3. Avoid foods high in fat and sugar:** Some foods high in fat and sugar can worsen constipation. A reduction in these foods can aid regularity.

• CHANGES IN LIFESTYLE

- 1. Routine physical activity:** Routine physical activity stimulates the intestines by causing them to contract better and push stools through the colon. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- 2. Establish a routine:** Try to have a bowel movement every day at approximately the same time. This may help your body develop a regular schedule for bowel movements.
- 3. Listen to urges promptly:** Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement can result in

constipation. Listen to your body and act accordingly.

• MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS

- 1. Laxatives:** Over-the-counter laxatives may help to some extent, but they should not be relied on for long-term management.
- 2. Prescribed medications:** If the constipation is chronic, the healthcare provider prescribes medications to regulate bowel movements.
- 2- Strategies to facilitate bladder emptying**
 - 1. Timed voiding:** Develop a schedule for patients to use the bathroom at regular intervals to prevent the bladder from becoming too full.
 - 2. Double voiding:** Once you are finished urinating, wait a few minutes, and then try to urinate again to completely empty your bladder.
 - 3. Warm baths:** You can sit in warm water in the bathtub to relax the muscles around your pelvis for easier urination.

3- Underlying causes for constipation and urinary retention

- 1. Prostate health:** Some men experience relief through medications for an enlarged prostate to reduce its size, or to relax the muscles of the bladder neck.
- 2. Pelvic floor dysfunction:** A woman with urinary retention from pelvic floor dysfunction can derive maximum benefit from physical therapy involving pelvic muscle exercises.

You should consult your nearest doctors if you have no improvement with treatment and still suffer the following symptoms-

1. Constipation
2. Bloating
3. Blood in the stool
4. Unintentional weight loss

Management of constipation and urinary retention is important not only for comfort and overall health but also for preventing hernia development. By diet modifications, lifestyle changes, and relevant

medical interventions, the patient will largely reduce elevated intra-abdominal pressures that lead to a hernia. Of course, it is possible to get more personalised counselling and treatment programs after consulting your health provider.

(The author, Dr. Mriganka Sekhar Sharma, is a consultant, Department of General Minimal Access and Bariatric Surgery, at Manipal Hospital.)



what's brewing?



Eleanor 1.0 Fashion for Fundraising with Shraavan Kумmar and Ready.Set.Go! initiative, co-presented with Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), was a celebration of art and culture, dedicated to the state of Telangana's history and vibrance. The event was conducted at HICC inHITEC City. Renowned fashion designer Shraavan Kумmar presented an exclusive collection in line with the theme of the evening, a kaleidoscope of Indian fashion.



PARTY

Narayana unveils Guidecast

Narayana Educational Institutions, with a 45-year legacy, has been pivotal in fulfilling countless student dreams; unveiled a new podcast, Guidecast by Narayana to address topics like mental and physical health to help parents strengthen relationships with their children. The first season is focused on mental well-being, offering guidance and support for students facing challenges.

Musical odyssey of love, life and leela

The world's first mega musical on *Shri Krishna - Rajadhiraaj: Love Life Leela* conceptualised and created by Dhanraj Nathwanis set to captivate audiences with a one of its kind theatrical experiences, bringing to life the magnanimity and benevolence of Shri Krishna. Set to unfold at the(NMACC) - Grand Theatre. The musical will have a runtime of 120 minutes, with shows running daily from August 15 to September 1, 2024.

'Mood' ball and gel pens hit markets

BIC Cello recently launched its latest innovation in India - the all-new MOOD pens range. Mirroring the vibrant spirit of Gen Z, these pens seamlessly blend fashion with functionality, promising a superior and delightful writing experience. The new MOOD pens range is a testament to the power of colours influencing our mood and emotions. Available in both ball and gel versions, the range offers a spectrum of colours — from calming blues and greys to vibrant, mood-lifting hues.

Makers of SIIMA and CCL announce nomination list

NEXA, in collaboration with the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA), is thrilled to announce the completion of the nomination process for the inaugural Streaming Academy Awards. This prestigious event is dedicated to celebrating excellence in original content across streaming platforms in both Hindi and Regional languages, specifically for web series and films directly streamed on OTT platforms. NEXA Streaming Academy Awards will honour with a total of 48 categories, the Streaming Academy Awards feature 24 categories dedicated to Hindi content and 24 to Regional content.

Paris Olympics to witness vibrant Indian culture

The Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC) is set to bring a vibrant cultural experience to the global stage at the India House, for the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics (July 27th to August 11th, 2024), starting with the Opening Ceremony with Bollywood singing sensation Shaan taking the stage. The India House will curate exclusive experiences through spectacular artistic showcases, art exhibits, live performances and more. The initiative highlights Founder & Chairperson Nita M. Ambani's lifelong vision of showcasing the best of India to the world.

Workshop on NEP 2020 for teacher empowerment

Bhai Parmanand Vidya Mandir, recently held a comprehensive workshop in their school auditorium to raise awareness among teachers about the New National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The workshop was facilitated by Manisha Sharma and Jyoti Sharma, renowned experts in competency-building programs. The event aimed to familiarise educators with the policy's intricate details, curricular changes, pedagogical shifts, and its holistic implementation for student development.

FNP sets trends with premium Rakhi collection

FNP renowned for its innovative and trendsetting Rakhi collections, announces the launch of its comprehensive Rakhi range for 2024. As the leader in online retail for Rakhi and Rakhi hampers, FNP continues to redefine the celebration of sibling bonds. This year's collection is handcrafted by skilled artisans and thoughtfully curated from across the country, offering unique and special designs for consumers in India and across the globe. Pre-booking for this exclusive collection has already started; ensuring customers can secure their favorite Rakhis well in advance.

SAMHI executes agreement with Marriott

SAMHI Hotels Ltd, a prominent hotel ownership and asset management platform in India, has informed exchanges about entering into agreements for the rebranding of two of its hotels acquired as part of ACIC portfolio. Pursuant to the above, SAMHI has entered into a management agreement with Marriott for the rebranding of its 217 rooms hotel in Pune to a Courtyard by Marriott branded hotel. The conversion and rebranding will occur post a renovation set to conclude by the end of FY2026.

Unicorn India Ventures partially exits Sascan

Unicorn India Ventures, a deep tech focused fund house, which is currently raising its third fund of Rs 1,000 crore, has announced a partial exit from neo diagnostics startups Sascan Meditech. UIV had invested Rs 2 crore spread across 2 rounds. The first investment was made in 2020.

Lifespan Announces Esha Singh as Brand Ambassador

Hyderabad based Lifespan Pvt. Ltd. announces the signing of Indian professional shooter Esha Singh as their brand ambassador. Esha Singh, one of the youngest shooters in the Indian Olympic contingent, will represent India in the pistol event at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.



MIT World Peace University (MIT-WPU) announced the successful conclusion of the 1st National Scientists Round Table Conference (NSRTC 2024). The three-day conference brought together top academicians, scientists, researchers, and scholars. The focus was on exchanging insights and research across Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, and Engineering & Technology.



SBI advisors in the city were honoured at a programme held in Banjara Hills. On this occasion, Zonal Director of SBI Life Vatsava, honoured SBI Senior Advisor Jawwadi Anilkumar who was the topper of Telangana with Veera Telangana Award.

Photos by - SV Chary



An association between Apollo Hospitals and the Cardiovascular Research Foundation (CRF) USA, the three-day TCT India 2024, India's premier Interventional Cardiology Conference, is being organised by FACTS Foundation, a non-profit organization of cardiologists and cardiac surgeons dedicated to newer research, innovation, education and training. The event is going to be held at HICC inHITEC City, starting from today. This event will end on July 28.



C. Suresh Kumar, former Professor and Head of Paediatrics at Gandhi Medical College, during a press meet held in the city highlighted that Hyderabad has witnessed a 10-15% annual increase in kidney patients, attributed to silent dehydration. He also highlighted the importance of fluid and electrolytes to combat rising silent dehydration crisis



Volta announced its collaboration with Total Emergency Network (TEN). This partnership aims to enhance safety for Volta users through an innovative integration of emergency services.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



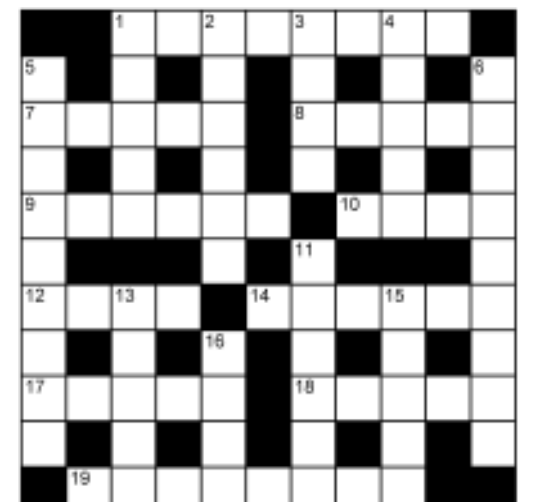
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

ACROSS

- Very good indeed
- A leader of a tribe
- Chefs
- A religious holiday every year
- A large continent
- A ship's tall pole
- The country just north of the USA
- A female relation
- A wild dog from Australia
- Opposite of strength

DOWN

- Worshipped statues
- Yelling loudly and shrilly
- A moving staircase
- A rider's seat on a horse
- Part of a stage play
- Opposite of uncles
- A pointed top of a mountain



GINGER MEGGS



RAKSHIT ATLURI ON BRINGING THRILLS, TRANSFORMATION TO BIG SCREEN

Actor Rakshit Atluri, all set with the global release of his upcoming film *Operation Raavan*, interacts with *The Pioneer* as he shares some interesting insights about the film.

K. RAMYA SREE

In the heart of the bustling film industry, where creativity meets ambition, Rakshit Atluri stands poised to captivate audiences once again. Known for his compelling roles in films like *Palasa* and *Narakasura*, Atluri now ventures into the realm of suspense thrillers with *Operation Raavan*, set for a global theatrical release on the 26th of this month. Directed by Venkata Sathya and produced under the keen eye of Dhyani Atluri, the film promises to redefine the genre with its innovative storyline and stellar cast.

In an exclusive interview, Rakshit Atluri shared insights into the making of *Operation Raavan*, shedding light on the film's origins and his transformative journey within it. "The concept of *Operation Raavan* took root during the Covid-19 lockdown," he revealed, reflecting on the genesis of the project. "After the success of *Palasa*, discussions at Sudhas Media revolved around crafting a thriller that would resonate deeply with today's audience." Under the guidance of his father, Dhyani Atluri, a seasoned storyteller in his own right, Rakshit Atluri embraced the challenge



of portraying Anand Sriram, a pivotal character in the narrative. "Working under my father's direction has been a unique experience. His vision and attention to detail have shaped every aspect of this film, from script development to the intricate dynamics of each scene," shared the *Palasa* star.

One of the film's highlights is the character 'Psycho', played by Sangeetha Vipin, whose portrayal Atluri believes will leave a lasting impression. "To engage the audience further, we've launched a special initiative tied to the character 'Psycho', viewers who identify Psycho and reach out to us will receive a specially minted silver coin, a gesture aimed at connecting deeply with our audience," he shared enthusiastically.

Reflecting on the challenges and rewards of his role, Atluri expressed his ambition to diversify his on-screen persona. "While

Operation Raavan doesn't seek to preach, it explores the complexities of its characters and their ideological conflicts. This film has been a journey of personal growth for me, pushing me to explore new dimensions in my acting," the actor explained.

From action-packed sequences to moments of introspection, Atluri's dedication to his craft shines through. "I sustained an injury during one of the action scenes. Every challenge has been an opportunity to evolve as an actor." With Radhika Sarath Kumar's formidable presence and the cinematic finesse of director Venkata Sathya, *Operation Raavan* promises a theatrical experience unlike any other. "The immersive sound and visuals are integral to the storytelling. This film is crafted for the big screen, where audiences can truly immerse themselves in its world," he affirmed.

Looking ahead, the actor remains focused on his craft, with upcoming projects like *Sasivadane* and *Palasa 2* on the horizon. "Each film is a chance to connect with audiences in new ways," he concluded with a smile. "I believe *Operation Raavan* and its successors will bring me closer to the hearts of viewers, sparking conversations and leaving a lasting impact."

Sanjay Dutt begins dubbing for *Double ISMART*

Sanjay Dutt, the iconic Bollywood star, has ventured into Telugu cinema with a pivotal role in the highly anticipated Pan-India film *Double ISMART*. This blockbuster project marks his first full-length role in a Telugu film, directed by the dynamic duo of Ustaad Ram Potheni and acclaimed director Puri Jagannadh. Dutt has not only portrayed his character with vigour but has also personally lent his voice by dubbing in Hindi for authenticity and impact. The film is currently in its final stages of post-production, with promotional activities already generating tremendous excitement. The teaser and two songs released so far have received an overwhelming response, particularly resonating with the masses. *Double ISMART* promises a double dose of mass appeal, action-



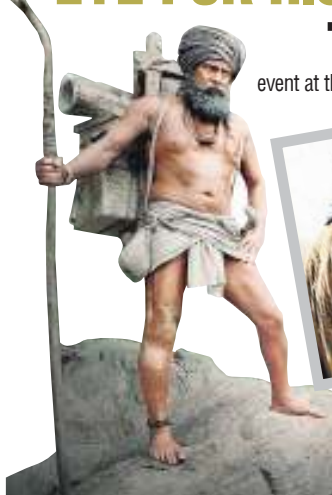
packed sequences, gripping drama, and high-octane entertainment. Produced under the banner of Puri Connects by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur, the movie features Kavya Thapar opposite Ram Potheni as the leading lady.

The music score is crafted by the legendary Mani Sharma, while the cinematography is handled by Sam K Naidu and Gianni Gianneli, ensuring a visually stunning experience. Scheduled for a grand release on Independence Day, August 15, *Double ISMART* will hit theatres worldwide in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi languages. PrimeShow Entertainment, led by Niranjan Reddy and Chaitanya Reddy, is overseeing the global distribution across all five languages, adding to the film's monumental anticipation and reach.

THANGALAN MAKERS EYE FOR HISTORIC KGF

The creators of *Thangalaan* are preparing for a spectacular event at the iconic Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), blending the narrative richness of Pa. Ranjith's ambitious project with the historical allure of Kolar's heritage. The film, deeply rooted in the legendary gold mines of Kolar, unfolds a tale of history, courage, and unwavering dreams. A close source from the production recently unveiled plans for a grand event at KGF, stating, "The makers of *Thangalaan* are gearing up to host a grand event at the Kolar Gold Fields, the heart of the film's narrative. This event promises to be a celebration of creativity and culture like never before."

The upcoming event at KGF aims not only to celebrate but also to honour the enduring spirit of creativity and the vibrant tradition of Indian storytelling. Featuring captivating performances that embody the essence of *Thangalaan* and immersive exhibitions highlighting the craftsmanship behind the film's production, every aspect of the event is crafted to enthrall and inspire. As excitement mounts for the film starring Chiyaan Vikram and Malavika Mohanan, all eyes are on Kolar Gold Fields, where *Thangalaan* breathes new life amidst echoes of history and the promise of a bright future. *Thangalaan*, which also stars Malavika Mohanan in a significant role, is scheduled for a worldwide release on August 15, 2024, in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The film's music is composed by GV Prakash Kumar, adding to the anticipation surrounding this epic tale set against the backdrop of KGF's storied legacy.



Sundarakanda makers celebrate Nara Rohith's b'day with new poster release

As Nara Rohith gears up for his landmark 20th film *Sundarakanda*, directed by Venkatesh Nimmalapati in his directorial debut, the excitement is palpable. Produced by Santhosh Chinnapolla, Govtham Reddy and Rakesh Mahankalli under the banner of Sandeep Picture Palace (SPP), the film promises to be a delightful rom-com. Celebrating Nara Rohith's birthday, the makers revealed a special poster that captures the essence of the film. In the poster, Nara Rohith exudes charm in a stylish attire, complemented by a vibrant and scenic backdrop. The tagline "No Two Love Stories Are The Same" hints at a unique love narrative, promising something fresh and engaging for audiences. Anticipation builds further as the teaser for the film is set to be released soon. Opposite Nara Rohith, Vriti Vaghani stars as the leading lady, supported by Sri Devi Vijay Kumar, Naresh Vijaya Krishna, and Vasuki Anand in pivotal roles. *Sundarakanda* is set to resonate with viewers through its colorful and relatable nuances. Pradeep M Varma handles the cinematography, capturing the film's visual splendor, while Leon James composes the music to enhance the storytelling. Sundeeep serves as the executive producer, with Rajesh Pentakota contributing as the art director.



Pranitha Subhash all set to welcome her second baby

Pranitha Subhash, celebrated for her versatile roles in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam cinema, has joyfully announced her second pregnancy. Taking to Instagram on Thursday, the actress shared the delightful news with her fans and followers, accompanied by pictures showcasing her baby bump. Pranitha humorously captioned, "Round 2... The pants don't fit anymore!" Her announcement sparked an outpouring of congratulatory messages from admirers and well-wishers, showering her with love and best wishes. On the professional front, Pranitha was last seen in the Kannada romantic comedy *Ramana Avatara*, directed by Vikas and Vinay Pampathi. Released on May 10, 2024, the film also starred Rishi, Shubra Aiyappa, Arun Sagar and Anirudh Acharya in pivotal roles. Pranitha tied the knot with businessman Nitin Raju in a private ceremony on May 30, 2021. The couple welcomed their first child, a baby girl, in June of the following year, marking a new chapter of happiness in their lives. Now, after three years of marital bliss, Pranitha and Nitin are eagerly anticipating the arrival of their second child, embarking on another joyous journey into parenthood.

AKASH PURI CHANGES HIS NAME

Akash Puri, known for his early success as a child artist in several blockbuster films directed by the prolific Puri Jagannadh, has officially changed his name to Akash Jagannadh. This announcement coincided with his special birthday celebration. As a lead actor, Akash gained prominence with roles in diverse films like *Andhra Pori*, *Mehbooba*, *Romantic* and *Chor Bazar*, where he showcased his versatility and acting prowess. Taking to social media, Akash shared his decision to adopt the name Akash Jagannadh, signaling a new chapter in his career. Expressing his enthusiasm, Akash Jagannadh revealed plans to embark on several exciting projects with compelling narratives, promising more details to be unveiled soon. Recently, Akash Jagannadh also took on the role of brand ambassador for RC Trend Setters, reflecting his growing influence and popularity in the industry. Wishing the young actor a joyous birthday and continued success in his endeavours.



Vamsi Nandipati acquires AP&TG theatrical rights of Kiran Abbavaram's KA

Successful producer Vamsi Nandipati, known for his knack for successful projects, has acquired the Telugu States rights to the epic period thriller *KA*, starring the talented young hero Kiran Abbavaram. He secured these rights for Rs. 12 crore on an NRI basis. The film's rights for theatrical and non-theatrical distribution in other languages are expected to fetch around Rs. 18 crore. Notably, the pre-release business for *KA* has already reached Rs. 30 crore. These impressive figures underscore the buzz that *KA* has generated within trade circles, reaffirming the adage that content is king. Nayan Sarika and Tanvi Raam play pivotal roles as heroines in *KA*. Presented by Chinta Varalakshmi and produced under the banner of Srichakraas Entertainments by Chinta Gopalakrishna Reddy, the film boasts high production values. Directors Sujith and Sandeep are crafting *KA* as a village-set action thriller. The film is slated for a grand theatrical release not only in Telugu but also in Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada.



Krishnasai's Jewel Thief teaser gives suspense thrills

Telugu cinema is gearing up for another gripping suspense thriller with the upcoming release of *Jewel Thief*, featuring Krishnasai and Meenakshi Jaiswal in lead roles. The teaser and audio launch event was held at Prasad Labs in Hyderabad, marking a significant milestone for the film directed by PS Narayana and produced under the Sri Vishnu Global Media banner by Mallela Prabhakar. The event saw guests including Central Reserve Police Force DIG Anil Minj, AP and Telangana Income Tax Commissioner IRS Officer Jeevan Lal Lavidiya and actress Esther, who unveiled the teaser and songs amidst much anticipation. Hero Krishnasai, inspired by Superstar Krishna, shared his excitement about the project. "This suspense thriller is tailored for the current generation. The music by MM Srilekha is impressive, and working with veteran actress Prema has been a dream come true," he enthused. Director PS Narayana highlighted the film's journey from concept to completion in a short span, emphasising the stellar contributions of the entire cast and crew. "This is a film that will captivate everyone, featuring renowned senior actors in significant roles," he assured.

GAMBHIR'S FIRST HEADACHE: PANT OR SAMSON FOR T20I SERIES

PTI ■ COLOMBO

New India head coach Gautam Gambhir will have the onerous task of choosing between Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson during the three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka starting from Saturday. While most of the key stars of the T20 World Cup winning side saps the retiring duo of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are in the Island nation, the choice between two flamboyant wicketkeeper batters Pant and Samson won't be an easy one. Worse, even with two slots vacant, one can't fit in both the hard-hitting batters. Pant with 171 runs was the third highest run-getter for India in the T20 World Cup in the Americas but Samson, though was part of the team, didn't get into any game. A bilateral series against Sri Lanka, of late, has become a low-stakes affair with the two countries often engaged in inconsequential series, some of which India plays to help other international cricket boards stay afloat. One such series was supposed to be the upcoming one against Sri Lanka but it has assumed greater significance



after Gambhir took over as the coach and Hardik Pandya, a sure-shot candidate for captaincy was surpassed by Suryakumar Yadav. In this backdrop, the presence of Gambhir, a fiercely opinionated former India opener and a successful franchise-level mentor, will certainly have a broader say in the team composition, something that will be built over two years in the run-up to the next T20 World Cup. The choice of a keeper-batter

in T20Is hasn't exactly been a straight forward one for India, especially during the time Pant was out of action due to a horrific car accident in December, 2022. Ishan Kishan was around for some time before he fell out of favour after leaving the tour of South Africa midway. Samson has featured in some games, so has Jitesh Sharma and Dhruv Jurel in the interim. Samson, one of Pant's contemporaries, has so far played 28 T20I games with a

couple of fifties and strike rate of 133 plus. But it will be fair to say that 27 of those matches have come in the period between 2020 to present, having made his debut back in 2015. So in three and half years, 27 matches sporadically isn't a lot of games to build on confidence. While average is a slightly less important aspect in the shortest format, the Kerala star would himself admit that 21.14 doesn't do justice to his immense potential. On the

other hand, Pant from his 74 T20I games has three fifties and a strike-rate of a shade below 127. Samson's average is thus pretty similar to the Delhi Capitals skipper, who scored at 22.70 per game. In terms of sheer numbers there is not much to choose between the two. Both are audacious stroke-makers, Pant's falling pull shots are fascinating while Samson on his day can hit the fastest of bowlers over extra cover for maximums.

It will also purely depend on what the new team management feels. When it came to Rohit Sharma, he has blind faith in Pant's capabilities and Samson despite being in the squad wasn't even up for discussion during the T20 World Cup. However, in the next tour following the T20 World Cup when most first XI boys were rested, Samson played the last three games in Zimbabwe and was also appointed vice-captain to Shubman Gill. In terms of keeping, Pant is a far better keeper to spinners like Ravi Bishnoi but in T20Is, keeping skills aren't that important as there are very few balls that would pose trouble for the glovesmen. Gambhir was Pant's first first-class captain and has seen him as an 18-year-old even before he played for the India U-19s. But he has also been a big advocate of Samson's T20 prowess and vocal about his inclusion during his days as a TV pundit. It will be a very tough choice and even if Pant is picked for the series, he knows that he would have to not only score quick but also play a few big innings to stack up the numbers and keep Samson at bay.



F1 driver Esteban to join American Haas team from next season

AP ■ KANNAPOLIS (US)

Frenchman Esteban Ocon will drive for Haas from next season as a replacement for Kevin Magnussen, the American Formula 1 team said on Thursday. Details of the deal were not announced, with Haas only saying that the 27-year-old driver committed to a "multi-year contract starting with the 2025 FIA Formula 1 World Championship." Ocon, the only driver to win a race for Alpine since it rebranded from Renault at the end of 2020, has picked up just three points this season and had already announced he was leaving the French-owned team. His Alpine contract is expiring at the end of the season. Ocon made his F1 debut in 2016 with Manor and joined the then-Renault team for 2020. His sole career win

came at the Hungarian Grand Prix in 2021 for Alpine after a crash in wet conditions took out much of the field. "I am thrilled to embark on this new chapter in my Formula 1 career," Ocon said. "I'll be joining a very ambitious racing team, whose spirit, work ethic, and undeniable upward trajectory has really impressed me." Haas announced last week that Magnussen would leave Haas at the end of the season when his contract expires. On the eve of the Belgian Grand Prix, team principal Ayao Komatsu said Ocon will bring crucial experience to the team after 19-year-old Oliver Bearman also joined. The British driver will take the seat vacated by German driver Nico Hulkenberg, who is joining Sauber at the end of the year ahead of its rebranding to Audi for 2026.

Djokovic, Nadal could meet in 2nd round at Paris Olympics, Swiatek faces Begu first

AP ■ PARIS

Top-seeded Novak Djokovic could meet his longtime rival Rafael Nadal in the second round of the Paris Olympic tennis tournament. Djokovic was drawn Thursday against Australian Matthew Ebden and Nadal faces Hungary's Marton Fucsovics, with the winners of those matches meeting in Round 2. The 38-year-old Nadal won a record 14 of his 22 major trophies at the French Open. He won gold in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc López at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. "Roland Garros as everybody knows is the most special place in tennis for me. I am enjoying the fact I am back for the Olympics," Nadal said on stage after the draw. "I am just trying to enjoy every single moment." French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz takes on Lebanese player Hadj Habib. Top-ranked Iga Swiatek of Poland faces Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania in the opening round of the women's draw with second-seeded American Coco Gauff taking on Australian Ajla Tomljanovic. Gauff is the reigning US Open champion and is making her Olympic debut. She is a flag bearer for the US team at Friday's opening ceremony along with basketball star LeBron James.



She will be the first tennis athlete to carry the US flag. Djokovic and Swiatek have not won Olympic gold. Djokovic owns 24 Grand Slam trophies, more than anyone else in tennis apart from Margaret Court, but his only Olympic medal was a bronze in Beijing in 2008. Swiatek has won the French Open four of the past five years on the same clay courts at Roland Garros. Four-time major winner Naomi Osaka of Japan takes on three-time major champion Angelique Kerber of Germany. Men's and women's first-round play begins Saturday, and the top-ranked man won't be playing. Jannik Sinner pulled out on Wednesday because of tonsillitis. The 22-year-old from Italy posted on X that he took medical advice to sit out the Summer Games. Tokyo Games champion Alexander Zverev of Germany plays Australian Alex de Minaur.

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP SEMI-FINAL India start firm favourites against Bangladesh

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Shafali Verma will be aiming to come out all guns blazing while Smriti Mandhana will be more than motivated to get a big one as India start overwhelming favourites against Bangladesh in the semi-final of the women's Asia Cup here on Friday. Shafali, with 158 runs, has been the second highest run-scorer in the tournament so far and against Nigar Sultana's team, which has a host of slow bowlers, she will have to give India a good start. The 'Women In Blue' pummeled the opposition in all three games -- winning by seven wickets against Pakistan, 78 runs against UAE and by an 82-run margin against Nepal.

However, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur knows that in Asia Cup, it is only the semi-final and final matter the most and they would not miss the fact that Bangladesh on select days can be a dangerous side. The start will be very important for India and Shafali will want her senior opening partner Mandhana to also fire in unison. The elegant left-hander was in great nick during her 45 against Pakistan, which could have been a bigger one in terms of volume. With UAE and Nepal being two of the three opponents during the group league stage, the Indian team would certainly face a sterner test against a bunch of decent slow bowlers in the Bangladesh



ranks. Slow left-arm orthodox Nahida Akhter and young leg-spinner Rabeya Khan have both claimed five wickets apiece. While Nahida with a parsimonious economy rate of 3.25 would like to build the pressure on an experienced batting line-up while leg-break bowler Rabeya is likely to push for wickets.

The medium pace department comprises veteran Jahanara Alam along with Ritu Moni, who also has chipped in with three wickets. However, with Harmanpreet, Richa Ghosh and Jemimah Rodrigues coming in the middle-order and all-rounders Deepti Sharma and Puja Vastrakar to complement them, India has a lot of quality

in their ranks. With pitches at the Dambulla Stadium slowing down considerably during the second half, India would like to defend a total on the big day. The semi-final will, however, be an afternoon game. Off-spinner Deepti has been very consistent with the ball taking eight wickets in three games so far. The economy rate of 4.66 has been equally impressive compared to Radha Yadav, who has been on the slightly expensive side. The Indian new ball duo of Renuka Singh Thakur and Vastrakar have been on target during the games. For Bangladesh, they haven't had too many impactful batters and if India can post anything in the range of 140-plus, it

could well be enough for a place in the final. **TEAMS** **INDIA:** Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Jemimah Rodrigues, Renuka Thakur, Dayalan Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajeevan. **BANGLADESH:** Nigar Sultana Joty (C), Shorna Akter, Nahida Akter, Murshida Khatun, Shorifa Khatun, Ritu Moni, Rubya Haider Jhelik, Sultana Khatun, Jahanara Alam, Dilara Akter, Ishma Tanjim, Rabeya Khan, Rumana Ahmed, Marufa Akter, Sabikun Nahar Jesmin.

Former AICF chief Sanjay Kapoor elected FIDE India zone president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former All India Chess Federation (AICF) chief Sanjay Kapoor has been unanimously elected the president of FIDE India Zone, the sport's apex body in the country said on Thursday. The announcement was made during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of AICF in Ahmedabad. Kapoor has been elected as the zone president for four years, and FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich congratulated the Indian

administrator. Kapoor's new role marks a pivotal moment for chess governance in India, entrusting him with the responsibility of overseeing the game's growth and development across the globe. Speaking on his appointment, Kapoor said, "It is an immense honour to be elected as the FIDE India Zone President. I am committed to the growth of chess in every corner of our country and ensuring that we produce Grandmasters from each and every state." "My experience with the 44th

Chess Olympiad has shown me the incredible potential we have, and I am excited to work towards a bright future for chess in India and internationally," he added. Kapoor has been at the forefront of successfully staging the 44th edition of the Chess Olympiad in India. He was the AICF president when India hosted the event. Meanwhile, On International Chess Day (July 20) last week, FIDE also launched its Guinness World Record attempt for the most games played online and over-the-board in 24 hours.

Indian athletes' confidence has reached new high: Gagan

PTI ■ PARIS

Olympic medallist shooter Gagan Narang said Indian athletes' mindset has changed over the years and their confidence has touched unprecedented levels, encouraging them to set their sights on a gold medal. The London Games bronze medallist, who is serving as India's Chef-de-Mission at the Paris Olympics, felt the Indian athletes are now not intimidated by their counterparts from other countries. "There is a huge change in the motivation and the level

of thinking our athletes have today. We used to feel scared, under-confident because other countries were better. But slowly that's changed, the mindset (has) changed," Narang told reporters here. "People started watching sports, playing it, then we had great performances. The confidence is at a new high. Today's athletes don't go just to participate, they go to perform. "Someone in the top 8 or 5 wants to win a medal today and not just any medal but a gold. That's the difference in the thinking of the athletes today.

"They don't think anyone is above them. They rate competitors at par and that's a very positive sign for Indian sport," Narang added. The 41-year-old said there has been an "unprecedented coordination" between the Sports Ministry, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the national federations. "The support we have got from the government (this time) we never got before. The support has increased in the past few years, TOPS' players have increased, they have got all the facilities they wanted.

Paris aims to reset Olympics with audacious games and wow opening

AP ■ PARIS

Paris has long been a city of dreamers: Just look at the Eiffel Tower, for decades the world's loftiest structure. Audacity also underpins the French capital's plans for its first Olympic Games in a century, which open Friday with an opening ceremony on the river.

The most sprawling and elaborate Olympic opening ever — a gala spectacular Friday evening on the River Seine that even French President Emmanuel Macron says initially felt like "a crazy and not very serious idea" — kicks off 16 days of competition that promise to be ground-breaking, with nearly every corner of the city hosting some aspect of competition.

After two toned-down, pandemic-hampered Olympics, expect a bold celebration. The heady marriage of sports and

France's world-renowned capital of fashion, gastronomy and culture could also help secure the Olympics' longer-term future.

Olympic organizers were struggling to find suitable host cities for their flagship Summer Games when they settled on Paris in 2017, enticed by its promise of innovations and the potential for the city of romance to rekindle love for the Olympics, especially with younger audiences that have so many other entertainment options. But Paris' challenges are huge, too.

Past and present sorrows hang over the Games. The city that has been repeatedly struck by deadly extremist attacks has to safeguard 10,500 athletes and millions of visitors. The international context of wars in Ukraine and Gaza add layers of complication for the gargantuan security effort. French elite special forces are



part of the security detail for Israel's delegation. Still, if all goes well, Paris hopes to be remembered as a before-and-after Olympic watershed. The first Games with nearly equal numbers of men and women, an advance that's been a long time coming since 22 women first got accepted as Olympians 124 years ago, also in Paris, will take another step toward aligning the Olympics with the post-#MeToo world.

Paris also hopes to reassure climate-conscious Generations Z and beyond by staging Games that are less polluting, more sustainable and more socially virtuous than their predecessors. Many of the sports venues are temporary, because Paris didn't want to repeat the mistake of previous Olympic host cities that built new arenas and then had no use for them. With iconic Paris monuments as backdrops — beach

volleyball in the Eiffel Tower's shadow — and breakdancing added to a growing list of Olympic sports that target young audiences, expect plenty of viral moments on Instagram, TikTok and elsewhere. Crowds will be back for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic forced Tokyo to push back its Games to 2021 and keep spectators away, and the Beijing Winter Games in 2022, when China was locked down. Prize-winning French theater director Thomas Jolly is turning central Paris into an open-air stage for the opening ceremony that will run through sunset and showcase France, its people and their history. The 330-meter-tall (1,083-foot-tall) Eiffel Tower will surely feature prominently. Hundreds of thousands of people, including 320,000 paying and invited ticket-holders, are expected to line

the Seine's banks as athletes are paraded along the river on boats.

During the extravaganza, a no-fly zone extending for 150 kilometers (93 miles) around the capital will close Paris' skies, policed by fighter jets, airspace-monitoring AWACS surveillance flights, surveillance drones, helicopters that can carry sharpshooters and drone-disabling equipment. Helping Parisians move past the attacks of 2015 Showcasing and celebrating Paris could be joyously cathartic for the city that was plunged into mourning by extremist attacks in 2015. Guesses about the identity of the person or people who might get the honor of lighting the Olympic cauldron include soccer icon Zinedine Zidane and other French sporting heroes, but also survivors of Islamic State-group gunmen and suicide bombers who killed

130 people on Nov. 13, 2015. Paris is also taking gambles in hopes of leaving an indelible impression on the Olympics' global audience of billions. The decision not to stage the opening ceremony in the traditional setting of France's biggest stadium — the Stade de France that was among the 2015 attackers' targets and is now the venue for Olympic track and field and rugby sevens — and to host skateboarding, archery and other sports in temporary arenas in the heart of Paris have made safeguarding the Games more complex. Rights campaigners and Games critics worry about the broad scope and scale of Olympic security, including the use of AI-equipped surveillance technology. Paris' reach stretches to the Pacific. The furthest venue is on the other side of the world in the French Pacific territory of Tahiti, where Olympic surfers

will compete on famously giant waves that first form in storm belts off Antarctica. Up to 45,000 police and gendarmes, plus 10,000 soldiers, are safeguarding Paris and its suburbs that together are hosting most of the 32 sports that will crown Olympic champions in 329 medal events. The gold, silver and bronze medals they'll hand out are inlaid with a hexagonal, polished chunk of iron taken from the Eiffel Tower. The Seine's banks and riverside roads and more than a dozen of its bridges were fenced off nine days ahead of the opening ceremony, creating a no-go zone for people who haven't applied in advance for passes and making it tough for Parisians and visitors to get around and see the sights in the city of 2 million. Owners of restaurants and other businesses inside the security fence are howling about fewer customers.