

The BRS would return to power and govern the state for another 15 years. Schemes launched by YSR like Arogyasri and fee reimbursement were continued without changing their names but were implemented better by the BRS. Some people want to wipe out all traces of KCR. So will you remove Telangana also then as I fought for its statehood

- K. Chandrasekhar Rao, BRS chief P4

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DON'T MISS...
Veligonda project will be completed...

District Collector A. Thameem Ansariya announced today that the Veligonda project is on track for completion soon, ensuring swift resolution of issues faced by evacuees. During her inspection of project sites on Tuesday, Collector Ansariya visited affected areas and received updates from officials and engineers on progress. She engaged with villagers in Kalanatala, a submerged village, discussing their concerns such as access to drinking water and basic amenities. Villagers expressed readiness to relocate pending fair compensation and...

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'Only 8 countries could lower...

Even as premature deaths due to cancer have come down across three-fourths of the world, only eight countries are likely to meet the related United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 3.4, pointed out a recent study. The target is concerned with slashing premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cancer, by a third by 2030 through prevention and treatment. For the study, researchers, including those from the World Health...

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International toy fair to begin on...

More than 300 domestic companies and over 100 foreign buyers from the US, Germany and other countries are expected to participate in the four-day international toy fair beginning on July 6 in the national capital, a statement said on Tuesday. More than 250 Indian brands will display their products during the fair, which is being organised at Pragati Maidan here, Toy Association of India senior vice-president Naresh Kumar Gautam said in the statement. Gautam said that the 15th Toy Biz...

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Lot of time for me to sleep, for now...

Rohit Sharma held the T20 World Cup trophy like a new-born baby as he walked towards the beach here for the triumphant captain's post-tournament photo shoot, a serene smile refusing to leave his face and the feeling of being a world champion yet to fully sink in. He couldn't be faulted for being a bit dazed. After all, a jinx that lasted over a decade had been broken. "It's surreal. It feels like a dream. It feels like it hasn't happened. Although it has happened but it feels like it hasn't happened," Rohit...

-SPORTS

Belgian envoy meets Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Belgian Ambassador to India, Didier Vanderhasselt, met with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday. The delegation, composed of Belgian trade and industry representatives led by Ambassador Vanderhasselt, discussed potential investment opportunities in the state.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu emphasized the government's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment in Andhra Pradesh. He stated, "We welcome businesses from India and across the world to invest in our state."

The Belgian delegation visited the state capital, Amaravati, and engaged in discussions aimed at exploring various avenues for economic collaboration.



'Funds crunch crippled Panchayat Raj system'

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister K. Pawan Kalyan lamented that a funds crunch has crippled the Panchayat Raj system in the State.

Pawan Kalyan held a meeting with Collector Shan Mohan Sagili and other officials on Tuesday to review various issues.

Speaking on the occasion, he said the government earns over Rs 1000 crore from sand extraction in East Godavari district, but it has not given the Panchayat Raj its share. "The village panchayats are fac-

ing a funds crunch because the state government has diverted their funds to other purposes. The panchayats should receive their share from sand extraction, mines, registrations, and labour taxes, but the government has not allocated the due funds. I was shocked at the dismal financial situation of the village panchayats when officials explained," Pawan Kalyan asserted.

Due to the indifference of the erstwhile YSRCP government, Andhra Pradesh did not receive funds under the Jal Jeevan Mission, and the matching funds were not released. Continued on Page 2

CM begins stock-taking

Reviews sand availability, damaged roads, inflation with top officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to take immediate measures to address the problems faced by various sections of people. On Tuesday, the CM held a series of review meetings with concerned ministers and officials at the Secretariat. The discussions focused on issues including the availability of sand in the State, the new sand policy, damaged roads, and the price control of essential commodities.

The Chief Minister emphasised that many problems faced by the people are a result of the previous government's policies, and quick steps should be taken to resolve them. He instructed officials to prepare a necessary roadmap to address these issues.

Chandrababu asked the officers to study the prevailing situations in different parts of the State, evaluate immediate measures, and formulate long-term plans to resolve these issues. Initially, he reviewed the availability of sand and the new policy to be adopted. Officials detailed the results of policies implemented by the TDP regime between 2014 and 2019 and the losses incurred due to the new policies introduced by the YSRCP government. They informed Chandrababu that the construction industry had suffered



- Naidu says problems due to previous government's policies and calls for a roadmap to resolve them.
- Immediate and long-term measures to be formulated based on current state evaluations.
- The construction industry suffered due to high sand prices and a lack of transparency in sand quarry maintenance.
- Immediate actions to ensure sand availability and control prices were directed
- CM stresses the need to repair damaged roads and adopt new technologies despite financial difficulties.
- Urgent measures to curb rising prices of essentials, especially onions, tomatoes, and rice, discussed.

Officials brief CM about sand supply irregularities and online system policies

significantly due to high sand prices, scarcity of stocks, and lack of transparency in the maintenance of sand quarries. The officials also briefed the Chief Minister on large-scale irregularities in sand supply and marketing, including the policies on online systems. "There was no proper assessment of sand mining quantities due to the lack of supervision," they reported.

In response, Chandrababu direct-

ed officials to ensure the immediate availability of sand for the construction industry and to prevent stock shortages. He emphasized the need to control sand prices and develop a new policy for sand supply.

Reviewing the condition of roads in the state, the Chief Minister noted that many roads were damaged due to the negligence of the previous government. Continued on Page 2

Naidu for Delhi today
 To discuss State proposals for Union Budget

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will visit the capital, Delhi, on Wednesday evening to discuss the proposals related to the State in the upcoming Union Budget. This visit is significant as it is the first meeting since Naidu assumed office as Chief Minister.

Reports indicate that he will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and other key officials during his visit. There is also a possibility that discussions will include the implementation of state bifurcation promises.

Chandrababu Naidu is expected to address pending state projects and other critical issues with NDA leaders at the Centre. Officials have already compiled detailed information on the pending projects from the last five years

'Yes, let's meet and iron out bifurcation issues'

Revanth accepts Naidu's proposal to meet on 6th July

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has accepted an invitation from AP Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for a face-to-face meeting on July 6 at the Jyoti Rao Phule Praja Bhavan.

"I completely agree with the need for an in-person discussion to better serve the people of our respective states," he said. "On behalf of the people of Telangana, I am delighted to invite you to the meeting on July 6 in Hyderabad," he added. Continued on Page 2



He concurred with CBN's reflections on the necessity of resolving all pending issues of the Bifurcation Act through an in-person meeting, emphasizing the importance of building a strong foundation for cooperation.

Jagan returns from B'luru sojourn

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy arrived in Tadepalli on Tuesday evening after a brief stay in Bengaluru. He returned to Tadepalli on Tuesday.

Following the election results, YS Jagan toured his home district, YSR Kadapa, where he met with YSR Congress Party leaders and workers, listening to their grievances. Afterwards, he travelled to Bengaluru with his family for a brief rest period. On Tuesday, YS Jagan arrived back in Tadepalli.

A large crowd, along with YSR Congress Party leaders and workers, gathered outside Gannavaram Airport to greet YS Jagan.



116 killed in stampede at UP 'satsang', most victims women

PNS ■ HATHRAS(UP)

A stampede at a religious congregation here killed 116 people on Tuesday as devotees suffocated to their deaths and bodies piled atop each other in the worst such tragedy in recent years.

The stampede took place as the devotees - most of them women - headed home after a 'satsang' in the Hathras district's Phulrai village, conducted by Baba Narayan Hari who is also known as Saakar Vishwa Hari Bhole Baba.

Some accounts said some people slipped in the slush, triggering the stampede. Twenty-seven bodies were brought to a hospital in neighbouring Etah district. Senior Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar Singh said 23 of them were women. And 89 lay dead in Hathras itself.

UP chief secretary Manoj Kumar Singh put the death toll at 116. Baring seven children and a man, the dead are all women. Singh said

72 have been identified so far.

Victims, dead or unconscious, were brought to the Sikandara Rau Trauma Centre in trucks and 'tempo's'. The bodies lay scattered outside this Hathras health centre as people milled around them.

A video clip showed a woman crying as she sat in a truck, amid five or six bodies. Another showed a man and a woman lifeless in another vehicle. Clips before the stampede showed people in a large 'shamiana', listening to Bhole Baba. The 'baba' sat before them on a throne-like chair.

The preacher was a policeman in the 1990s when he left the force, and started holding satsangs, according to one account. Politicians are said to be among his devotees.

District Magistrate Ashish Kumar said the 'satsang' was a private event for which the sub-divisional magistrate had granted permission.

Continued on Page 2

1 dead, 15 students hurt as lorry rams school bus

PNS ■ NELLORE

Tragedy struck near Kavali town on Tuesday when a collision between a lorry and a school bus resulted in one fatality and injuries to 15 students. The incident occurred on Tuesday morning on the outskirts of Kavali, as the bus was transporting 20 students to RSR International School.

According to the police, the accident happened as the bus attempted a U-turn on the Chennai-Kolkata highway. A speeding lorry collided with the bus, causing it to overturn on the road. Tragically, the school's cleaner lost his life instantly in the collision. The



injured students, suffering from various degrees of injuries, were promptly taken to nearby hospitals where they are currently receiving treatment.

MLA Kavaya Krishna Reddy visited the hospital to meet with the

CM delighted over 2nd Araku cafe in Paris

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed his joy at the announcement made by Anand Mahindra, Chairman of the Mahindra Group, regarding the imminent opening of a second cafe featuring Andhra Pradesh's renowned Araku coffee in Paris.

"Another cafe in Paris - that's fantastic news! Delighted that Araku coffee continues to gain the global recognition it deserves," CM Naidu shared on 'X', reacting to Anand Mahindra's earlier announcement.

"The journey of Naandi Foundation's Arakonomics and the Girijan Cooperative Corporation has transformed the lives of our tribal communities. I eagerly anticipate more such success stories emerging from



Andhra Pradesh," the Chief Minister added.

Anand Mahindra, Chairman of the Naandi Foundation Board, had previously disclosed plans to open a second cafe near the

Pantheon in Paris. He expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for mentioning Araku coffee in his 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast on June 30.

Mahindra highlighted that tribal farmers in the Araku Valley employ regenerative agricultural methods to grow coffee, resulting in a globally renowned product acknowledged as among the finest coffees worldwide.

Reflecting on Naandi Foundation's 25-year journey, Mahindra credited Chandrababu Naidu and the late Dr. K Anji Reddy for their vision in establishing Naandi to uplift tribal farmers through high-quality coffee cultivation.

Mahindra praised Naandi Foundation CEO Manoj Kumar and his team for their dedication in transforming Araku coffee into a global brand. He noted that the

first cafe, located in Paris' Marais district, has already attracted substantial local patronage.

"We are thrilled to announce the opening of our second Cafe near the Pantheon in Paris. Additionally, we have outlets in Bengaluru and Mumbai," Mahindra shared.

He underscored the significant impact of Arakonomics, stating that over 300,000 tribals have been lifted out of poverty, with more than 42,000 farmer families becoming prosperous, earning Rs 1,00,000 in profit per season from coffee cultivation. Mahindra also highlighted the environmental contribution of planting millions of trees by these tribal families.

"This is the real 'Return on Equity' of building a global social enterprise brand from India," Mahindra concluded.

NEET-PG likely to be held mid-August: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Post Graduate (NEET-PG) 2024 is likely to be held mid-August, sources said on Tuesday.

The revised date for the medical entrance exam is expected to be announced this week.

A meeting was held in the Union home ministry on Monday, in which officials from the health ministry, National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS), along with its technical partner Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and Cyber Cell officials discussed the preparedness for the NEET-PG, which is to be held online. "Besides the NEET-PG, the meeting was held to evaluate the robustness of the system for the conduct of the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination, which is scheduled for July 6," a source said.

AMARAVATI IN FAST LANE

Seed Access Road work gains speed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The construction of the Seed Access Road in Amaravati, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, has gained momentum. According to the initial plans, efforts are underway to expedite the completion of the second phase of this crucial infrastructure project.



Following the election of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led NDA government, the construction work on the Seed Access Road, which connects the Secretariat in Amaravati to the Chennai-Kolkata National Highway, was accelerated. This project, estimated to cost around Rs 500 crores, had seen little progress under the previous government over the past five years. The TDP government began construction in 2017, completing nearly 80 per cent of the first phase. However, the proposals for the second phase stalled after the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) came to power.

The second construction phase covers 18.27 km, with the Chandrababu Naidu-led government aiming for completion by the end of April 2025. NCC Company is currently executing the four-lane road works for Rs 125 crores. This Seed Access Road is designed to connect government building complexes in the seed capital with the National Highway. The road starts from the National Highway near Manipal Hospital and extends towards Borupalem after crossing the

Kanaka Durga Varadhi from Vijayawada to Guntur. This is the second major project undertaken by the government following the construction of the temporary secretariat in the capital.

The Seed Access Road is divided into two parts, with a total length of 21.5 km. Initially, tenders were called for 18.27 km. A 16.3-meter wide median has been reserved for the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) and Metro Rail. A two-lane road, each 7.25 meters wide, will be constructed on either side, along with cycle tracks. The first phase of the road will start near Undavalli and continue to Borupalem. Three of the seven major roads being constructed in the capital pass through this route. The road will feature approach roads at approximately 30 locations, and the median will remain open at 12 points. Additionally, 41 culverts and two mini bridges will be constructed along the 18.27-km stretch.

While the government has

acquired some land through land pooling, additional land is still required. Farmers have expressed willingness to provide their land only if compensated under the Land Acquisition Act introduced by the Central government, rejecting the Land Pooling Act. The construction area includes lands from Undavalli, Penumaka, and Tadepalli villages, as well as Sundarayya Nagar and Sitanagaram colonies near Manipal Hospital.

Officials have identified 78 families and 68 acres of agricultural land that need to be acquired. The compensation for Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) is estimated to cost Rs 49 crores. The government is considering negotiating with landowners to expedite the acquisition process.

Reports suggest that authorities are planning to relocate the affected families of Sundarayya Nagar and Sitanagaram to alternative housing in other areas.

11 IAS officers...

Continued from Page 1

Further changes include P Arun Babu, who moves from Sri Satya Sai District to become Collector & District Magistrate of Palnadu District. Anand O., Joint Commissioner (CT) in Visakhapatnam, is transferred to SPS Nellore District as Collector. Dr Venkateswar Salijamala, Director of Secondary Health, takes over as Collector & District Magistrate in Tirupati District. Sridhar Chamakuri moves from Joint Collector & Additional District Magistrate of Bapatla District to Collector & District Magistrate in Annamaya District. Siva Sankar Lotheti, who was awaiting posting, is appointed as Collector & District Magistrate of YSR district. Chetan TS, Managing Director of AP Beverages Corporation, shifts from the Revenue (Excise) Department to become Collector & District Magistrate of Sri Satya Sai District. Lastly, B Raja Kumari, Joint Collector & Additional District Magistrate of Guntur District, moves to Nandyal District as Collector.

AP cab drivers in Hyderabad seek Lokesh's help over life tax

Leaders of teachers' unions also meet the Education Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP cab drivers in Hyderabad brought their grievances to IT Minister Nara Lokesh during a Praja Darbar session on Tuesday. They submitted a representation seeking his intervention to resolve a pressing issue: the Telangana government's demand for life tax payment on their vehicles, marking the completion of Hyderabad's 10 years as the joint capital.

The drivers highlighted that they had already paid life tax when the states were unified and argued that imposing it again would create severe financial hardship. They also complained about alleged harsh treatment of Andhra Pradesh vehicles by local authorities in Hyderabad. With the upcoming meeting between the CMs of both states scheduled for July 6, the drivers appealed for a resolution to their concerns and requested an



extension to continue operating their vehicles in Hyderabad.

Meanwhile, at the Praja Darbar, Minister Lokesh also addressed concerns from leaders of teacher unions regarding stalled transfer orders due to the Election Code. Lokesh assured

them that teacher transfers would be conducted transparently and according to regulations, emphasizing his commitment to upholding integrity in the process.

The Praja Darbar, which Lokesh initiated to engage directly with constituents, has garnered signif-

icant participation from people across the state, highlighting various issues for his attention. Such has been the response that MLAs from the ruling party are now considering organising similar sessions in their respective Assembly segments.

'YSRCP leaders looted public wealth'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Former finance minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu has launched a scathing attack on the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, accusing its leaders of widespread corruption and financial mismanagement over the past five years. In a strongly worded letter addressed to the TDP government, Yanamala Ramakrishnu alleged that YSRCP leaders have systematically looted the wealth of the Telugu people, leaving the state's economy in dire straits.

Yanamala Ramakrishnu urged the government to take decisive action, proposing the use of the Revenue Recovery Act or the introduction of special legislation to reclaim the allegedly misappropriated assets of YCP leaders. He applauded the current government's efforts to mitigate economic losses incurred during Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure and put forward 15 key recommendations aimed at bolstering the state's financial health and fulfilling manifesto promises.

Central to Yanamala Ramakrishnu's recommendations is the implementation of the Comprehensive Financial Management System (CFMS) for transparent bill payments and seeking revenue regularization from the Center. He advocated for



- The government to take decisive action, proposing the use of the Revenue Recovery Act or the introduction of special legislation to reclaim the allegedly misappropriated assets of YCP leaders.
- Central to Yanamala Ramakrishnu's recommendations is the implementation of the Comprehensive Financial Management System (CFMS) for transparent bill payments and seeking revenue regularization from the Center.

securing reasonable fixed loans and increasing grant-in-aid to the state. Yanamala emphasized the necessity of prudent managing Ways and Means advances and Overdrafts (OD), ensuring that welfare schemes reach deserving beneficiaries only.

Furthermore, Yanamala Ramakrishnu stressed the importance of cutting costs, plugging leakages in capital expenditure, and transforming Andhra Pradesh into a thriving industrial hub while safeguarding natural resources. He underscored strict adherence to the Financial Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act to

uphold fiscal discipline. "Temporary control of the fiscal deficit will pave the way for a sustainable reduction in the years ahead,"

Yanamala Ramakrishnu asserted, highlighting the imperative of combating corruption to foster an environment conducive to economic progress and prosperity. He expressed confidence in Chandrababu Naidu's leadership and commitment to good governance, envisioning sustainable economic growth under his stewardship.

The TDP has long accused the YCP government of rampant corruption, particularly in sectors like liquor, sand, and

mining. An internal investigation is underway to quantify these alleged misappropriations, with plans to identify and legally pursue those responsible.

Yanamala Ramakrishnu's proposal for a dedicated law targeting the recovery of assets allegedly looted by YCP leaders has sparked widespread public interest and debate.

As Andhra Pradesh confronts formidable economic challenges, Yanamala Ramakrishnu's bold assertions and comprehensive recommendations are poised to shape discussions on governance and economic recovery across the state.

'Funds crunch...'

Continued from Page 1

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, drinking water could be supplied to every village, he stated.

The Panchayat Raj Minister assured the development of Hope Island as an Eco-Tourism Park. Without harming marine life, eco-tourism would be developed at Hope Island, he announced.

Pawan Kalyan deplored the destruction of the Mada forest to provide house sites. Moreover, the harmful Malaysian breed of Kono Carpus saplings was planted for greenery, and they would be removed in a phased manner, he stated.

The Minister recalled being kept informed for a long time about the disappearance of over 30,000 women and girls in the state. Following a complaint from a Bhimavaram couple, he directed the Vijayawada CP to trace their missing daughter. The police traced the girl in Jammu within 72 hours and are bringing her to Vijayawada, he disclosed.

Pawan Kalyan proposed setting up a special cell for missing girls and informed that he would discuss the matter in the next Cabinet meeting. MP Tangella Uday Srinivas, MLAs Vanamadi Venkateswara Rao, Pantam Nanaji, V. Satyaprabha, Jyothula Nehru, and SP Satish Kumar were among those who attended the meeting.

116 killed in...

Continued from Page 1

The local administration provided security outside the venue while the arrangements inside were made by organisers, he added. According to Additional Director General of Police (Agra Zone) Anupam Kulshrestha, 40 personnel were deployed at the venue.

Eyewitness Shakuntala Devi told PTI Videos that the stampede took place while people were leaving the venue. People fell atop each other, she said, and then the bodies were pulled out.

According to Sikandra Rau sub divisional magistrate Ravendra Kumar, the stampede took place when devotees tried to get a glimpse of Bhole Baba as the event ended. They also wanted to collect some soil from around the baba's feet, he said. Satsang participant Sonu Kumar blamed the slippery ground for the stampede.

"When Guru ji left the place after almost one and half hours, all of a sudden devotees ran behind him to touch his feet," he said. When they turned back, some slipped.

Sikandra Rau police station SHO Ashish Kumar blamed "overcrowding" at the 'satsang'. Another eyewitness, who left the place before the end of the 'satsang' said the arrangements were not adequate, given the number of devotees.

Agra's additional director general of police and Aligarh divisional commissioner are part of a team that would probe the incident, the state government said.



India's first desalination-based Hydrogen plant in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam is set to become a pioneer in green energy with India's first desalination-based hydrogen project underway. The Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IPE) and NTPC Limited are collaborating on this landmark initiative, estimated to cost Rs 35 crore.

The project will see a 1 tonne per day (TPD) capacity plant installed at NTPC Simhadri. This aligns with NTPC's commitment to clean energy, as the company pursues a comprehensive green hydrogen agenda. Their vision includes establishing an energy park at Pudimadaka in Anakapalli district, with approval from the Andhra Pradesh State Investment Board in 2023. This ambitious project, with a total investment of ?1.1 lakh crore across two phases, aims to produce green hydrogen, green ammonia, and green methanol, significantly boosting India's renewable energy capabilities.

Professor Shalivahan,

Director of IPE, highlighted the project's environmental benefits. "Our approach leverages desalinated water from NTPC Simhadri's existing plant for hydrogen generation through electrolysis," he explained. This eliminates the reliance on freshwater resources, a crucial advantage in water-scarce regions.

Dr. Somnath Ghosh, the project's lead investigator, provided technical details. "We use desalinated water to produce one tonne of hydrogen daily, requiring around 10 tonnes of water obtained from 300 tonnes of seawater. The produced hydrogen will be stored at NTPC's facilities," he said.

While currently reliant on conventional electricity sources, Dr. Ghosh emphasized the significant environmental benefits.

"Unlike traditional methods that emit carbon dioxide, ours is carbon-neutral," he explained.

"We utilize waste heat from the power plant for desalination, essentially converting wasted energy into valuable hydrogen.

Water released from Tatipudi Reservoir

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and NRI Affairs, Kondapalli Srinivas, highlighted Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's commitment to bringing joy and prosperity to the people's lives. Speaking at the release of irrigation water from the Gorrepati Butchi Apparao Tatipudi Reservoir in Gantayyala mandal on Tuesday, the minister emphasised the mission to uplift communities and spread happiness across the region.

Minister Srinivas assured comprehensive irrigation coverage for the suburbs surrounding the Tatipudi Reservoir, a vital water source for approximately 15,365 acres spanning 35 villages in Gantayyala, Jami, and S. Kota mandals. Criticizing past administrations for neglecting the irrigation sector, Minister Srinivas pledged to desilt all canals by next year, with initial efforts already underway on the MN channel. Plans are also in motion to secure funds from Visakhapatnam to further develop the reservoir, which crucially supports the city's drinking water needs.

The minister also promised the restoration of the local boat with enhanced safety standards and envisioned the area as a bur-



geoning tourist destination. He highlighted the recent distribution of NTR Bharosa pensions, bringing joy to senior citizens, widows, and disabled individuals. "Honoring the elders' contributions by providing these pensions is our duty," he emphasized.

District Collector Dr. BR Ambedkar announced that agriculture, irrigation, education, and medical sectors would receive top priority. He committed to making substantial contributions towards the Tatipudi reservoir's advancement.

S. Kota MLA Kolla Lalithakumari praised the reservoir, built on the Gosthani River, as a lifeline for Visakhapatnam's drinking water and the region's irrigation needs. She noted that it benefits around 40,000 farmers across 35 villages in three mandals.

However, she criticized the previous government's neglect of crucial projects like Polavaram, which suffered from a lack of allocated funds even for essential repairs. Lalithakumari called for the Tatipudi reservoir's development in both irrigation and tourism.

Parliamentary Constituency TDP President Kimidi Nagarajuna affirmed their commitment to addressing farmers' issues. Local farmer and TDP leader Rongali Krishna shared the challenges faced by the Tatipudi community, emphasizing the need for immediate action.

The event saw participation from key officials, including RDO MV Suryakala, Irrigation EE Seetharamanaidu, DE Govinda Rao, JE Tamminaidu, MPDO Bhavani, Tashildar Neelakantheshwara Reddy, local

'Guilty won't be spared'

Working on war footing to curb paper leaks: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the government is working on a war footing to curb incidents of paper leaks, while asserting that those playing with the future of youngsters will not be spared.

The prime minister's comments came amid a raging row over alleged irregularities, including paper leaks, in competitive examinations such as the NEET and the NET. The opposition has been demanding a discussion on the issue in Parliament.

Replying to a two-day debate on the Motion of Thanks to the president's address to a joint sitting of Parliament, Modi said arrests are being made across the

country in connection with the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NET) issue.

"The president expressed concerns about paper leaks in her address. I also want to tell students and youngsters that the government is serious about controlling such incidents and we are taking back-to-back steps on a war footing to fulfil our responsibilities," he said.

"Those playing with the future of youngsters will not be spared, arrests are being made across the country in the NEET issue. The Centre has already framed strict laws and important steps are being taken to strengthen the entire system of conducting examinations," the prime minister added.

'Yes, let's meet...'

Continued from Page 1

On behalf of the people of Telangana and his government, Revanth expressed delight in accepting Naidu's invitation for a meeting. The discussion is scheduled for the afternoon of July 6 at the Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule Bhavan in Hyderabad.

In a letter dated July 2, Revanth expressed his gratitude for the letter he had received from Chandrababu on July 1 and congratulated him on his victory in the recent Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh.

Revanth acknowledged Chandrababu Naidu's historic achievement of being sworn in as Chief Minister for a fourth time and wished him the best.

Anitha vows justice for tribals

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a decisive move against the illegal trafficking of ganja, Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has pledged to bring the true culprits to justice. Her visit to the Visakhapatnam Central Prison marked a significant moment in her commitment to addressing the plight of innocent tribals and youth wrongfully imprisoned. During her inaugural visit, Minister Anitha highlighted the severe overcrowding in the prison, which has a capacity of 800 but currently houses 2,000 inmates. Disturbingly, among these inmates, 1,200 are young individuals apprehended for involvement in ganja trafficking. Expressing deep concern over this issue, she promised a thorough investigation to ensure that justice prevails for those falsely accused.

In a media briefing, Anitha discussed her meticulous review of the prison conditions and her interactions with remand prisoners involved in ganja cases. She expressed alarm at the number of young individuals trapped in legal battles while the true perpetrators remain free. She announced plans for a comprehensive study of the issue and assured necessary actions to rectify the situation.

She visits Visakhapatnam Central Prison



To improve inmate welfare, Anitha inaugurated an Any Time Clinic (ATC) in the Pranahita Block. This facility aims to prevent the need for inmates to leave the premises for medical examinations, offering 17 types of services

within the jail. Additionally, she revealed plans to establish a de-addiction centre and provide psychiatric services, ensuring holistic support for the inmates.

Her inspection extended to various vocational units with-

in the jail, including printing, bookbinding, handloom, sanitiser production, and steel units. Observing the skilled work of inmates, she interacted with them to understand their experiences and challenges, noting the production

of notebooks, bound books, handloom cloths, chairs, and sanitiser kits.

The Minister was visibly moved by the stories of young individuals caught in ganja cases during her interaction with remand prisoners. She listened to grievances about delayed relief despite good conduct and assured that she would consult legal experts and act according to the Supreme Court's guidelines to expedite justice.

Minister Anitha outlined her vision for a more equitable and supportive correctional system. She pledged to enhance facilities and rights for both prisoners and jail staff, promising quarters, vehicles, and essential amenities. Emphasising a policy of friendly policing, she underscored the importance of improving marketing facilities for products made by prisoners.

Accompanying the Minister on her visit were Superintendent Kishore Kumar, Additional Superintendent Venkateswara Rao, Deputy Superintendents Ramachandra Rao and Kamalakar Rao, Civil DCP, and other officials, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of the jail's operations and conditions.

Water release for Pattiseema scheme today, says Nimmala



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Water Resources Minister Nimmala Nannayana Reddy announced that water will be released to the Pattiseema lift irrigation scheme starting at 7:27 am on Wednesday. The Minister conducted inspections at various sites including the Polavaram Project, Pattiseema, Purushothampatnam, Tadipudi, and Pushkara lift schemes on Tuesday. Subsequently, he convened a review meeting with officials from concerned departments to discuss the water release for these lift

irrigation schemes.

Addressing the media, Minister Ramanaidu emphasised the critical importance of addressing irrigation and drinking water challenges for the Krishna Delta region through these schemes. He detailed the allocation of water resources, stating that 7,000 cusecs will be directed to Pattiseema, 870 cusecs to Tadipudi, 3,500 cusecs to Purushottam Patnam, and 1,225 cusecs to Pushkara.

Minister Ramanaidu underscored the vision of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to ensure Andhra Pradesh becomes drought-free with

the completion of the Polavaram project, which is vital for the state's populace. He highlighted that the Pattiseema and Purushothama Patnam lift irrigation schemes were initiated to mitigate drinking and irrigation water shortages until the Polavaram project reached fruition.

The minister also expressed dissatisfaction, attributing delays in the Polavaram project to former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He asserted that under TDP leadership, had he come to power in 2019, the Polavaram project would have been completed by 2020.

Govt committed to skill training for students: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister of Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh has stated that the government is committed to providing skill training to the students and creating jobs across the state. Minister Lokesh conducted a review with the senior officials of the Skill Development Department on Tuesday. The government has launched the Skill Senses programme to identify the skills among the youth of the state and train them in the respective fields. The meeting discussed the procedures for participation of various departments in Skill Senses. In particular, they discussed the possibilities of conducting a house-to-house survey through village and ward secretariats under the auspices of APSSDC, Industries Department. Minister Lokesh directed the officials to study the skill development programmes being implemented



in various states in the country and prepare further plans with better policies. The authorities were advised to look into the procedures implemented in other states. He said that the issue of training for courses in demand abroad should be looked into. Skill Development and Training Secretary Saurabh Gaur, APSSDC MD Raja Babu, DET Navya, CEO Srinivasulu, ADG Dinesh and others participated in the meeting.

Paying income tax in time is our duty: DRM

Awareness programme organised on tax filing, laws

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

N Abhinaya, Joint Commissioner, Income Tax, said that while the collection of revenue is critical to the task of nation-building, it should be a smooth process, as Chanakya mentioned in his Arthashastra "to collect taxes from a taxpayer is just like a bee collects honey from a flower without disturbing its petals".

Speaking at the gathering at an awareness programme organised by the Vijayawada Division, South Central Railway, and the Income Tax Department on Tuesday, she said navigating the complexities of taxation can often be daunting without proper guidance. "Our programme aims to demystify income tax, empowering you with knowledge, and foster compliance with tax laws. Also, through this programme, we shall highlight critical issues of incorrect claims of deductions and exemptions."

Narendra A Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, while



addressing the huge gathering of serving and retired employees, said that most of the public relies on other people for their tax filing needs. "Though we may feel that tax filing is a difficult task, it is not. All we need to do is read the income tax provisions and try to understand them, and then we can file our own taxes with ease. We should teach this to our spouses and children, and inculcate the habit of understanding money and finance related matters. The government relies on revenue generation through the taxes paid by

us. We, being government employees, need to be extra careful while filing our taxes and ensure that we do not negligently resort to any wrongdoing which might lead to tax evasion," he said. He also thanked the Income Tax Department team for conducting this awareness programme.

A team of income tax officers also gave a PowerPoint presentation on the basics of income tax, tax filing procedure, tax benefits and deductions, refund scams and red flags. They even gave case studies to showcase how peo-

ple can calculate income tax returns and the avenues available under proper provisions to save taxes.

K Srinivas, Additional DRM (Operations), E Sivaramakrishna, Senior Divisional Finance Manager, Katta Anand, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer, Ravi Kumar, Senior Divisional Mechanical Officer, Vijayawada Division, SCR, D Vijay Babu and R Chamundeswari, Additional Commissioner, Income Tax, other Railway and Income Tax officers and staff participated in the programme.

Ramachandraiah, Hari Prasad file papers for MLA quota MLC posts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has made a surprise move in the selection of candidates for the two MLC seats under MLAs' quota, by-elections for which are scheduled to be held on July 12.

Naidu announced the names of former MLC C Ramachandraiah and Jana Sena Party official spokesperson and secretary of party's political affairs committee P Hari Prasad.

Both Ramachandraiah and Hari Prasad filed their nominations before 3 pm, the deadline for filing of nominations. Since there are no other nominations, they will be declared elected as MLCs unanimously by July 5, the last date for withdrawal of nominations.

Till the other day, there were reports from within the TDP camp that Chandrababu Naidu had decided to nominate former MLA SVSN Varma, who sacrificed his seat for Jana Sena Party chief

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Pawan Kalyan in Pithapuram constituency. In fact, Varma himself declared his own candidature on X. Besides, there was a talk that the second MLC seat will be given to a minority candidate -- either former legislative council chairman MD Ahmed Sharif or former MLC Mohd Iqbal.

But to the surprise of everyone, Naidu gave a shock to both the leaders, by choosing former MLC C Ramachandraiah, who was disqualified for defecting from YSRCP to TDP, just before the recent elections.

Tiruchanoor school kitchen gets Tirupati's first PNG connection

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AG&P Pratham, committed to promoting cleaner and more efficient cooking solutions, has activated its first commercial piped natural gas (PNG) connection at Edify School's kitchen in Vaishnavi Nagar, Tiruchanoor. The school has now switched to using PNG as its cooking fuel. This initiative aims to provide the school with a convenient, cost-effective, and eco-friendly cooking fuel option. During the inaugural ceremony, Praneeth, Chairman of Edify School, along with senior management from AG&P Pratham, ignited the canteen gas stove, marking the commencement of kitchen operations powered by PNG.



by the end of 2024, covering many households and commercial establishments in Tirupati.

Gautam Anand, Regional Head & Assistant Vice President of AG&P Pratham, stated that

the PNG supply is expected to reduce the commercial kitchen's fuel bill. He explained, "It's great to see Tirupati embracing sustainable culinary practices. By switching to PNG, the school can enjoy significant

cost savings of 20-30% compared to LPG cylinders. Additionally, piped gas connections ensure secure and hassle-free daily usage by eliminating the need for booking, storage, and handling of LPG cylinders."

IGZP expands wildlife diversity through exchange programme

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bold move to enrich its biodiversity and offer an immersive experience to visitors, the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) is set to initiate a landmark animal exchange programme with the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, supported by the Radhe Krishna Temple Elephant Welfare Trust, IGZP eagerly awaits the arrival of Green Winged Macaws, Scarlet Macaws, Military Macaws, Medium Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, Squirrel Monkeys, Common Marmosets, Red-necked Wallabies, and Meerkats. In return, the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre will welcome Striped Hyenas, Hog Deer, Painted Storks, Grey Pelicans,



Star Tortoises, Gharials, Jungle Cats, Dholes, Wolves, and Gaur.

This exchange not only introduces four new species to IGZP's already diverse collection, but also enriches the portfolio at the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre. Ahead of being displayed in their respective enclosures, all incoming animals at IGZP will undergo a mandatory quarantine period, ensuring their health and safety alongside the park's visitors.

G. Mangamma, the Curator of the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, emphasised the profound impact of such exchange programmes in advancing wildlife conservation efforts and providing enhanced educational opportunities for visitors.

ATTACKS AND RIOTS

YSRCP demands action against TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leader and former MP Nandigam Suresh has made it clear that they will knock on the door of the court against the anarchy of Telugu Desam in the state from the moment they come to power. He said that the riots and attacks committed by the TDP leaders are not trivial, beatings, personal insults and destruction of government and private properties are outrageous.

Addressing a press meeting at the YSRC central office at Tadepalli on Tuesday, he said that so many atrocities are happening in the state and CM Chandrababu Naidu is silent forgetting his promises to the people of no rebellion against the Opposition Party. People gave power not for retaliations, said Nandigam Suresh and recalled that after the election results in the state, the anarchies committed by the TD leaders increased day by day and Naidu failed to control the law and order situation. He recalled that Jagan Mohan Reddy ruled the administration for the last 5 years but such incidents of attacks did not happen.

He asked CM Naidu if the people empowered TD to take revenge on the opposition. or to do good to the people? He expressed anger that MLA Kolikapudi



Srinivas was doing anarchy in Tiruvuru and demolished the local YSRC MPP's house without listening to the police. Nandigam Suresh said that since there is no situation to implement the promises given, they are trying to start a fight and scare.

Former MLA Kayle Anil Kumar said that the government of bulldozers is running under the leadership of Chandrababu and the demolishing of the structure illegally by Tiruvuru MLA of TDP Kolikapudi Srinivas reflected the same. He expressed his anger that MLA Srinivas did not behave like a human being and went to a huge rally in cars and demolished houses with bulldozers despite police efforts to stop the anarchy. Anil Kumar demanded stern action against MLA Srinivas and other TDP culprits who demolished the houses of YSRC leaders and to stop illegal demolitions.

Vijayawada Academy of Ophthalmology organises CME

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MAXICON -24, a Continuing Medical Education (CME) event, was held under the aegis of Maxivision Eye Hospital, in association with the Vijayawada Academy of Ophthalmology. The event witnessed active participation from ophthalmologists, optometrists, and medical students across Andhra Pradesh

fostering an environment of learning and collaboration.

Dr AAV Ramalinga Reddy said MAXICON-24 has been an incredible platform for sharing knowledge and advancing the field of ophthalmology. "We are grateful to the Vijayawada Academy of Ophthalmology for their support and collaboration. We are committed to continuous education and excellence in eye



care. Events like MAXICON-24 help us stay at the forefront of medical advancements and improve patient outcomes," he added.

Dr Prabhavathi delivered an insightful presentation on pathophysiology and management of diabetic macular edema (DME). She elaborated on the underlying mechanisms contributing to DME, emphasising the importance of early

detection and intervention. Dr Prabhavathi highlighted various treatment modalities, including anti-VEGF therapies and corticosteroids, and shared recent advancements in surgical techniques that are proving to be effective in managing this condition.

Dr Srujana emphasised the growing need for specialised myopia clinics, given the increasing prevalence of

myopia globally. She discussed the importance of early diagnosis and regular monitoring to prevent severe complications. Dr Srujana also introduced the audience to various preventive strategies and treatment options, including orthokeratology and atropine eye drops, which have shown promising results in slowing the progression of myopia in children and adolescents.

Bumpy road ahead for Chandrababu in setting right AP!

Making Andhra Pradesh "the number one state in the country" may be easier said than done for Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, given its current dismal fiscal position. Although he has vast experience; Naidu, in his current stint as chief minister is bound to face formidable financial problems for running the government smoothly. Investors, who can help foster growth, will look at the fiscal health of the state before making or continuing investments in AP.

The much-awaited distribution of pensions to about 65 lakh beneficiaries across Andhra Pradesh is considered to be the touchstone of

NDA's rule under Naidu with the assistance of his deputy Pawan Kalyan. Of course, they have vowed to work together for the well-being of the state. Likewise, the cadres of Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena Party must work closely for good governance.

There have been differences between the TDP and JSP in the past, particularly in 2014 when JSP president Pawan Kalyan openly supported BJP headed by Narendra Modi. Pawan chose not to contest the elections then only to avoid a possible split in the positive vote bank for Modi. But there is also a view that Pawan paved the way for Naidu's victory in the

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state in the 2014 elections. But the TDP had swept the elections held for local bodies earlier (results of which were released after the Assembly elections). There were no friendly ties between the two parties then. TDP cadre went to the town claiming that the overwhelming results of polls

to local bodies were "not because of Pawan Kalyan". The situation continued till the 2019 elections in which TDP, BJP and JSP chose to be a divided house. This came in handy for the then principal opposition YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) to register an impressive win by bagging



M D RATNA KUMAR Senior Journalist

151 seats out of 175 in the AP Legislative Assembly. Having dislodged YSRCP from power, the TDP, JSP and BJP will have to cement their friendship for their collective

political interests. Naidu and Pawan appear to be ideologically connected under the influence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is believed that they are contemplating possible replication of the NDA formula in neighbouring Telangana also for strengthening the alliance.

As for Chandrababu Naidu's immediate tasks, he must focus on the resumption of construction of the capital city Amaravati and address the impediments in the way of completion of Polavaram multipurpose project. Completion of the project before the end of Naidu's current term is unlikely, going by his comments following his visit to Polavaram project site. Besides, the cases filed by Odisha and

Chhattisgarh states against the Polavaram project, highlighting submergence of their lands, may complicate matters for Naidu.

Chandrababu Naidu has declared that his government will spend Rs.1.65 lakh crore towards giving community pensions to 65 lakh poor and needy people. Other schemes too require substantial funds.

Special Category Status for the state is another key issue that can disturb Naidu at any time. NDA alliance partner, president of Janata Dal (United) and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has demanded SCS for Bihar. If he succeeds in getting such bonanza from the Centre, it will certainly haunt Naidu!

There is widespread dissatisfaction among people that taxpayer money is not being used properly in terms of public access to community assets and benefits. Most people want to see creation of tangible assets across the state to reflect real development.

In view of the foregoing challenges, one can foresee a bumpy road ahead for Chandrababu Naidu with all his determination to take the state to the next level.

Interestingly, it was Naidu who had written the letter of consent for bifurcation of the undivided AP state as part of his political strategy when he was in the Opposition back in 2008. Now, he has to come to terms with bifurcation blues in a new avatar!

Veligonda project will be completed soon: Collector

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector A. Thameem Ansariya announced today that the Veligonda project is on track for completion soon, ensuring swift resolution of issues faced by evacuees.

During her inspection of project sites on Tuesday, Collector Ansariya visited affected areas and received updates from officials and engineers on progress. She engaged with villagers in Kalanutala, a submergence village, discussing their concerns such as access to drinking water and basic amenities. Villagers expressed readiness to relocate pending fair compensation and appealed for an extension of the cutoff date for identifying evacuee families.

Collector Ansariya assured villagers that their concerns



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would be brought to the government's attention and resolved promptly. She also visited the rehabilitation colony in Vemulakota to observe the facilities provided

to residents. Later, she inspected the ongoing construction of intake wells at the project site and visited the rehabilitation colony in Idupuru, interacting with its residents.

In a separate meeting, Markapuram MLA Kandula Narayana Reddy met with Collector Ansariya at the sub-collector's office in Markapuram. The MLA urged swift completion of the Veligonda project and advocated for immediate water release. He also appealed for increased water supply to rehabilitation colonies via tankers. Accompanying Collector Ansariya were Markapuram sub-collector Rahul Meena, SE Abooth Aleem, Mardan Ali, Special Collector for Land Acquisition Jhansi Lakshmi, and Special Deputy Collector D. Nagajyothi.

SCS not a demand, but right of AP people: Subba Reddy

High time Chandrababu Naidu prevailed upon Centre to get Special Category Status granted to the State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress MP (Rajya Sabha) YV Subba Reddy, while speaking during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in Rajya Sabha, emphasised that Special Category Status (SCS) is not merely a demand, but a right of the people of Andhra Pradesh, which has "suffered immensely due to unjust bifurcation".

He said that Telugu Desam is in power in Andhra Pradesh and sharing power with the NDA government at the Centre, so it's high time Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu prevails upon the Centre to get Special Category Status granted to the State.

Subba Reddy asserted that Andhra Pradesh should be given SCS and it is not a demand, but the right of people. He also reminded the Centre to resolve the pending issues following the bifurcation of the State. In his Rajya Sabha speech, Subba Reddy requested the Centre to stop privatising the Vizag Steel Plant. He also demanded the allocation of captive iron mines to revive the steel plant.

Subba Reddy further requested the Centre for sanctioning a metro from the new airport to Visakhapatnam. He asked the government to increase the safety of passengers in the trains and also stressed on the need for upgrading the

Kavach, which is an automated train protection safety system designed to prevent collisions on the same track. The Railways should complete its work on the Nadikudi Srikalahasti project at the earliest, he added. He also requested the Centre to complete the works on Visakha-Chennai Industrial Corridor.

Highlighting the initiatives of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's government to enhance the medical education infrastructure, Subba Reddy said the government established 16 medical colleges in the State. The previous government also introduced the Family Doctor programme to provide preventive healthcare to the needy.

Heavy rain forecast over next one week

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and strong winds with speeds of 30-40 Km/h are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next five days, the Meteorological Centre said on Tuesday. In a daily weather report here, it said that light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at many places, at a few places, or at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. The monsoon is weak over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam and normal over Rayalaseema.

Rainfall occurred at two places over Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and at a few places over Rayalaseema, and dry weather prevailed during the last 24 hours, the report added.

Pawan's action yields results as missing girl traced in Jammu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The swift intervention by Minister for Panchayat Raj, K. Pawan Kalyan, has led to the successful tracing of a missing girl in Jammu.

A couple from Bhimavaram town approached Pawan Kalyan a few days ago, informing him about their daughter who had been missing for approximately nine months. Despite complaining at the Machavaram police station, they claimed no action had been taken, and they broke down in front of the minister, moved by their distress.



In response, Pawan Kalyan immediately contacted the concerned police officials, including Commissioner of Police PHD Ramakrishna and the CI of Machavaram police station, instructing them to take immediate steps to locate the missing girl. Following Pawan Kalyan's directives, the police acted swiftly, forming special teams dedicated to the search. Their efforts led to the girl being found in Jammu. A police team was dispatched to

Jammu, where they met the girl and arranged for her return to Vijayawada. Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna informed Pawan Kalyan that the girl was being brought back to the city.

Pawan Kalyan expressed his appreciation and congratulated the police team for their efficient and rapid response in locating the girl. It is noteworthy that Pawan Kalyan has been vocal over the past year about the disappearance of over 30,000 girls and women in Andhra Pradesh, criticizing the YSRCP-led government for their lack of response.

Harendhira Prasad posted as Vizag DC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

M N Harendhira Prasad, IAS (2015), Additional Chief Electoral Officer, Andhra Pradesh, and ex-Office Joint Secretary to Government, General Administration (Elections) Department, has been transferred and posted as Collector and District Magistrate, Visakhapatnam. Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad issued GO Rt No 1159 in this regard on Tuesday.

Harendhira Prasad will hand over the charge of Additional CEO to P Koteswara Rao, IAS, (2009).

DSC will be conducted efficiently, without flaws: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for IT and Human Resources Development Nara Lokesh has made it clear that the District Selection Committee (DSC) examination will be conducted efficiently and flawlessly.

The Minister held a meeting with the officials concerned and reviewed the conducting of DSC and Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) examinations and the issuance of notifications for the exams.

Speaking on the occasion, Lokesh said that requests were received from the candidates

that there should be a long gap between the DSC and TET examinations. He suggested to the officials that opinions should be elicited from the candidates on when the DSC should be conducted.

He inquired with the officials about the misleading propaganda being spread on social media about the syllabus of the DSC. He made it clear that no change had been made to the syllabus of DSC. The candidate could get the details of the syllabus at <https://aptet.apcfss.in>, he informed.

Lokesh directed the officials to submit a comprehensive report on the damage caused by the GO 117, which was issued by the erstwhile YSRCP government for winding up of some government schools.

The IT Minister ordered the officials to take steps to provide quality mid-day meals to the students. He also ordered the officials to focus on providing drinking water to schools and carrying out sanitation during the rainy season. School Education Principal Secretary Kona Seshidhar and Commissioner Suresh Kumar were among those who attended the meeting.

Officials warned of action over laxity in diarrhoea control

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has issued a stern warning to officials, stating that any report of diarrhoea cases in the district due to unhygienic conditions and contaminated water will result in strict action against the responsible departments.

In a video conference held on Tuesday with municipal commissioners and mandal-level officials, the Collector reviewed sanitation, drinking water, and other pressing issues in the district. She emphasized the need for heightened attention to sanitation, drinking water, and mosquito eradication during the monsoon season.

Collector Vetri Selvi directed officials to ensure full-scale sanitation programs in both rural and urban areas as the rains decrease. She stressed the importance of preventing any diarrhoea cases by maintaining high standards of cleanliness.

She instructed municipal commissioners, panchayat secretaries, and EO PRDs to supervise sanitation work from 6 AM onwards. Surprise inspections will be conducted, and any negligence leading to severe repercussions for the officials involved.

All overhead drinking water tanks in rural and urban areas



must be cleaned, and water should only be supplied post-chlorination. Drainages should be cleared daily to prevent sewage accumulation, and measures such as spreading Malathion and Abate for mosquito eradication should be implemented. The Collector also ordered fogging to combat mosquitoes in every town and village and instructed daily road cleaning to prevent rainwater stagnation.

Panchayat Secretaries are required to reside in their respective work locations. The Collector also urged officials to respond promptly to sanitation, contaminated drinking water, and mosquito-related issues reported in daily newspapers and to send a rejoinder on the actions taken to the journalists.

ZP CEO T. Srinivas Viswanath, RWS SE Satyanarayana, Municipal Commissioner S. Venkata Krishna, and other officials attended the meeting.

BRS will be back and rule again

• Asserts confident KCR, recalls 10 years of BRS's good governance



BRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao addressing ZP chairpersons in his farmhouse at Erravelli on Tuesday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS president K. Chandrasekhar Rao said that he was confident that the BRS would return to power and rule for another 15 years.

He criticised the Congress stating that once in power they act recklessly making the public despise them. He recalled a similar situation after NTR's rule. On Tuesday, KCR held a meeting with the ZP chairpersons of Telangana at his farmhouse in Erravelli.

Speaking on the occasion, KCR acknowledged the key role ZP chairpersons played in the state's development during BRS rule and congratulated them on completing their terms. He urged them to aim for greater heights, emphasizing that real politicians work for the people regardless of power. Reflecting on the 10

years of BRS governance, he said that everything ran smoothly, contrasting it with problems regarding electricity, drinking water and law and order under the Congress government which led to communal riots.

He asked why the same officials were unable to maintain peace now and stressed that the BRS government achieved unprecedented development in 10 years.

He commented on BRS leaders who left the party after holding high posts and questioned their inability to stay without posts for a short period.

He said that the schemes launched by YSR like Arogyasi and the fee reimbursement scheme were continued without changing names but was implemented better by the BRS.

He said the successful Rythu Bandhu scheme was introduced to stabilize agriculture. He expressed concern over the Congress government's attempts to undermine the scheme, citing potential corruption if not implemented properly.

KCR predicted that the BRS would return to power and urged his party workers to be patient. He said that there might be a reorganization of constituencies in the next two years, increasing the number of constituencies to 160 in Telangana, which would create more opportunities for women.

He emphasized the need for the reconstruction of Telangana and stated that whoever receives the B-form from the BRS will be victorious. He said the BRS would soon complete appointing committees at all levels and would also

strengthen its social media presence.

KCR concluded by speaking about Prof. Hashmi of Bangladesh, who set up 71,000 savings groups for poor women and zero-pollution cities where mayors are closely connected with the public.

KCR felicitated the ZP chairpersons with shawls and along with their families the chairpersons took photographs with KCR. He greeted each chairperson by name congratulating them for their contributions to development in their respective districts.

BRS Working President KTR spent considerable time talking to the ZP chairpersons and their families. He later presented Yadadri Prasadam and mementos to the chairpersons.

The chairpersons and their families expressed joy at meeting the BRS chief.

Manpower shortage hampering deployment of 'Kavach' in SCR

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY ■ HYDERABAD



With the rise in train collisions across the country, people raised concerns on the safety measures taken by the railways. They questioned why the railways have been dilly-dallying in installing train collision avoidance system (TCAS), called 'Kavach'.

It has been adopted as an automated train protection system. To avert these dreadful collisions, Indian Railways took initiative to develop Kavach system in 2012 and completed its development in 2022. However, despite its development, some of the areas still remain uncovered under the Kavach system due to various factors.

According to a South Central Railway (SCR) official, the Automated Train Protection (ATP) system covers only 25 per cent i.e 555 route kilometers (Rkms) of Telangana under South Central Railways (SCR) zone. The kavach system was deployed across 1,465 route kilometers (Rkms) in the entire zone. This includes 555 Rkms in Telangana (out of a total of 2,014 Rkms in the State), 129 Rkms in Andhra Pradesh, 132 Rkms in Karnataka, and 576 Rkms in Maharashtra. Additionally, the ATP system has been

installed in 159 locos and at 136 stations. But, Secunderabad-Raichur, Vijayawada-Kazipet-Balharshah sections remained uncovered by the system.

People are raising concerns about the safety of other sections which remain uncovered by the system. Most of these sections are critical especially when it comes to Vijayawada-Balharshah route which witnesses numerous trains followed by Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam, Secunderabad-Raichur, Nizamabad-Manmad, Guntakal-Hubli all of which are in the dire need of Kavach system. One of the main reasons behind uncoverage of critical sections in Telangana is, there is a significant manpower shortage for handling the Kavach system, especially for crucial safety-related activities such as locomotive pilots, station masters, and track maintainers. Approximately 15,000 posts are vacant across the SCR limits.

INDIA CORNER

51-foot-statue of sage Parshuram to come up on holy river bank in Arunachal

A 51-foot-tall statue of Sage Parshuram, considered one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, will be erected at 'Parshuram Kund', a holy spot on the bank of the Lohit river in Arunachal Pradesh, an official said on Tuesday. The state government is making efforts to develop 'Parshuram Kund' in Lohit district as a major pilgrimage centre in the Northeastern regions, the official said. Under the central government's Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive scheme, a grant of Rs 37.87 crore has been allocated to develop the site, he said. The project includes installing a 51-foot statue of Sage Parshuram which will be donated by the VIPRA Foundation, an organisation dedicated to develop the Kund. The official said that the statue will be erected on the bank of the Lohit river at the holy site, which attracts lakhs of devotees who take holy dips during Makar Sankranti.



Court allows two-hour custody parole to Engineer Rashid to take oath as MP

A court here on Tuesday granted two-hour custody parole to Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid to take oath as a Lok Sabha MP on July 5, subject to some conditions. Rashid, also known as Engineer Rashid, was elected from Baramulla seat as an independent candidate defeating National Conference leader Omar Abdullah in the recent Lok Sabha polls. He was arrested in a 2017 Jammu and Kashmir terror funding case. Rashid had moved the court seeking interim bail, or custody parole in the alternative, to take oath and perform his parliamentary functions. Additional Sessions Judge Chander Jit Singh allowed custody parole for two hours on July 5 to enable him to take oath, subject to a few conditions. These included a custody parole of two hours or till the conclusion of proceedings, whichever was later. The designated time of two hours excluded travel time.



Woman moves HC seeking termination of 'unwanted' pregnancy

A 28-year-old woman has approached the Bombay High Court seeking to terminate her 26-week pregnancy as the same was "unwanted". The woman in her plea said she already has a four-year-old daughter and is going through divorce proceedings with her estranged husband. As per the plea, the woman is in a relationship with a friend with whom she got pregnant. "If the petitioner is made to go through the unwanted pregnancy, then there is likelihood of mental and physical anguish and trauma," the plea said. Pursuant to the plea, the high court last week directed a medical board to examine the woman and submit a report on its opinion. A division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and Neela Gokhale on Tuesday perused the medical board's report and noted that it was not in favour of termination of the pregnancy. The bench asked the woman's lawyer Tejas Dande to ask the woman to go through the report and posted the matter for further hearing on Wednesday.



Deepening ties with India in several areas: US

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The US is deepening its ties with India in several key areas, including economic and security cooperation, a senior official has said, emphasising that Washington will continue to cultivate this relationship. State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel made the remarks on Monday at his daily news conference in response to a question on US-India relations and the recent conversation between President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the recent G7 Summit in Italy. "India is a country in which we are deepening our relations within a number of key spaces, especially as it relates to deepening our economic ties, deepening our security cooperation," Patel told reporters.



Patel added that National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan visited India a few weeks ago too. Sullivan visited India from June 17 to 18 and held extensive talks with his counterpart Ajit Doval primarily focusing on the implementation of the ambitious India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET). Responding to a question on Pakistan and on India-Pakistan ties, Patel said the US would hope that any country on the face of the planet condemns terrorism anywhere. "But ultimately, this is between India and Pakistan. Broadly, of course, we welcome any countries making more positive relations with their neighbours. But as it relates to this specifically, I just, I don't have anything to offer," he said.

India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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'No mention of Ayodhya in Prez's speech'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Samajwadi Party (SP) MP from Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh Awadhesh Prasad regretted on Tuesday that there was no mention of Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram, in the president's address to a joint sitting of Parliament. In his maiden speech in the Lok Sabha, Prasad said there is filth on the streets of Ayodhya and people have to wade through the filth to reach the newly-built Ram temple. "I was very surprised to see that in the 29-page speech of the president, there was no mention of Ayodhya, no mention of the birth place of Lord Ram," the SP leader said during a discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the president's address. He also regretted that poor people from whom land has been acquired for building an airport at Ayodhya are yet to receive their due compensation.

'Oppn upset as 1st time non-Cong leader became PM for 3rd term'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asked NDA MPs to follow parliamentary rules and conduct, and learn from senior members about the best practices, comments that came a day after the ruling alliance accused Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi of making a "most irresponsible" speech. Addressing a meeting of NDA MPs, Modi said the opposition is upset as for the first time a non-Congress leader, that too a "chai-wala", has become prime minister for a third straight term, sources said. Highlighting his humble origins, he took an apparent jibe at the Nehru-Gandhi family saying that its members used to be prime minister and gave little recognition to those from outside their fold, the sources said. Briefing reporters,



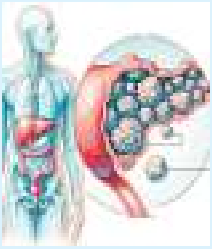
Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju said Modi asked MPs to study parliamentary issues, attend Parliament regularly and raise the matters related to their constituency effectively. Asked if Modi referred to Gandhi's Monday speech in Lok Sabha, Rijju said he made no such mention but added that when the country's prime minister speaks, the message is for everyone. Gandhi had launched a no-holds-barred attack on the BJP in the Lok Sabha on Monday, accusing the leaders of the ruling party of dividing people on communal lines, drawing massive protests from the treasury benches, with Prime Minister Modi slamming the Congress leader for calling the entire Hindu community violent. At the alliance meeting, Modi was felicitated by NDA leaders for his "historic" third term, Rijju added. Sources said the prime minister asked MPs to study any issue before making comments on it before the media, and said they should stay in touch with their constituencies and thank voters for supporting them.

Delhi: Around 1500 stones removed from woman's gallbladder

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 1500 stones were removed from a woman's gallbladder at a private hospital in Delhi. A 32-year-old woman, who was suffering from persistent bloating and heaviness after eating junk and fatty foods, had her gallbladder removed which contained nearly 1500 stones, said Dr Manish K. Gupta, Vice Chairperson and Senior Consultant, Laparoscopic and General Surgeon at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. The woman Riya Sharma, who successfully underwent a laparoscopic cholecystectomy at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, had also been self-medicating for what she believed to be gas, Dr Gupta said. She also experienced recurrent episodes of right upper abdominal pain radiating to her back and shoulder, often accompanied by nausea and vomiting, he added. After a thorough evaluation, the patient was scheduled for a laparoscopic cholecystectomy, a minimally invasive procedure to remove the gallbladder and stones.

"During her surgery (on Saturday), 10 mm and 5 mm incisions were made in her abdomen to facilitate the removal of the gallbladder," Dr Gupta said. Speaking about her condition, Riya Sharma, who lives in Gurgaon, told PTI, "I live by myself, which is why I am mostly dependent on outside food." "A few weeks back, I was suffering from persistent bloating and heaviness. After consulting my family physician, an ultrasound revealed that my gallbladder was full of stones and I was then referred to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital," she added. Despite the extensive number of stones, the patient was discharged the day after surgery, able to eat a normal diet and move around independently, Dr Gupta said. He also emphasised the importance of timely intervention, noting that small stones can migrate into the common bile duct (CBD), causing jaundice and pancreatitis, while large stones can lead to chronic irritation and potentially gallbladder cancer if left untreated.



Raj govt decides to repeal Gandhi Vatika Trust Act

PNS ■ JAIPUR

The Rajasthan cabinet on Tuesday decided to repeal the Gandhi Vatika Trust Act, 2023 brought by the previous Gehlot government for the operation and management of 'Gandhi Vatika', a museum based on the biography of Mahatma Gandhi. The other decisions taken by the cabinet include building a 'green field' airport in Kota and opening 'flying academy' in Kishangarh and other places. After the meeting, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel told reporters that the decision to repeal the Gandhi Vatika Trust Act was taken in the meeting as there were some flaws in the Act. He said the previous Congress government gave such unlimited powers to the Gandhi Vatika Trust which were not needed. He said the operation of Gandhi Vatika will continue. Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi and the then chief minister Ashok Gehlot inaugurated the 'Gandhi Vatika' built in the Central Park of Jaipur on September 23 last year. The initiative aimed at introducing the new generation to the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi. The theme of Gandhi Vatika, built at a cost of Rs 85 crore, was prepared under the guidance of a committee of Gandhian thinkers.

India in talks with Africa, Latin America for critical mineral block

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is in talks with Africa as well as Latin America to get critical mineral blocks on a government-to-government basis, Veena Kumari Dermal, joint secretary of the Ministry of Mines, said on Tuesday. Critical minerals such as lithium are essential components in many of today's rapidly growing clean energy technologies, including wind turbines, electricity networks, and electric vehicles. "We are having lots of discussions with many other resources-rich countries both in Africa as well as in Latin

America for getting... a block on a G2G basis or on a priority basis," Dermal said at India Energy Storage Week (IESW) 2024 organised by India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA). The mines ministry, she said, is giving more and more importance to the exploration of critical minerals in India. At the domestic front, the government has successfully auctioned one lithium block in Chhattisgarh, the joint secretary added. She said the Chhattisgarh government will take steps to start the exploration and production from the lithium block at the earliest.

Maiki South Mining Pvt Ltd had last month bagged the country's first lithium block in Chhattisgarh that was put up for sale. Meanwhile, the government cancelled the auction of 14 critical minerals that were on offer in the second round of auction. In June, the government had put on sale 21 blocks in the fourth round of auction of critical and strategic minerals. The government received 56 physical bids and 56 online bids for 18 of the 20 blocks offered during the first tranche of the auction, which began on November 29, 2023.

Quashing sexual violence cases upon monetary settlement would imply "justice is for sale": HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The court noted that the memorandum of understanding (MOU) entered into by the parties is not the result of a resolution of misunderstandings through family intervention but an exchange of money totalling Rs 12 lakh, intended to secure the quashing of the FIR. The woman had initially demanded Rs 12 lakh from the man but later settled for Rs 1.5 lakh. In the FIR, the woman, who was divorced and had a child, alleged that the accused had misrepresented himself as a divorcee and engaged in sexual violence with her under the false pretext of marriage. The FIR also alleged shooting of inappropriate videos and photos by the accused, threats to kill her and her son, and repeated misrepresentation by the accused. Later, it was submitted that the FIR had been lodged since the woman was angry and that it be now quashed as they have reached a settlement. The prosecutor opposed the plea saying if the FIR is quashed on the ground that the prosecutrix had lodged the complaint out of anger towards the accused, it would be a travesty of justice and an abuse of the criminal justice system.

Criminal cases involving allegations of sexual violence cannot be quashed on the basis of monetary payments as doing so would imply that "justice is for sale", the Delhi High Court has observed. The high court said even if the parties have reached a compromise in a sexual violence case, they cannot demand quashing of the FIR as a matter of right. The court made the observation while rejecting a plea moved by a rape accused seeking quashing of an FIR registered by a woman on the ground that the matter was amicably settled between the parties and she agreed to settle for Rs 1.5 lakh. "... This court is of the opinion that criminal cases involving allegations of sexual violence cannot be quashed on the basis of monetary payments, as doing so would imply that justice is for sale," Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said. The high court, in an order passed on Monday, said it has considered the fact that the FIR itself reveals serious allegations against the man and his family members, including consistent threats to the prosecutrix (woman) to prevent her from lodging a complaint.



'Only 8 countries could lower early deaths'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as premature deaths due to cancer have come down across three-fourths of the world, only eight countries are likely to meet the related United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 3.4, pointed out a recent study. The target is concerned with slashing premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cancer, by a third by 2030 through prevention and treatment. For the study, researchers, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO), Switzerland, calculated the risk of dying prematurely for people aged 30-69 years to discern

how the pattern of yearly premature deaths due to cancer changed from 2000-2019 across 183 countries. Data from the WHO Global Health Estimates were used. The research team found that while overall early deaths due to all cancers fell across South-East Asian countries, early deaths due to breast, colorectal and pancreatic cancer increased. The findings were published in The Lancet Oncology. However, "for most countries, (early deaths due to cancer) rates are not declining fast enough to reach SDG 3.4 targets. No WHO region will reach SDG 3.4 targets for all cancers combined," the authors wrote.



By 2050, 35 million new cancer cases are predicted, with the highest burden expected in lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) and low-income countries (LICs), according to the researchers. Previous studies have found that cancer, along with cardiovascular (heart-related) disease, are now the first or second causes of premature death in most countries and WHO regions, the authors said. However, no studies have evaluated early deaths due to each cancer type, they said.

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Preach prohibition in Tamil Nadu: Sitharaman to VCK member in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) member Thol Thirumavalavan to "preach" prohibition in his own state of Tamil Nadu where 56 people died recently after consuming spurious liquor. Participating in the debate on Motion of Thanks on the President's address in the Lok Sabha, the VCK MP, who spoke in Tamil, raised the drug abuse issue in his speech. The VCK is an ally of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu.



Intervening in the debate, Sitharaman said Thirumavalavan is requesting the Union government to invoke provisions given in the Constitution, particularly referring to the Preamble, to bring in prohibition and also to ensure that there are no drugs in the country.

Sitharaman, who is a Rajya Sabha member from Andhra Pradesh, said the VCK MP has raised a very noble cause, which is appreciable. "But the party, with which he's in alliance in Tamil Nadu, is in power there...where more than 56 people died due to consumption of illicit liquor. He should first preach there. Drug abuse is rampant in Tamil Nadu," Sitharaman said in the Lok Sabha. The hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district took place last month. The tragedy left over 56 people dead and many are still hospitalised.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Brace for a deluge

As India transitions from the scorching summer heat to the monsoon season, a dramatic shift in weather is on the horizon

As the rumbling in clouds becomes louder and the humidity rises, it is time for monsoon. It is welcome as it brings much relief from the scorching heat and a lot of discomfort that comes with it but as the monsoon progresses it also becomes a challenge, exposing our inadequacies and unpreparedness to meet this annual phenomenon. The monsoon season, while a welcome relief from the summer heat, brings with it significant challenges. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for heavy rainfall in seven states: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Madhya Pradesh. Residents of these areas are advised to brace for severe weather conditions, including the potential for flash floods, particularly in Uttarakhand, Goa, and Karnataka. This year's monsoon is expected to be more severe than usual. The IMD has warned of extremely heavy rainfall over the next few days, which could lead to significant disruptions and pose serious risks to life and property. It is just a matter of days before Delhi will wear a Venice look as water logging is a norm that repeats every year. The people living on the banks of Yamuna would be rendered homeless as if it were their destiny. And after the waters recede it would be life as usual for the people and the Government alike. But a lot of misery is in store for Uttarakhand where flash floods are predicted. Uttarakhand faces an elevated risk of flash floods. The steep slopes and narrow valleys can quickly channel rainwater, leading to sudden and severe flooding. Goa is also vulnerable to heavy rains and flash floods during the monsoon. The state's infrastructure can become quickly overwhelmed, leading to waterlogging and disruption of services. Karnataka is expected to experience torrential downpours. The Western Ghats, which run along the western edge of the state, can intensify the rainfall, increasing the risk of floods and landslides.



It is not just the monsoon, but its aftermath is equally challenging. The waterborne diseases and spectre of epidemics loom large while authorities watch it happening as mute spectators. Indeed it is high time authorities in the affected states take proactive measures to mitigate the impact of the heavy rains and prepare for the possible evacuation of vulnerable populations to safer areas. Issuing regular updates and warnings to keep the public informed and safe. Ensuring that critical infrastructure, such as dams and drainage systems, are prepared to handle the increased water levels. Many bridges in Bihar have collapsed even before the monsoon, airport Terminal T1 in Delhi collapsed and several highways have caved in, if these are not warning signals then what is? Blaming the monsoon is certainly lame. It is not sudden or unexpected. It happens every year yet we are ill-prepared for it. Besides, we so much depend upon it for irrigating our fields and providing drinking water. One can find so many pains when the rain is falling but then Without the rain, there would be no rainbow!

Without the rain, there would be no rainbow!

Without the rain, there would be no rainbow!

PICTALK



Villagers use a boat to travel across a flood affected area after heavy rainfall, in Morigaon district

The need for music and life skills in modern education

To ensure holistic development and equal opportunities for all children, music must become an integral part of the school curriculum

Driven on one side by developments in technology and on the other by changes to the global social order, we face tectonic shifts in the future of the workforce and challenges such as climate change and conflict. With this as a backdrop in mind, there is an urgent need to ensure that we can equip today's youth with the skills and mindsets to thrive in this dynamic environment. Education for the last 200 years has largely been based on imparting knowledge.



With increasing levels of specialization through the Industrial Revolution, knowledge became more valuable; however, today, soft skills, also known as Life Skills, have become much more needed. Without these skills, it is difficult to survive and succeed. More importantly, character building becomes imperative if we are to be prepared to tackle the global challenges facing us. We must define leadership not by position but as "Strength of Character" and "Sense of Community." There is plenty

of research and evidence showing that skills such as collaboration and communication, critical and creative thinking, and character traits such as self-confidence, grit, and resilience, as well as having a growth mindset, can be effectively developed through experiential learning that uses mediums such as team sports, the arts, and free play. Music is one of the most powerful art forms that supports the development of these skills in multiple, effective ways. Learning music requires practice and self-discipline to improve. It requires the student to set goals, like mastering a piece of music or preparing for a performance, and then implement a plan to achieve these goals. Performing in a group teaches students the importance of working together, listening to each other, and supporting one another. Students who learn different types and forms of music develop empathy and a deeper understanding of different perspectives. Most music programs encourage composition and improvisation, allowing students to develop their creative thinking skills. Performing

in front of an audience helps build self-confidence while learning from mistakes during a performance helps build resilience and a growth mindset. Today, a well-rounded music curriculum is available in higher-end private schools, but all children must get the same opportunity. We need to ensure that music education becomes a core part of the school curriculum and is not treated as an extracurricular activity. Only then can we ensure equal access, regardless of background or skill level. If we can make teaching music in schools the norm, it will ensure the holistic development of all children. Building character and life skills will mean that we will not only support children in their journey towards personal and professional success, but we will also help develop a generation of leaders capable of taking care of themselves and the world around them.

(The writer is CEO and founder, Enabling Leadership; views are personal)



RAVI SONAD

In the pantheon of the leaders belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the name of the late Manohar Parrikar would always be taken with a lot of respect. A Goan and an IITan, Parrikar was never happy with the stereotypical image of his state being a tourist destination for cheap alcohol, drugs and also sex. While Goa attracted tourists for its natural beauty and cultural magnetism, since the 1990s, there has been a noticeable increase in visitors drawn to the state for its permissive environment regarding alcohol, drugs, and sex tourism. Manohar Parrikar was vocal about his reservations concerning this shift in the tourist profile. He believed that such trends would tarnish Goa's image and disrupt the social fabric of the state once and for all. A leaf could be taken out from the books of Parrikar by the current Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Pushkar Singh Dhama regarding a similar crisis being faced by the Himalayan state.

Take a drive from Clock Tower in Dehradun on the legendary Rajpur Road to Mussoorie, you will realise that all the cars parked on the roadside are doubling up as bars. This 'car-o-bar' would often be a vehicle with a Haryana, UP and Punjab number plate. The two days that one was in the Doon Valley recently, as these bars roared in the costly model cars, one could not find a single soul in the police uniform to check them. Somewhere it seemed that the absence of the cops on this road was deliberate to let these bars prosper. Dehradun was once known as the bakery capital of India. These bakery shops lining Rajpur Road have been overtaken by wine shops with glitzy lights announcing prominently what they sell. Well, one cannot protest about the shops but buying bottles and drinking outside on the roads have to be surely protested. Author Ratna Manucha, whose family has stayed in the valley for ages, calls these 'car-o-baris' the Aliens from the other states. "Each year the crowds coming into my



town swell. These aliens from outer states come in obscenely big cars, they drive nasty, trying to edge us locals in our sensible little cars off the road, showing the finger on occasions and mouthing expletives, throwing rubbish out of their windows, drinking on unlit highways, and then crashing their cars into unsuspecting locals," says Manucha. Things get worse during the weekends as the Rajpur road gets clogged. The 'tourists' really don't mind spending hours in the serpentine queues.

However, the residents of Doon living either on the arterial road or the smaller roads prefer staying at home lest their plan to visit somebody gets wasted in the jam. Dehradun till about 10 years back was not like this. It was still an idyllic town preferred by people to live a retired life. In broadening the roads to accommodate ever-increasing traffic flow, trees have been cut. Given the winter pollution in Delhi-NCR, a large number of people have bought apartments in Doon Valley to spend the winter months. This demand has given rise to the building of multi-storied apartments. In turn, these apartments have been built clearing the lychee orchards, which once kept the valley



DEHRADUN TILL ABOUT 10 YEARS BACK WAS NOT LIKE THIS. IT WAS STILL AN IDYLIC TOWN PREFERRED BY PEOPLE TO LIVE A RETIRED LIFE. IN BROADENING THE ROADS TO ACCOMMODATE EVER-INCREASING TRAFFIC FLOW, TREES HAVE BEEN CUT

green. Dehradun till some years back did not need the use of air-conditioners. The hotels with the ACs largely used them during the winter months for room heating purposes. But you can now see the topography of the valley with houses having air-conditioners jutting out of their windows. This 'horrorscape' is not just limited to the summer tourist season. Dehradun in the past two decades has evolved into a major centre for higher education.

The large number of the colleges, both professional and general, have mushroomed along the ridges and the plains. They are not exactly home to centres for great knowledge earning but certainly give a graduate degree for a handsome fee. Given the high fee structure, there is always a dearth of students and vacant seats. The marketing teams of these institutions scout far and wide specially looking for the youth wanting some fun with a degree as a bonus. These 'students' prefer staying in the apartments outside the campus, as it can accommodate their costly cars, as there are no restrictions on their timing to return home and none really bothered if their vehicle fell into a gorge as they drove in a drunken state. Uttarakhand



SIDHARTH MISHRA

Reclaiming Dehradun: Battling tourism woes

Once an idyllic retreat and educational hub, Dehradun is now grappling with unchecked tourism, threatening its serene character

too has liberal liquor laws like Goa. Excise duty earned from liquor sales is the mainstay of the state revenue. But shouldn't Dhama be concerned about the image of Uttarakhand like Parrikar was for Goa? The late leader streamlined things in Goa without really tinkering with the existing laws. Parrikar emphasized the need for a robust law enforcement framework to tackle alcohol and drug tourism.

He increased police patrolling in tourist hotspots and enhanced coordination with central agencies. Second Parrikar pushed for regulations to control the sale and consumption of liquor in tourist areas. This included measures such as restricting liquor outlets and promoting responsible drinking through awareness campaigns. Dhama government in Uttarakhand too needs to make the presence of the cops more effective and control the misery that the residents of the city are being made to face. It's also depressing for those who regularly visit Doon to spend some time in peace who are now ending up being shooed by the blaring horns of speeding vehicles.

(The writer is the author and president, of the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA'S PHOENIX MOMENT:

Madam — India's Phoenix Moment: A T20 World Cup Triumph! India's cricket team exhibited remarkable determination and resilience, clinching the T20 World Cup 2024 title with a breathtaking comeback in the final five overs. Rising like a phoenix from the ashes, India soared to victory, proving their mettle on the grandest stage. In the thrilling conclusion, Hardik Pandya's final over was nothing short of brilliant, and a spectacular catch by Suryakumar Yadav (SKY)—who went beyond the boundary and timed his leap perfectly to secure the catch on his second attempt—played a crucial role in sealing India's victory. Earlier in the match, King Virat Kohli's solid 76 runs and Akshar Patel's crucial 47 provided stability to the Indian innings, setting a record-high T20 Cup final total of 176. Despite this, the South African team, the Proteas, responded with a strong performance, reaching a respectable score and losing just four wickets. However, with only 30 runs needed from the last 30 balls and six wickets in hand, the Proteas faltered under immense pressure. Boundaries that were expected to seal the win for them turned into catches or mere singles, proving that "luck did not favor them" in those decisive final overs. Yes, indeed, a blend of luck and daring spirit won the game for India. Team India deserves all the praise for its fantastic performance.

PVM Nivriti | Secunderabad

SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

Madam — Apropos the report titled "Flogging of couple: BJP seeks resignation of Didi" (July 2); if the TMC leader Tajemul Islam has indeed beaten up a youth and a woman with sticks, he must be awarded exemplary punishment according to law. But by which temerity can the leaders of BJP dare to act as "moral guardians" of the country and atrociously demand the resignation of Mamata Banerjee? When Dalit youths

Unjustified opposition to new criminal laws



The recent introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA) has sparked mixed reactions from experts. Some members of the legal community suggest continuing with the old laws for another 20 years, a recommendation that is both impractical and counterproductive. It's unreasonable to speculate on future circumstances even one or two years ahead, let alone 20 years. This suggestion essentially advocates for delay-

ing the implementation of the new laws indefinitely. As is often the case, opposition parties have unitedly opposed these new laws, not on their merits or demerits, but because they were discussed during the previous Lok Sabha in their absence. This argument holds no water. Their absence during the discussions and debates in the previous session was not justified, and they missed an opportunity to contribute meaningfully. No one prevented them from participating; they chose not to, and that cannot be a valid reason to stall the implementation of these new laws.

The custodians of the law, who are highly educated and capable individuals, can certainly understand and implement these new legal frameworks. Union Home Minister Amit Shah aptly stated that these laws are created by Indians, for Indians, and by the Indian Parliament, marking the end of colonial criminal justice laws.

KV Setharamaiah | Bengaluru

were publicly flogged in Una Gujarat in 2016, the BJP leaders asked Anandiben Patel to resign! When spine-chilling gangrape/murder/forced cremation took place in Hathras Unnao Budaun; did the BJP leaders demand the resignation of Yogi Adityanath? When Kuki women got paraded naked in Manipur before gang rape, why didn't the BJP leaders demand the resignation of N Biren Singh immediately? Why didn't the resignation of Pushkar Singh Dhama get demanded after a lady receptionist was murdered in Uttarakhand? When Bengali migrant labourer Afrazul Khan was burnt alive to death in Rajsamund in 2017, did the BJP leaders ask Vasundhara Raje to resign?

Hardly two weeks ago, street vendor Aurangzeb had been brutally lynched to death in full view of the Aligarh public! Did the "conscientious" leaders of the BJP act honestly enough to demand the resignation of Yogi Adityanath? Indeed, two wrongs do not make a right, but the greater truth remains that the

leaders of the hypocrite BJP simply hold no moral right to deliver unsolicited sermons about human rights.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

MONSOON IS A CHALLENGE

Madam — In the past few days, the number of rain-related deaths in the nation's capital has reached 11, with six deaths reported on Saturday alone. The heavy rainfall on Friday caused widespread waterlogging in Delhi. In response, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has expanded its staff to address waterlogging issues.

To effectively tackle urban waterlogging, a holistic approach is needed, incorporating infrastructure improvements, sustainable urban design, and active community engagement. By implementing these strategies, cities can mitigate the impacts of heavy rains and enhance their resilience for the future.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

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FIRST COLUMN EMBRACING THE PRESENT WITH MINDFULNESS

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RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Most of us might have heard the proverb 'You only know what you've got when it's gone' many times in our lives. But, in spite of that, many of us realize the fortune we had, only when we lose it. The stream of life flows on and every second the water in the stream is changing. At any given moment the water at the same spot in the stream is different. What is present now will move on to the next moment, so every moment life is unfolding and something new is being presented. Life unfolds in the present. But so often, we let it slip away, allowing time to rush past unobserved and unseized, and squandering the precious seconds of our lives as we are lost in the past or caught up in the future.

It's very common for most of us to fantasize about things like shopping or going to a movie while we are at work. And while we are actually in a movie theatre, we worry about the work piling up on our desks, isn't it ironic? We are trapped by intrusive memories of the past or fret about what may or may not happen in the future and in this whole struggle, we don't appreciate the Present because we identify ourselves with our thoughts, beliefs and emotions strongly. We forget the fact that we need to live in the Present i.e. the NOW, and for that, we need to be very still inside but we are constantly distracted by our thoughts linked to the past and future. Most of us think in a conditioned, addictive way.

We are addicted to the patterns and beliefs we created in the past which keep driving our thoughts in the present. Instead of thinking consciously and with full awareness, we are controlled by our thoughts of the past. To change this pattern we need first to pause and observe what's going on in our mind. We need to step back and watch and then steer our thoughts towards the present moment and creative goals. We need to focus on being before thinking, judging, analysing and doing. Living in the present is a state of active, open, intentional attention to the present. When we become aware of what's going on inside our mind, we realize that we are not our thoughts; we are the observer of our thoughts from moment to moment and stop judging them. It is like watching waves rising and falling on the surface of the ocean. Spiritual wisdom makes



us aware and realise that we are souls — sentient points of light and purity, peace, joy and love are our original state of being. As the noise and chatter of the mind slow down, we can experience our true nature and just relax in our state of being. Then we are connected to the now not influenced by the past, future or anything out there. We are in a highly creative state when our pure awareness creates pure energy of love, joy and peace in every moment and shapes our destiny. Under such a stage, we are flowing with life without grasping, chasing, wanting, needing or holding on to anything. We are in a truly liberated state and truly powerful and creative. There is fresh energy in every thought and action. Living in the present reduces impulsive and reactive behaviour. Those who live in the moment can hear negative feedback without feeling threatened.

They are more accepting, accommodating and flexible, as a result of which they have easy and satisfying relationships. It is very important for all of us to realize that we are now in the most important and beneficial age when the Almighty Himself is bestowing His treasures of wisdom, love and powers upon humanity. Hence, by becoming soul conscious we can live in the present and make the best out of each second of this valuable period. Being aware of the self as a soul and of being connected to the Supreme liberates us in a second and we are able to flow with life with ease and lightness. So, don't look back because you are not going that way.

(Writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

Modi Govt's imperative for employment growth



AS MITTAL

Despite the country's emerge as a major manufacturing hub, the sector has seen limited progress, contributing to a rising unemployment rate among the youth

There has been a long-standing vision to make India a global manufacturing hub to create millions of jobs. However, considering India's size and status as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, it's perplexing how the potential for job creation and growth in the manufacturing sector has been overlooked for so long. The new government must implement a new industrial policy having decisive measures to address current structural constraints and reshape India's manufacturing sector in response to global supply chain shifts. This is crucial for achieving a GDP of \$5 trillion and making India the world's third-largest economy by 2027. It's alarming that unemployment among young people with graduate degrees is at an all-time high of 29 per cent as India moves towards becoming the third-largest economy. In 2019, manufacturing was the second-largest employer in India after agriculture, but it has now fallen to fourth place behind the construction sector, trade, and hospitality.

The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSO) data shows that 45.5% of the workforce is employed in agriculture, 12.4% in construction, and only 11.6% in manufacturing, despite its potential to create a multitude of job opportunities. Manufacturing still employs around 60 million people in India, effective action is needed to unlock its full potential for job creation at large. India's impressive growth is hindered by the lacklustre performance of the manufacturing sector, which has shown limited expansion over the past 25 years. Unlike other countries, India's production structure has shifted directly from agriculture to services-driven growth, resulting in a stagnant contribution of manufacturing to India's GDP at 15-17%, significantly lower than in East and South-East Asian countries. China has a 31.63% share of global manufacturing, the US has 15.87%, Japan 6.52%, Germany 4.78%, and India 2.87%. This highlights the urgent need for India to address the challenges in its manufacturing sector.

The reasons for this stagnation could be diverse, such as high tax burden, overburdened regulatory compliances, inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, unreliable electricity, lack of access to credit or a skilled workforce, and insufficient focus on research, development, and technology adoption.

Despite these obstacles, Indian manufacturers are now more emboldened to transcend their comfort zones and align with the nation's goal of becoming a global player.

Areas to be addressed:
Focus on sectors of strength: There are strong capabilities in various sectors such as automobiles (especially e-vehicles, to raise its current share from 7% to over 30%), pharmaceuticals and chemicals, textiles and apparel, engineering goods, farm-implements, and bicycles. However, there are significant gaps in mega-scale facilities that can anchor large-scale exports. The reliability of supporting infrastructure and fostering global partnerships for MSMEs are critical for accelerating growth.

Revisit PLI: It is necessary to reevaluate the effectiveness of the Production Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme, creat-



THE NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY ORGANISATION DATA SHOWS THAT 45.5 PER CENT OF THE WORKFORCE IS EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE, 12.4 PER CENT IN CONSTRUCTION, AND ONLY 11.6 PER CENT IN MANUFACTURING, DESPITE ITS POTENTIAL TO CREATE A MULTITUDE OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

ed in 2020 to invigorate the domestic manufacturing sector, showing the desired results. The progress of schemes worth over Rs.2 lakh crore covering 14 sectors, especially in labour-intensive sectors like automobiles, auto components, textiles, IT hardware, and medical devices, it has been slow.

The PLI scheme's broader goals, such as job creation, attracting substantial investments, enhancing exports, and positioning India as a global manufacturing hub, have yet to be fulfilled. **Restructure GST:** The current Goods and Service Tax (GST) structure applies to over 1250 items and services, with standard tax rates of 5%, 12%, 18%, and the highest rate of 28%. Additionally, there are zero and special rates of 0.25%, 1.5%, and 3% for certain goods and services.

To address inflation and tax-related issues, a restructuring of the tax system is necessary. This could involve transitioning from the existing four-slab structure to a two-slab model and providing exemptions for items such as farm implements, which were previously exempted under the Pre-GST regime.

Opportunities in next-generation sectors: Opportunities in renewable energy, aerospace, and high-tech manufacturing sectors such as semiconductors and mobile devices is a case in point as the \$12 billion exports in FY 23, more than double the \$4.8 billion in FY20, are rapidly emerging as the world transitions to a

green and connected future. Building a solid foundation in these sectors requires focusing on R&D, investments in technology transfers, global tie-ups, and incentivizing investments, along with collaboration across academia, industry, and the government.

Smart manufacturing stack: India's technology stack is a leading example of digital disruption at scale and showcases the country's capabilities for innovative solutions. A similar innovative leap in manufacturing, oriented toward the next generation of smart industrial clusters, connected factories, enhanced efficiency and reduced waste, high-productivity assets, end-to-end value chain transparency, and tech-enabled real-time interventions, can be significant differentiators. Accelerate future-ready infrastructure: India's inefficiencies are costing the nation heavily in time and money.

It is imperative to reduce current logistics costs from 8-10 per cent to 6 per cent of GDP by 2030. This requires a \$1.2 billion investment in industry-focused corridors. To provide a level playing field to the northern India manufacturing hubs, away from seaports, especially land-locked border states like Punjab needs policy-backed support to combat over double freight burden in comparison to southern-western states.

Labour-intensive manufacturing: As technological advancements drive productivity in manufactur-

ing across various sectors, the government also needs to address the transition of the workforce from agriculture and other fields. The 2024 India Employment Report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes the need to promote labour-intensive manufacturing and enhance efforts in skilling. It is crucial to prioritize skill development, and industry leaders should play a pivotal role in driving this initiative.

The Way Forward: A thriving and self-reliant domestic manufacturing sector is essential for India to achieve inclusive growth by implementing an aggressive and effective reform agenda and navigating geopolitical risks and climate change-driven calamities.

It is crucial to ensure that the recent promises made in the poll can be fulfilled to transform India into a global manufacturing hub, resulting in employment generation and tangible progress. India has the capacity and resources to excel in this area, and it's time for the new government to make it happen.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA). Views expressed are personal)

The petrodollar system and its influence on global finance and geopolitics

A more multipolar financial ecosystem that accommodates a diverse array of currencies and economic influences is taking shape

The petrodollar system, inaugurated in 1974, has long been a linchpin of global finance and geopolitics. Established through an agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia, it stipulated that the kingdom would exclusively sell its oil in US dollars. This arrangement not only guaranteed a consistent demand for the dollar but also directed oil revenues back into the US economy through investments in US Treasury bonds and other financial assets.

As a result, the system created a significant source of funding for the US government and solidified the dollar's status as the world's primary reserve currency. Geopolitically, the petrodollar system forged a symbiotic relationship between



SANTOSH MATHEW

the US and oil-exporting nations, particularly those in the Middle East. In exchange for security assurances and economic assistance, these countries committed to conducting oil transactions in dollars, thereby granting the US significant sway over global oil markets and the broader economy. This symbiosis reinforced the US's geopolitical influence and allowed it to project power in

the strategically vital Middle East, ensuring the uninterrupted flow of oil, which is critical for the global economy. Recent developments suggest a potential departure from this long-standing arrangement. On June 9, Saudi Arabia declared its intention to discontinue exclusive oil sales in US dollars. This decision is part of a broader strategy to diversify the Saudi economy and diminish reliance on oil revenues. The move away from the petrodollar system is seen by some as a step towards strengthening ties with other economic powers, notably China, which seeks to promote its currency, the yuan, as an alternative in global trade. The role of Henry Kissinger, a pivotal figure in establishing the petrodollar system, under-

scores its historical significance. Kissinger's negotiations with Saudi Arabia in the 1970s not only secured American dominance in global finance but also assured protection for Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, cementing their alliance with the US through military cooperation and strategic partnerships.

Reactions to Saudi Arabia's decision vary widely. Analysts speculate it could weaken the dollar's global hegemony, potentially leading to its depreciation and higher inflation rates in the US. However, mitigating factors include the US's current status as an oil exporter, reducing vulnerability to fluctuations in oil prices and currency dynamics. The broader implications for the global economy remain



uncertain. A shift away from the dollar in oil transactions could promote greater currency diversification and lessen dependence on the US financial system. For oil-importing countries, this shift could offer more stable pricing if transactions are conducted in their own currencies or other stable alternatives. In conclusion, Saudi Arabia's strategic pivot signifies a significant evolution in global financial systems.

While it may not immediately dismantle the petrodollar's influence, it signals a transition towards a more multipolar economic order, where multiple currencies could assume pivotal roles in global trade and finance. This transformation is anticipated to unfold gradually, with profound implications for international relations and economic strategies worldwide.

Throughout decades, the petrodollar system has upheld the dollar's global dominance, intertwining economic power with geopolitical influence. The petrodollar system's historical context and its prospective decline illustrate the dynamic nature of global finance and geopolitical landscapes. The shift in Saudi Arabia's pol-

icy highlights the kingdom's strategic intent to align itself more closely with emerging economic powers and reduce its over-reliance on oil revenue. This move is emblematic of a broader global trend toward economic diversification and the quest for greater financial sovereignty among oil-producing nations.

The gradual erosion of the petrodollar system could herald the rise of alternative financial paradigms, challenging the entrenched supremacy of the US dollar. As countries explore new avenues for conducting international trade and finance, the world may witness an increase in currency diversification, potentially leading to a more balanced and less US-centric global economy. Such a shift could also

encourage more equitable economic partnerships and reduce the economic vulnerabilities associated with dependence on a single dominant currency. Moreover, the potential decline of the petrodollar system invites a reexamination of existing geopolitical alliances and economic dependencies.

The ripple effects of these changes could extend beyond the realm of finance, influencing international diplomacy, trade policies, and even security dynamics. The focus will likely shift toward fostering a more multipolar financial ecosystem that accommodates a diverse array of currencies and economic influences.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Groww Asset Management, trustee settle case with Sebi; pay Rs 9 lakh

Groww Asset Management Ltd (formerly known as Indiabulls Asset Management Company Ltd) and its trustee have settled with markets watchdog Sebi a case pertaining to alleged violation of regulatory norms after paying Rs 9 lakh. This came after the applicants -- Groww Asset Management Company and Groww Trustee Ltd (earlier known as Indiabulls Trustee Company Ltd) -- proposed to settle the alleged violation by "neither admitting nor denying the findings of fact." It is hereby ordered that any proceedings that may be initiated for the violations... are settled in respect of the applicants," the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in its settlement order passed on June 28. The applicants have submitted that on account of change in control of Indiabulls Asset Management Company and Indiabulls Trustee due to the acquisition of these entities by Nextbillion Technology Pvt Ltd, the entities are now known as Groww Asset Management and Groww Trustee with effect from May 3, 2023.



Allcargo Gati raises Rs 169.28 crore through QIP

Express logistics firm Allcargo Gati Ltd on Tuesday said it has raised Rs 169.28 crore by issuing equity shares through a Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP). The fresh capital has been secured after the fund-raise committee of the company's board has approved the issue and allotment to successful qualified institutional buyers at the issue price of Rs 101 per equity share at its meeting on June 28. Allcargo Gati Ltd said in a statement. QIP saw participation from various investors raising a total amount of Rs 169.28 crore, it added. "The response to our QIP underscores investor confidence in our business strategy and market position. The funds raised will strengthen our financial position and support our growth initiatives across key segments," said Pirojshah Sarkari, Managing Director and CEO, Gati Express and Supply Chain Pvt Limited (GESCLP).



India's coal production rises 14% in June

The country's coal production rose by 14.49 per cent to 84.63 million tonne (MT) in June. The country's coal output was 73.92 MT in June last fiscal, according to provisional figures of the government. In June Coal India Ltd's (CIL) production was at 63.10 MT, registering a rise of 8.87 per cent compared to the same period last year, the coal ministry said in a statement. India's coal dispatch in June was at 85.76 MT, up by 10.15 per cent compared to the same period last year. Additionally, as on June 30, the coal stock held by coal companies witnessed a surge, reaching 95.02 MT. "This surge reflects an impressive annual growth rate of 41.68 per cent underscoring the robust performance and efficiency of the coal sector. Concurrently, the coal stock at thermal power plants (TPP) marked a notable increase to 46.70 MT (Provisional) on the same date, with an annual growth rate of 30.15 per cent," it added. Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output.



RBI proposes rationalising norms on ex-im transactions

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Tuesday proposed rationalising regulations that cover export and import transactions with an aim to promote ease of doing business and empower banks to provide more efficient service to their foreign exchange customers. The central bank has issued 'Regulation of Foreign Trade under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999 - Draft Regulations and Directions' in this regard. As per the draft, every exporter should furnish to the specified authority a declaration specifying the amount representing the full export value of the goods or services. "The amount representing the full export value of goods and services shall be realised and repatriated to India within nine months from the date of shipment for goods and date of invoice for services," it said. The draft also proposes that



The central bank has issued 'Regulation of Foreign Trade under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999 - Draft Regulations and Directions' in this regard. As per the draft, every exporter should furnish to the specified authority a declaration specifying the amount representing the full export value of the goods or services

an exporter who has not realised the full value of export within the time specified may be caution listed by the author-

ised dealer. An exporter who has been caution listed can undertake export only against receipt of advance payment in full or against an irrecoverable letter of credit, to the satisfaction of the authorised dealer. According to the draft, no advance remittance for the import of gold and silver should be permitted unless specifically approved by the Reserve Bank of India. The RBI said the proposed regulations are intended to promote ease of doing business, especially for small exporters and importers. They are also intended to empower Authorised Dealer banks to provide quicker and more efficient service to their foreign exchange customers, the central bank said. The RBI has sought comments on the draft regulations under FEMA and directions to authorised dealer banks by September 1.

Sensex, Nifty close flat after hitting fresh lifetime highs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit fresh lifetime high levels before closing flat due to profit-taking in select banking and telecom shares amid mixed global cues on Tuesday. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 34.74 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 79,441.45 in a volatile trade. During the day, it jumped 379.68 points or 0.47 per cent to hit a record peak of 79,855.87. The Nifty declined by 18.10 points or 0.07 per cent to 24,123.85. Intra-day, it climbed 94.4 points or 0.39 per cent to hit a lifetime high of 24,236.35. Among the Sensex pack, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India and Titan were the biggest gainers. Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies and Tata Steel were the biggest losers.

Centre developing platform for resolution of non-trade barriers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry is developing a platform for registering non-tariff barriers (NTBs) faced by exporters and taking up with the concerned countries for their resolution, a senior official said. At present, there is an information gap on these barriers particularly for small items. "We are making a portal so that we can prioritise all the NTBs. Traders will register their complaints and the ministry will pursue that," the official said. In cases where the barrier is impacting a large volume of goods will be prioritised for their redressal and action-taking. Economic think tank GTRI in its report has stated that India needs to act in a fast-track manner for the removal of NTBs, being faced by domestic exporters in different countries like the US, China and Japan, to achieve export target of US\$ 1 trillion for goods by 2030.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has suggested a two-pronged strategy to mitigate the influence of NTBs on exports. It asked for upgrading domestic systems, in cases where Indian products are rejected



agriculture products face problems due to higher pesticide levels, presence of pests and contaminants due to foot and mouth disease. India's exports are far below potential as they face NTBs in the EU (European Union), the US, China, Japan, Korea and many other countries. Key Indian exports that routinely face high barriers include chillies, tea, basmati rice, milk, poultry, bovine meat, fish, chemical products to the EU; sesame seed, black tiger shrimps, medicines, apparel to Japan; food, meat, fish, dairy, industrial products to China; shrimps to the US; and bovine meat to South Korea. According to the report, the other products which face these barriers include ceramic tiles in Egypt; chilli in Mexico; medicines in Argentina; microbiological reagents in Saudi Arabia; electrical, medical devices, and household appliances in Brazil; veterinary pharmaceuticals, feed additives, and machinery in Russia.

Chhattisgarh govt launches 'single window system 2.0' for ease of industrialists

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Tuesday launched the second edition of the 'single window system' (SWS) to facilitate speedy approvals of various clearances required for setting up industries. Speaking at the launch of the portal at his official residence in Raipur, Sai said the state government would extend all possible assistance to entrepreneurs interested in investing in the state. The Commerce and Industry Department already



operates a 'single window system' portal which has been updated and re-launched, Sai said. The system will ensure speedy clearances and approvals for the convenience of investors and new industrialists, he said, adding that "good governance and zero

tolerance towards corruption" are top priorities of the government. The online facility helps simplify the process by reducing administrative physical interference in the grant of clearances and approvals, he said. The state has abundant resources and has immense potential for industrial growth. With the new system, all the facilities will be available at one click and the process of setting up new units will become easier, which will attract investment, the chief minister said.

Divine Power Energy's makes stellar debut; shares jump over 284%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Divine Power Energy Ltd, a manufacturer of insulated wires and strips, on Tuesday made a remarkable debut, closing with a premium of more than 284 per cent against the issue price of Rs 40. The stock was listed at Rs 155, reflecting gains of 287.50 per cent from the issue price on the NSE SME platform. Later, shares of the company settled at Rs 150 apiece,

down by 3.23 per cent. At the close of the trading session, the company's market valuation stood at Rs 322.01 crore. In volume terms, 31.44 lakh shares of the company exchanged hands on the bourse. Last week, Divine Power Energy's initial public offering (IPO) was subscribed nearly 394 times on the final day, driven by an overwhelming response from retail investors.

'Country's peak power demand may cross 400 GW by FY32'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's peak power demand may surpass the projected 384 GW mark and even cross 400 GW by 2031-32, according to Power Secretary Pankaj Agarwal. Speaking at the CII-Smart Metering Conference, the official on Tuesday said peak power demand had already reached 250 GW in May. "The way power demand has grown in some states in the last two years, the demand will touch 384 GW and may easily cross 400

GW by 2031-32. For this we must have an installed (power generation) capacity of 900 GW," Agarwal said. The government's projection for this year's peak power demand is 260 GW, which is expected by September, according to Agarwal. With the onset of monsoon, peak power demand has been showing a downward trend. As per official data, peak demand was around 209 GW on Monday. He further said beneficiaries of PM Surya Ghar Yojana must be provided meters under the RDSS scheme.



Stock broking firms tumble; Angel One tanks nearly 9%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of stock broking firms declined on Tuesday, a day after markets regulator Sebi directed stock exchanges and other market infrastructure institutions (MIIs) to implement a uniform and equal charge structure for all members rather than varying charges based on their volume or activity. At the close of trade, the stock of Angel One tanked 8.72 per cent, Geojit Financial Services tumbled 6.83 per cent, Motilal Oswal Financial Services dropped

4.19 per cent, SMC Global Securities went lower by 2.81 per cent, Dolat Algotech declined 2.28 per cent and 5paisa Capital dipped 0.05 per cent on the BSE. During the day, shares of Angel One tumbled 10.50 per cent, Geojit Financial Services tanked 7.59 per cent, Dolat Algotech dropped 5.39 per cent, Motilal Oswal Financial Services went lower by 4.63 per cent, 5paisa Capital declined 4.51 per cent and SMC Global Securities fell 4.13 per cent. The regulator instructed

stock exchanges, clearing corporations, and depositories constituted as MIIs to ensure that any charges recovered from the end client are "True to Label".



Kotak Mahindra Bank shares decline over 2%; mcap erodes by Rs 7,777 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Kotak Mahindra Bank on Tuesday declined over 2 per cent, wiping out Rs 7,777.33 crore from its mar-

ket capitalisation as the company's name cropped up in the Adani-Hindenburg row. The stock went lower by 2.16 per cent to settle at Rs 1,769.60 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it tumbled 3.98 per cent to Rs 1,736.65. On the NSE, it declined 2.12 per cent to Rs 1,769.60 per share. The company's market valuation eroded by Rs 7,777.33 crore to Rs 3,51,787.86 crore. Billionaire banker Uday Kotak founded bank and brokerage created and oversaw an offshore fund used by an unnamed investor to profit from a plunge in Adani shares

that followed a damning Hindenburg report, the US short-seller said. Hindenburg Research, which had in a January 2023 report alleged stock market manipulations and accounting fraud at the Adani group, said it has received a show cause notice from Indian markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) over gains made from betting on the conglomerate's shares. The US short-seller said it had disclosed that it had bets against the group, adding that its gains were only over US\$ 4 million.

Iffco launches campaign to boost nano-fertiliser adoption in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (Iffco) on Tuesday said it has launched a major initiative to promote the use of nano-fertilisers among farmers across India. The "Nano Fertilizer Usage Promotion Mahaabhiyan" aims to create 200 model nano village clusters, covering 800 villages, where farmers will receive a 25 per cent subsidy on the maximum retail price (MRP) of Nano Urea Plus, Nano DAP, and Sagarika fertilisers, it added. To encourage the use of modern application techniques, Iffco will provide a grant of Rs 100 per acre to drone entrepre-

neurs, enabling farmers to access low-cost spraying services, it said in a statement. The cooperative plans to raise awareness about the benefits of nano fertilisers, including improved crop quality and increased production through demonstrations in these model villages. The move comes as the government seeks to reduce its dependence on chemical fertilisers and promote more sustainable agricultural practices. The government has also launched a 100-day action plan to promote nano-fertilisers and plans to hold 1,270 demos of Nano DAP (liquid) in 413 districts and 200 trials of Nano Urea Plus (liquid) in 100 districts.

International toy fair to begin on July 6; over 100 foreign buyers to participate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 300 domestic companies and over 100 foreign buyers from the US, Germany and other countries are expected to participate in the four-day international toy fair beginning on July 6 in the national capital, a statement said on Tuesday. More than 250 Indian brands will display their products during the fair, which is being organised at Pragati Maidan here, Toy Association of India senior vice-president Naresh Kumar Gautam said in



the statement. Gautam said that the 15th Toy Biz International B2B Expo 2024 is the largest fair in South Asia. "It is a big platform for Indian toy makers to showcase their products and capabilities to the global audience. It helps us attract new customers and partners, expand market reach for our toys and boost exports," he said. In addition, he said, Toy Biz also provides a platform for industry players to network and connect with each other, which can help foster collaborations, partnerships and joint

ventures. Gautam, who is also the CEO of Noida-based Little Genius Toys Pvt Ltd, also suggested the government provide fiscal support to manufacturers in organising these fairs. "At least Rs 1 lakh should be given to all the stalls in these fairs. At present, we are providing hotel accommodation to foreign buyers and ticket cost up to Rs 1 lakh," he added. He said that the expo can also help raise awareness about the importance of the Indian toy industry, both domestically and internationally.

ICICI Bank launches Forex Card for students



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector lender ICICI Bank on Tuesday launched a pre-paid Sapphire Forex Card, crafted specifically for students who are going abroad for higher education. The card, powered by Visa, provides exclusive benefits and convenience to students and their parents to manage education-related expenses abroad like admission fees, course-related fees and other day-to-day expenses, including travel, dining and groceries, among others, the bank said in a statement. The card offers the freedom of loading and transacting in

15 currencies without any cross-currency mark-up charge being levied by the bank, allowing students to conveniently travel across the globe even if they load only one currency on the card, it added. The card comes with an array of joining benefits up to Rs 15,000, along with exclusive privileges, it said. It comes with a welcome kit with two cards -- a primary and a replacement card -- that can be activated digitally through iMobile Pay, internet banking or by calling the bank's customer care in the event of loss/damage of the primary card, it noted.

what's brewing?



ADITYA SEAL JOINS KAJOL & PRABHU DEVA IN MAHARAGNI

Actor Aditya Seal is set to join the star-studded cast of the highly anticipated film *Maharagni*. Directed by Charantej Uppalapati, the film boasts an ensemble cast that includes the legendary Kajol and the iconic Prabhu Deva. Aditya Seal, known for his compelling performances in films such as *Tum Bin 2* and *Student of the Year 2*, is thrilled about his new role. The actor expressed his excitement, emphasising how significant this opportunity is for him. "It's a dream come true for me," Aditya Seal said. "I grew up watching Kajol's versatility as an actor and the 'God of Dance', Prabhu Deva. Sharing screen space with both the stalwarts is surreal. I am ecstatic about this opportunity to work alongside such legendary actors." *Maharagni* promises to be a captivating blend of drama, dance and emotion, bringing together some of the finest talents in the industry. Aditya Seal's addition to the cast is expected to bring fresh and dynamic energy to the film.



Nimrit Kaur looks back on her emotional transformation

Actress Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia has opened up about her journey of overcoming depression and taking charge of her life, shedding light on the challenges she faced and the transformative changes she made for a healthier and happier life. Ahluwalia, known for her resilience and determination, speaks of her struggles with depression, both during her college years and after her stint in the reality show *Bigg Boss 16*. Following her eviction from *Bigg Boss 16*, where she stood on the top 6 list, she found herself grappling with depression as she struggled to find work in the industry. This experience triggered memories of similar struggles she faced during her college days, where she was bullied by classmates due to her weight, significantly impacting her mental health. Recalling her journey, she shared, "Battling depression has been a significant challenge in my life, both during my college years and after my stint in *Bigg Boss 16*. Facing rejection and struggling to find work in the industry took a toll on my mental health. These experiences brought back memories of the bullying I endured during my college days, which deeply affected me." Despite the challenges, she found the strength to take charge of her life, undergoing emotional transformations. "Taking charge of my life was a turning point for me. I underwent an emotional transformation, committing myself to a healthier lifestyle and pursuing my passion for modeling and television," Ahluwalia continued.



John Wick makers to remake Kill in English

The directors of *John Wick* are preparing to adapt Nikhil Nagesh Bhat's brutal thriller *Kill* into a Hollywood picture. This is not the first time a Bollywood film has inspired the West. However, the majority of Hindi films that have done so, have given their plots to Hollywood films rather than being officially adapted. Panorama Studios has revealed that Jeetu Joseph's 2013 Malayalam murder thriller, starring Mohanlal, will become the first Indian film to be formally converted into an English remake. The film has already been converted into Hindi, and the cast includes Ajay Devgn, Tabu, and Shriya Saran. It has also inspired a sequel in Hindi and Malayalam, respectively. According to reports, Lionsgate and 87Eleven Entertainment have partnered to produce an English adaptation of *Kill*. These production companies have financed Keanu Reeves' *John Wick* franchise. The Nikhil Nagesh Bhat-directed film drew attention when it premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival's Midnight Madness section, as well as at the Tribeca Film Festival. The film tells the narrative of an Indian Army commando who faces thugs on a train to New Delhi as his fiancée is taken captive. The English remake will be directed by Chad Stahelski, Jason Spitz and Alex Young from 87Eleven Entertainment. Stahelski told, "Nikhil creates relentless action sequences that need to be watched by as large an audience as possible. It's thrilling to be creating an English-language version; we have large shoes to fill."



Steve Carell dives deep into 'Gru' for Despicable Me 4

Former Supervillain Gru is all set to create mayhem with Lucy, his adorable children, Margo, Edith and Agnes along with the newest addition, Gru Junior. In addition, the minions are back and stronger than ever in their new avatar, the Mega Minions! The latest addition to the *Despicable Me* franchise is directed by Chris Renaud and Patrick Delage. Universal Pictures brings to audiences this July, a Chris Melandari and Illumination production, the much anticipated, *Despicable Me 4*. The upcoming release features a star-studded cast with Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig, Miranda Cosgrove, Dana Gaier and Pierre Coffin as returning characters, with exciting new additions of Sofia Vergara as Valentina, Joey King as Poppy, Madison Polan as Agnes and Will Ferrell as Maxime Le Mal. The film begins on a wholesome, family-fun note until things take a turn for the worse when Gru has to run away with his family to a secluded location to avoid his former arch-nemesis, Maxime Le Mal and his girlfriend, Valentina. On balancing 'Gru Jr.' and protecting his family with a threat over his head, Carell adds, "Lucy and the girls have always been his motivation to be the best that he can be, but with the arrival of Gru Jr., the family dynamic changes. Gru Jr. is a chip off the old block, but he's not warming up to dear old dad. Gru has nothing but love for his baby boy, but he faces an uphill battle to win his son's affection. It's every parent's nightmare to not instantly bond with your kids, and Gru struggles to establish a relationship with his new bundle of joy, while simultaneously saving the world as an AVL agent." Steve Carell excitedly reveals what makes his character tick in the new film, he says "Some people aren't so nice, but they try to convince the world that they are; Gru is nice, but he tries to convince the world that he's not! As the series has progressed, the writers have explored different aspects of Gru's world." Will 'Gru' be able to manage his new parenting role, while trying to fight off his old nemesis and protect his family from evil dangers? Catch *Despicable Me 4* available in theatres in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu on July 2024.

Akshay Kumar asks Jacky Bhagnani to keep his BMCM pay on hold

The last few weeks have shown multiple crew members coming up with their stories of delayed payments. Finally addressing the swirling rumours about unpaid dues, actor-producer Jacky Bhagnani, on behalf of the producers of *Bade Miya Chote Miyan*, has opened up on the issue. Not long ago, the leading man of their last film *Bade Miya Chote Miyan*, Akshay Kumar, met with Jacky Bhagnani and asked for his payment to be put on hold until the entire cast and crew were paid. Speaking on the same, he shared, "Akshay sir and I had met to discuss this matter. Upon learning about this situation, Akshay sir didn't hesitate to step forward and show his support for the crew. He has insisted that his payments be placed on hold until every single crew member working on our projects receives their full and final payment. We are incredibly grateful for Akshay sir's understanding and his willingness to stand with us during this time. The movie business hinges on strong relationships and that is the spirit we strive to foster in the industry."



FUN

ARCHIE

Panel 1: Archie is showing off his new smart-phone. Betty and Veronica are impressed. Panel 2: Archie explains the phone's features. Panel 3: Archie is using the phone. Panel 4: Archie is talking to a woman on the phone.

CALVIN AND HOBBS

Panel 1: Calvin is hungry. Panel 2: Calvin asks Hobbes if he can catch anything. Panel 3: Calvin asks Hobbes what tigers eat. Panel 4: Hobbes explains that tigers eat caterpillars. Panel 5: Calvin asks if tigers really eat caterpillars. Panel 6: Calvin asks Hobbes to show him a tiger. Panel 7: Hobbes shows Calvin a picture of a tiger.

GARFIELD

Panel 1: Garfield is talking to Jon. Panel 2: Garfield is talking to Jon. Panel 3: Garfield is talking to Jon. Panel 4: Garfield is talking to Jon.

REALITY CHECK

Panel 1: A man is talking to a woman. Panel 2: A man is talking to a woman. Panel 3: A man is talking to a woman.

SPEED BUMP

Panel 1: A man is talking to a woman. Panel 2: A man is talking to a woman.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	
5				6
7			8	
9			10	
			11	
12	13		14	15
17			18	
			19	

NANCY

Panel 1: Nancy is talking to a man. Panel 2: Nancy is talking to a man. Panel 3: Nancy is talking to a man. Panel 4: Nancy is talking to a man.

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Speaks very quietly
- A builder follows these when building a house
- The backbone
- Athen's is the capital city of this country
- Fewer
- You see with these
- The large country just north of the USA
- Weary
- Near
- Young people
- Lift up
- Food that looks like lots of worms
- A daily publication
- A small dish under a cup
- Garden soil
- A nut from an oak tree
- A worshipped statue

DOWN

- A huge sea mammal
- A six-legged creature
- Shove

SOLUTION

A	C	A	Q	U	A	R	I	U	M		E
M	S	T	E	W							
B	L	U	E	C	E	A	B	E			
U	A										
L	I	A	C								
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C	E	A									
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E	N	I									
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'I DON'T WANT MY DAUGHTER SEE ME PLAYING NEGATIVE ROLES'

TEJAL SINHA

Every daily soap viewer will remember Sangita Ghosh as Muskaan Mallik in *Mehndi Tere Naam Ki* or Pammi in *Des Mein Niklla Hoga Chand*. These back-to-back shows had made her a household name in the television industry.

Well, her stint in the industry goes way beyond that, but hey, why do we talk about it when we have her for an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*? "Oh god, you are making me sit and think about it (we laugh). It's been a long journey, but it has just passed by. Television you work day in and out. You don't realise it. These days, people come up and meet me on sets and say, 'Humne aapka yeh show dekha tha and oh god, you still look the same.' It's then that I realise 'Itne saal hogaye. I need to tell them all, 'Relax guys, don't make me old, tee-hee.'"

However, it's been a rewarding journey for her and considering getting the opportunity to work on shows loved by people with good teams, she says, it's been quite a fulfilling journey with a lot more to come.

Initially, she began her journey as a child actor before she could get her big break at the age of around 23 with *Mehndi Tere Naam Ki*. She did do shows, including *Daraar* and *Adhikaar*, but in a supporting role. Back then, she recalls, "We did not think of it as struggles. I did it because I wanted to do television and amongst many other reasons, I started liking what I was doing. I was not sure what I was going to do. I gave an audition and got selected for one of the roles and that's how the journey started. Struggles, however, if you ask, were reaching the studios on time. I was fortunate that, back then, at that time, I got to work with very good people. Initially, you do have struggles, but I don't want to get into them and glorify them. I don't consider it a struggle, but just like your learning period."

No doubt, vamps and villains play a significant role in television shows, or even films, for that matter. And what is a show with a negative character? If you look back at her stints, she too has played several negative characters, including *Doli Saja Ke*, *Rishton Ka Chakravayuh* and *Divya Drishti*. So is there like another type of fascination for such roles, we wonder and the *Kehta Hai Dil Jee Le Zara* actress gleefully shares, "Thank you for reminding me of *Doli* (she giggles). *Doli Saja Ke* was the first show where I played an antagonist! *Doli* was offered to me by Aruna Ji, which was a cameo and I couldn't say no to her. With her itself, I had worked on her shows as a protagonist and she asked me. For her, I can do anything. Even if she asks me to give a passion shot, I'd love to do it. *Rishton Ka Chakravayuh*: I found the role to be very prompt and it didn't bother me that I was not the protagonist of the show. The way the role was narrated, I was just hooked on it."

But with *Divya Drishti*, on the other hand, she did have questions in her mind about how the maker felt that she could do justice to the role! She further continues, "It was a fantasy show and I genuinely didn't think of playing a 'Pisachini'. When I met Mukta, she was like, just do it; you'll have fun. It was something different and I wanted to challenge myself. I didn't know how I would do it, but once I did that show, I had so much fun."

It was so much fun for her on the sets that there were times she'd end up laughing at the dialogue she had to say. Then came *Swaran Ghar*, with whom she wasn't sure about playing a negative character, keeping in mind that she has a daughter now. "I wasn't sure whether I wanted my daughter to see me playing a negative role because, she's just two and a-half. Luckily, she's not watching television and I was like, let's do it until she watches me on-screen! She needs to grow up to know that these are just roles and



Sangita Ghosh, an actress, is well-known in the industry for her ability to bring characters to life on screen. In an exclusive phone conversation with *The Pioneer*, she discusses her journey, her skepticism about portraying unpleasant characters and her thoughts on making movies.

this generally does not happen in real life."

She also recalls one of the incidents when her daughter somehow watched a clip of her feeling playing that character, where she fell dizzy. And her daughter immediately called her, saying, 'Mumma girl gayi'.

Going ahead, she feels very fortunate to be getting to play different lead roles. "We need to look for roles that have a lot of meat. I feel antagonistic roles have a lot of meat, are fun, purposeful and colourful. If you can crack it, then it's a lot of fun to play it," says the *Nach Baliye* star, adding, "I don't think playing negative characters should really impact. Personally, I understand the difference between what's real and what's reel. I always tend to leave it behind. As an actor, I do try to feel the backstory of the character. There are times I ask my director, 'Yeh aurat pagal toh nahi hai na'. However, I believe that there are flaws within everyone and I don't approach any such character with pressure. I try to have fun and bring my own logic to it."

Talking of her negative roles, she's once again seen playing the role of an antagonist, Saroj, in Sun Neo's *Saajha Sindoor*. Getting onboard was no less than a cakewalk for her, having known the makers already. With Nandita, she goes back to a much-long association, right from *Mehndi Tere Naam Ki* to *Des Mein Niklla Hoga Chand* and many more. "I got a chance to work with her after 17 years, so I was in. However, when she told me it was an antagonist, I was in two minds. However, she convinced me that if I'd do it, the role would be something else. Then I knew the writer also and I have been working with him for a long time. He narrated the role, and something just hit within and I was like, Let's do it. There was a lot of back and forth, but again, just because it was a negative role was not the reason, but a lot of things, like thinking about my daughter, I had to leave her in Jaipur and travel to Mumbai. I wanted the role to be worth it for me to leave my daughter and travel. I had immense trust in the team and so I went along."

Working with Sun Neo on Sun TV was again a plus point for her to get on board. She further found it intriguing to play a second wife.

For *Parvarish* fame, it's always been about the role, the production house and the vibe. Sangita, who doesn't limit herself to any genre or character on a concluding note, speaks of why she hasn't worked in films. She humorously shares, "Koi offer hi nahi karta, kya kare. I don't really sit and think much about it, I feel that if it has to come to me, it will. I am okay with giving auditions, but not to prove myself as an actor. If the director thinks I might fit in that role, then that's different, but not to prove my capability. I have worked for so many years. Even if I had to give 100 auditions to play that particular role, I would do it, but sorry, I wouldn't give auditions just to check if I could act or not."

Evicted but unbroken: Payal Malik cheers on her Bigg Boss allies

AARTI SREENATH

In a surprising turn of events, the last eviction from the ongoing season of *Bigg Boss OTT 3* saw the eviction of Payal Malik, leaving many fans in shock and disappointment. However, despite her early exit, Payal expressed her unwavering support for her two 'sher's, Armaan and Kritika Malik. "Though I have been evicted, I feel happy that two of my 'sher's are still in the game. I would definitely support them and hope at least one of them wins the *Bigg Boss* title," she declared with characteristic enthusiasm in this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*.

Talking of *Bigg Boss* as a whole, there's always a debate on whether the show is scripted or not. Well, initially, Payal was also one of them. However, addressing these misconceptions, she shares, "I had a very wrong notion that the show was scripted, but after entering the house, I realised it was all genuine." Her comments have lent a new level of credibility to the show, which has often been criticised for allegedly manipulating events for dramatic effect. However, her praise for the show's authenticity was tempered by her disappointment over her eviction. "I feel bad that I was evicted at an early stage. The eviction process wasn't genuine at all. I had to leave the house only because of the other contestants," she asserted. This candid admission has sparked discussions among fans and viewers about the fairness of the eviction process!

Throughout her journey, Payal highlighted that though she had Armaan and Kritika, Ranvir Shorey, Sana Maqbool, and Chandrika Dixit, aka the

'Vadapav girl', she felt supported unwaveringly, helping her further navigate the ups and downs of the *Bigg Boss* house.

"When everyone used to dance in the morning and share their stories, it used to be my favourite part of the day," Payal recalled. These moments of camaraderie were a welcome respite from the often tense and competitive atmosphere of the house.

Her advice to the future participants is clear and direct: "Start playing as soon as you enter the house. Don't wait for others to start, or you might get evicted." Payal emphasised the importance of being proactive and strategic from the very beginning, a lesson she learned the hard way through her own experience. In addition to her reflections on the game, Payal also addressed when asked about a viral video where Sana Maqbool questioned Armaan Malik about their situation, specifically if it would have been acceptable if Payal had gotten married to someone else. He blatantly denied it, to which Payal responded, "Initially, it was difficult for me to accept, but due to certain reasons, I had to. It was a shocker, but later I had no other option."

Sharing the challenges of having her personal life broadcasted so publicly, Payal admitted it was tough initially but has since grown accustomed to it. "Explaining our situation to new people we meet has become less painful over time, but it still affects me when people are too intrusive. I have now learned to cope with the public interest and maintain my composure." When asked if she would consider returning as a wild card entry, Payal enthusiastically responded, "I would love to make an entrance as a wild card." Her readiness to re-enter the house underscores her competitive spirit and her desire to continue her journey on *Bigg Boss*.

EX-BIGG BOSS OTT 3 PARTICIPANT AND WELL-KNOWN YOUTUBER PAYAL MALIK WAS THE ONE TO BE ELIMINATED FROM THE SHOW. IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE PIONEER, SHE TALKS ABOUT HER EVICTION AND WHAT SHE LEARNED FROM THE SHOW.



Goodness of 'centella asiatica' for overall well-being

Centella Asiatica, commonly known as *Gotu Kola*, is a herb with a rich history in traditional medicine, particularly in Asian cultures. Known for its wide range of benefits for both skin and overall health, Centella Asiatica is often regarded as a powerhouse for wellness and beauty.

For skin benefits, it stands out due to its ability to promote wound healing. Compounds like asiaticoside in the herb boost collagen production and enhance the tensile strength of new skin, aiding in faster recovery from injuries. Its anti-aging properties are equally impressive. Rich in antioxidants, it combats free radicals that cause premature aging. It helps maintain skin elasticity and firmness by stimulating collagen production, thereby reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

A standout feature of it is its ability

to reduce inflammation. This makes it an effective treatment for conditions like eczema, psoriasis and acne. The herb soothes irritated skin and reduces redness, providing relief from discomfort. Additionally, it hydrates and nourishes the skin naturally. Packed with amino acids, beta carotene, fatty acids and phytochemicals, it helps maintain the skin's moisture barrier, leaving it soft and supple.

Centella Asiatica also improves skin tone and texture. Regular use can lead to a more even skin tone and smoother texture. It reduces the appearance of scars and blemishes, contributing to a clearer complexion.

The health benefits of the herb are equally impressive. Traditionally used to boost cognitive function, studies suggest it may enhance memory, improve concentration, and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. It

is believed to protect brain cells and improve circulation, which can help prevent cognitive decline.

Supporting cardiovascular health is another significant benefit. Centella Asiatica helps strengthen veins and capillaries, improving circulation and reducing the risk of conditions like varicose veins and chronic venous insufficiency. It also promotes digestive health by aiding digestion and alleviating stomach issues such as indigestion and ulcers. Its anti-inflammatory properties soothe the



digestive tract and promote a healthy gut environment.

The herb is known for its anti-anxiety and stress relief properties. As an adaptogen, it helps the body cope with stress, having a calming effect on the nervous system, which can reduce anxiety levels and promote a sense of well-being. Additionally, it boosts the immune system by stimulating the produc-

tion of white blood cells that fight off infections, and its antioxidant properties protect the body from oxidative stress and free radical damage.

Centella Asiatica can be consumed in various forms. Topical applications include creams, serums and ointments infused with centella asiatica extract, which are commonly used for skin

benefits. Supplements, such as capsules or tablets containing *Gotu Kola* extract, can be taken to improve overall health. Dried leaves can be brewed into teas and liquid extracts can be added to beverages.

Gotu Kola,

embodies a rich tradition of healing and rejuvenation in Asian medicine, offering profound benefits for both skin and health. Its role in promoting wound healing, reducing inflammation, and enhancing cognitive function underscores its versatility and effectiveness. Whether applied topically in skincare products or consumed as a supplement, it continues to prove its value in supporting overall well-being. Embracing this botanical powerhouse can lead to healthier, more resilient skin and a strengthened foundation for holistic health. Integrating centella asiatica into daily routines offers a natural path towards vitality and beauty, rooted in centuries of herbal wisdom and modern scientific validation.

(The author, Dr. Aravind Badiger, is a Technical Director at BDR Pharmaceuticals.)

Lot of time for me to sleep, for now I want to live every second of this win: Rohit

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Rohit Sharma held the T20 World Cup trophy like a new-born baby as he walked towards the beach here for the triumphant captain's post-tournament photo shoot, a serene smile refusing to leave his face and the feeling of being a world champion yet to fully sink in. He couldn't be faulted for being a bit dazed. After all, a jinx that lasted over a decade had been broken. "It's surreal. It feels like a dream. It feels like it hasn't happened. Although it has happened but it feels like it hasn't happened," Rohit laughed trying to process his thoughts after 24 hours while talking to BCCI.TV. The coastal city of

Bridgetown is battling a hurricane. The same could also be said about the Indian captain, only that his is a battle to control a gamut of emotions threatening to overwhelm him like a huge sea wave every now and then. "Last night we had a good time, we had a blast with the teammates till the early morning," he couldn't stop grinning before becoming a touch emotional. I would say I didn't sleep properly but that's absolutely fine by me. There is a lot of time for me to go back and sleep. "I want to live this moment, each minute, each second that is passing by and will try to make the most of it," he said describing how it felt to lead an Indian team to its first ICC title in 11 years.



"It's been a great moment right from the time the game got over to till now. That's the emotions and feelings you have," said the skipper. His marauding run at the top, especially in the knockouts, fetched Rohit a place in the team of the tournament but all he can think about for now is a sense of joyous relief. "We have dreamt about this for such a long period of time, we worked hard as a unit for such a long period of time and to see this (the trophy) with us, it feels quite relieved as well. "When you have worked hard for something and eventually at the end you get it, feels really, really nice," the skipper reiterated. People were amazed and amused to see Rohit walk to

the 22-yard strip at Kensington Oval and put a tiny speck of soil in his mouth, just like Novak Djokovic does after winning the Wimbledon. The 37-year-old said it was a spur of the moment act. "Nothing was scripted. It was all coming instinctively. I was feeling the moment," Rohit said about his ode to the turf that gave him the best moment of his life. "When I went to the pitch, that pitch gave us this trophy. I will remember that ground forever in my life and that pitch as well. I wanted to have a piece of it with me. "Those moments are very special, the place where all our dreams came true and I wanted something of it," he concluded.

Thanks for that call Ro: Dravid reveals how Rohit stopped him from quitting after ODI WC heartbreak

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Had he not received a phone call from India skipper Rohit Sharma, requesting him to continue after the ODI World Cup final defeat, Rahul Dravid wouldn't have been a part of history, the outgoing head coach revealed in his farewell speech to the team after it was crowned T20 world champion here. Dravid's tenure had ended with the ODI World Cup after India lost to Australia in the final despite a 10-match winning run, but the coaching staff got an extension till the end of the T20 World Cup that concluded on Saturday last. While Dravid has not reapplied for the role after India's second T20 World Cup win, he mentioned Rohit's role in urging him to continue as the coach during his speech in the Kensington Oval dressing room after the team's win seven-run win in the final against South Africa on Saturday. "Ro, thank you very much for making that call to me November and asking to continue," Dravid said in a video shared by BCCI on



Tuesday. "I think it's been such a privilege and a pleasure to work with each and everyone of you, but Ro, also thanks for the time...There is a lot of time we have to chat, we have to discuss, we have to agree, we have to disagree at times, but thank you so very much," Dravid said as Rohit laughed. Dravid praised the players for putting up collectively solid performances through the tournament and urged them to celebrate the achievement as

much as they would like. "All of you will remember these moments. We always say, it is not about the runs, it is not about the wickets, you never remember your career but you remember moments like this, so let's really enjoy," Dravid said. "I could not be more proud of you guys, to come back the way you did, the way you fought, the way we worked as a team...The resilience. There has been some disappointment over the years where we have

and everyone of them has made since the time you were kids, for you to be here in the dressing room," Dravid said. "Today, your parents, your wives, your children, your brother, your coaches, so many people have made so many sacrifices and worked so hard with you for you to enjoy this memory in this moment... Really, really proud to have being a part of this memory with you guys," he continued. Usually articulate, Dravid admitted he was falling short of words but praised the team for their respect towards the outgoing coaching staff. "I'm not usually short of words but on a day like today, for me to be part of this, I could not be more grateful for the respect, for the kindness, for the effort that each and everyone of you are shown to me, to my coaching staff to my support staff," he conceded. Dravid also praised the BCCI officials and others for their work behind the scenes. "Behind a great team, there is also a successful organisation and we have to acknowledge the work of BCCI and people behind the scenes for the work they have done," he added.

Gutted, tough pill to swallow: Miller on T20 World Cup final loss

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

"Gutted" David Miller said the T20 World Cup final loss to India was a tough blow, but the swashbuckling batter expressed confidence that despite enduring pain the resilient South African team would continue pushing boundaries. Shedding the unwanted tag of perennial "chokers", the Proteas had marched into their maiden T20 World Cup final unbeaten. However, they faltered in the summit clash, losing to India by seven runs. "I am gutted!! Really tough pill to swallow after what transpired 2 days ago. Words don't explain how I am feeling. One thing I do know is how proud I am of this unit," Miller posted an Instagram story late on Monday. Before the final, the Proteas enjoyed a sensational run, eking out wins in the pressure situations to become favourites for the title. "This journey was an incredible one, with highs and lows throughout the entire month. We have endured pain, but I know this team has the



resilience and will keep raising the bar," he wrote. South Africa had looked on course to a memorable win needing 30 runs in as many balls. However, Indian bowlers, led by Jasprit Bumrah, fashioned a remarkable turnaround picking the key wicket of Heinrich Klaasen followed by Marco Jansen. With Miller at the crease and 16 needed off the last over, the Proteas still remained hopeful. But a spectacular catch by Suryakumar Yadav at the boundary ended Miller's innings while deflating hopes of a South African win. It was the closest South Africa had come to winning a title, having made seven semifinal exits in ICC global events.



Praggnanandhaa to take on Bogdan-Daniel; Gukesh up against Vachier-Lagrave

PTI ■ BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa will look to sharpen his game after squandering winning opportunities when he takes on last-placed Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania in the third round of the Superbet Classic Chess tournament. While Praggnanandhaa has not been at his best in better positions, World Championship challenger D Gukesh has survived pretty well despite living dangerously in a couple of games in the tournament, which is a part of the Grand chess tour. With five rounds gone and just four more to come, the two Indians with three points apiece, are within striking distance of the tournament leader Fabiano Caruana of United States who is on 3.5 points. Alireza Firouzja and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France, Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi and American Wesley So share the fourth spot on 2.5 points each, a half point ahead of Dutchman Anish Giri and Uzbek Nodirbek Abdusattorov. Bogdan-Daniel is at the bottom of the table with 1.5 points. Gukesh will have black pieces against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and it should not be a tall order for the Indian who has been trying various set ups against the King pawn opening. Vachier-Lagrave, on the other hand, will be hoping for a

complicated struggle but the fact that he is not very adventurous when it comes to opening choices makes his task a little more difficult. Praggnanandhaa will not only be favourite but will also be under pressure. In the previous round, the Indian missed out on a straightforward winning manoeuvre against Wesley So while earlier on, Gukesh survived what was a technically difficult but theoretically lost endgame against him. With the white pieces to back him the ball will be in Praggnanandhaa's court to deliver the goods. Bogdan-Daniel is still hunting for an elusive victory with just three draws thus far and the Romanian knows it will not be easy to cross a tiger on the prowl. Caruana has had some good games and will like to continue in similar fashion. The next round is against Ian Nepomniachtchi who has drawn all his games so far in the tournament. **Pairings round 6:** Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 2.5) vs D Gukesh (Ind, 3); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2) vs Anish Giri (Ned, 2); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 2.5) vs Wesley So (Usa, 2.5) R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3) vs Deac Bogdan Daniel (Rou, 1.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 3.5) vs Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 2.5).

Laxman-coached India team leave for Zimbabwe, Gill to link up from US

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A young-Indian cricket team under National Cricket Academy head VVS Laxman left for Zimbabwe to play a five-match T20I series starting in Harare on July 6. The team will be led by Shubman Gill while the likes of youngsters Riyan Parag and Abhishek Sharma have been rewarded for their exploits in the last IPL with maiden India call-ups. Skipper Gill, the reserve opener for the T20 World Cup was on a break and will link up with the Zimbabwe-bound squad directly in Harare from the US. The BCCI took to X to post pictures of those who boarded the flight, which includes Sharma, Parag, Rituraj Gaikwad, Avesh Khan, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Tushar Deshpande and NCA head Laxman. Five members of the squad -- Shivam Dube, Sanju Samson, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh and Khaleel Ahmed were either part



of the T20 World Cup-winning team or were travelling reserves are stranded in Barbados due to hurricane Beryl. They will join the squad later. With Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja retiring from the shortest format of the game, the T20 series against Zimbabwe will provide the youngsters with the perfect opportunity to cement their places in the team for future series. **India's squad for T20I series against Zimbabwe:** Shubman Gill (Captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rituraj Gaikwad, Abhishek Sharma, Rinku Singh, Sanju Samson (WK), Dhruv Jurel (WK), Shivam Dube, Riyan Parag, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar, Tushar Deshpande.



Error-prone Nagal makes first round exit from Wimbledon

PTI ■ LONDON

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal committed 44 unforced errors as he made a first round exit from the Wimbledon, going down in four sets to Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia here. Making his maiden appearance in the men's singles main draw, Nagal toiled hard for two hours 38 minutes and even managed to take a set off world number 53 Kecmanovic before conceding a 2-6 6-3 6-3 4-6 defeat on Monday night. The 26-year-old, ranked 72 did show flashes of brilliance as hit 47 winners but in general, struggled on the grass court. In the end, he could manage only 104 points against Kecmanovic's 122. The 53rd ranked Serbian fired six aces and only committed two double faults. This was Kecmanovic's second win in as many matches against Nagal, having beaten the Indian

at the ATP 250 event in Cologne, Germany, four years ago. The Paris Olympics bound Nagal is the first Indian in five years to play a Wimbledon men's singles main draw match. Prajnesh Gunneswaran had made a first-round exit in 2019. Nagal is having a dream season as he had also qualified for the main draw of the Australian Open earlier this year. He had stunned 31st-seeded Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan in the opening round to become the first Indian male tennis player to beat a seeded player in 35 years in a Slam. He had also qualified for the main draw of the Indian Wells Masters and Monte-Carlo Masters, the ATP 1000 events. The Indian has won two Challenger events this season the Heilbronn Challenger and the Chennai Open ATP Challenger. He also competed at the French Open, losing in the opening round.

Indians in County: Sudharsan scores 14 for Surrey, Shaw manages 31 and 37 for Northants

PTI ■ LONDON

Young left-hand batter Sai Sudharsan and the seasoned Prithvi Shaw failed to get big scores in their ongoing English county games for Surrey and Northamptonshire respectively. Both are into their second season with their county sides. In a home game at the Oval against Essex, Surrey scored 262 in their first essay with Sudharsan, who normally bats at the top of the order for Tamil Nadu, coming in at No. 6 and managing 14 off 47 balls with two boundaries. He was dismissed by left-arm medium pacer Paul Walter with former South Africa international Simon Harmer taking the catch. However, Sudharsan is yet to bat in the second essay where Surrey are currently 44 for 3 with a lead of 126 runs after taking an 82-run first innings lead bowling the visitors out for 180.



In another game between Northamptonshire and Sussex, flamboyant right-hander Shaw struck 13 boundaries across two innings -- seven in a 22-ball-31 and another six in 37 off 41 balls, but failed to get a big score. In the first innings, Sussex's second change medium pacer Fynn Hudson-Prentice got his wicket, caught by Jack Carson. Shaw's score was the second highest in his team's dismal first innings performance of 97 all out in little over 20 overs. This was after Sussex had scored 143 in their first innings. In the second innings, Northamptonshire were 137 for four in a chase of 284 with Shaw contributing another quick-fire 37 before left-arm seamer Sean Hunt breached through his defences.

'My role in *Viraaji* is unlike any I've played before'

PNS | HYDERABAD

Fresh off the success of his recent film *Nindha*, Varun Sandesh is all set to enthrall audiences once again with his upcoming project, *Viraaji*. Produced by Mahendra Nath Kondla under the M3 Media banner in collaboration with Maha Movies, *Viraaji* marks the directorial debut of Adhyanth Harsha, promising a fresh perspective and a captivating narrative.

The excitement surrounding *Viraaji* peaked with a grand title launch event held at Hyderabad's Prasad Labs on Tuesday, where the team unveiled the film's intriguing title and shared insights into what audiences can expect from this venture.

According to the director, *Viraaji* is a strong title, and the film will showcase Varun Sandesh in a completely new avatar. This film is being made by a

bunch of newcomers and the makers sought support from the audience. "The soon-to-be-revealed first look will undoubtedly impress you. This film is tailor-made for Varun Sandesh," said the director.

In a quick conversation with us, Varun Sandesh revealed his initial reaction to the script, saying, "When Harsha narrated the story of *Viraaji* to me, I was immediately captivated. The first half was intriguing, but it was the second half that truly gripped me. I saw immense potential in the narrative and knew I wanted to be a part of it."

Reflecting on the success of *Nindha*, which marked a significant milestone in his career, Varun Sandesh added, "The response to *Nindha* has been overwhelming, and it has been a great source of motivation for me. Just like *Nindha*, *Viraaji* promises to be a refreshing experience for the audience."

Speaking about his character in



Viraaji, Varun Sandesh teased, "This role is unlike any I've played before. It required extensive preparation, and I can confidently say it's one of my craziest yet. The first look at the film, set to be unveiled on the July 10, will give audiences a glimpse into this exciting journey."



Kubera team teases fans with a sneak peek of Rashmika's character

Sekhar Kammula, a National Award-winning director best known for films like *Fidaa* and *Love Story*, is the director of *Kubera*.

For the first time, Dhanush and filmmaker Sekhar Kammula collaborated on the movie, which has definitely generated excitement among viewers. A sneak peek into Rashmika Mandanna's character in the movie has now been revealed by the directors, who guarantee that it "intrigues with every layer!"

The official Rashmika look teases a character revelation that will happen on July 5, 2024, but does not show her appearance. The character of Nagarjuna Akkineni in the film had already been teased by the directors.

The movie, which also stars Jim Sarbh and Nagarjuna, is produced by Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao under the auspices of Sree Venkateswara Cinemas LLP, an Asian Group company, in collaboration with Amigos Creations Pvt Ltd, and is presented by Sonali Narang.

Rashmika will next be seen in *Pushpa: The Rise* and was last seen in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Animal*. In her kitty, she also has *Rainbow*, *The Girlfriend* and *Chaava*.



'Frustrated Anthem' from *Darling* out now!



The upcoming romantic comedy *Darling*, starring Priyadarshi and Nabha Natesh and directed by debutant Aswin Raam, has been generating considerable excitement ahead of its release. Produced by K Niranjan Reddy and Chaitanya of PrimeShow Entertainment, the film has already made waves with its entertaining promos and hit songs.

Following the success of its first single, touted as a 'Frustrated Anthem', the makers have now unveiled the film's second single, *Raahi Re*. Unlike its predecessor, *Raahi Re* is a delightful melody that serves as the perfect soundtrack for solo adventures. The accompanying visuals feature Nabha Natesh embarking on a solo trip across various picturesque locations in India, capturing unforgettable moments along the way.

Cinematographer Naresh Ramadurai has beautifully captured the essence of these journeys. Nabha Natesh shines in *Raahi Re*, complemented by Vivek Sagar's striking composition and the catchy lyrics penned by Kasarla Shyam. Kapil Kapilan's vocals add a magical touch to the song, ensuring it resonates instantly with listeners, much like the first single. The film *Darling* also features Brahmanandam, Vishnu, Krishna Tej, Ananya Nagalla and several other talented actors in pivotal roles. A team of skilled technicians, including dialogue writer Hemanth, editor Pradeep E Ragav of *Love Today* and production designer Gandhi, contributes to the film's visual and narrative appeal.

Scheduled for a worldwide release on July 19, *Darling* promises to be a refreshing take on romance, infused with humor and memorable musical moments. As anticipation builds, fans of Priyadarshi and Nabha Natesh eagerly await the film's release, anticipating a blend of laughter, romance, and heartwarming melodies.

Russian beauty in *Ninnu Vadalanu*



Brace yourselves for a spine-chilling cinematic experience as *Ninnu Vadalanu*, a gripping horror suspense thriller, prepares to captivate audiences. Directed by Sheraz Mehdal and produced by Ashok Khullar, with co-production by Devendra Negi under the banners of UVT Hollywood Studio (USA) and Shreya Productions, this film promises to be a unique blend of terror and intrigue. Starring Lyuba Palm and Khushbu Jain in pivotal roles, alongside noted actors Gangadhar, Vizag Sharif, Vizag Ravi Teja, Ajay and Ananth, *Ninnu Vadalanu* unfolds its haunting tale against the atmospheric backdrops of Goa and Hyderabad.

Lyuba Palm, hailing from Russia, brings a wealth of international experience to the Telugu film industry. A multifaceted talent, she has not only graced screens but also delved into producing and writing. In Russia, Palm's credits include producing the documentary *Save the Children* and contributing as a writer and producer to the TV series *Love Over Evil*. Now, she steps into the spotlight with *Ninnu Vadalanu*, marking her debut in Telugu cinema.

Commenting on her role and the film, Lyuba Palm shared, "I'm thrilled to be a part of *Ninnu Vadalanu*. It's a genre that challenges me as an artist and the script immediately resonated with me. Working alongside such a talented team has been a rewarding experience."

Rakul Preet Singh is eager to return to her Telugu roots!



Rakul Preet Singh, who made her Hindi film debut with *Yaariyan*, is currently at the peak of her career, with several projects lined up for release. But according to a recent post, Singh might make her comeback with a Telugu film down south. The actress dropped a hint through an Instagram story that has got her fans excited about her upcoming venture. In a recent AMA session, Rakul revealed she is reading Telugu scripts. Talking about the same, she said, "I really miss all my Telugu fans, and I really want to do a Telugu film soon. I'm just waiting for the right script—maybe something that's exciting because I feel the part of me, which is the 'Telugu Amma', is really missing Telugu now, so hopefully soon. I'm reading a couple of things, hopefully soon."

Rakul Preet Singh worked in the Telugu film *Venkatadri Express* and the Tamil film *Thadaiyara Thaakka*, as well as other Tamil and Telugu films like *Loukyam*, *Pandaga Chesko*, *Sarrainodu*, *Dhruva* and *Nannaku Prematho*. Rakul Preet Singh is a renowned name in the South Indian film industry and has marked her presence with her humongous success in films and her remarkable acting.

With a strong lineage in South Indian cinema, one of Bollywood's most admired and prettiest actresses, Rakul Preet Singh, has an incredible slate of films, including the highly anticipated *Indian 2*, which stars the legendary Kamal Haasan. Rakul's *De De Pyaar De 2* has been a major project because of the original installment's success. Her next film, *Mere Husband Ki Biwi*, is slated to release after *De De Pyaar De 2* and *Indian 2*. It looks like a delightful ride. She also has *Ameri* scheduled, which is expected to be an intense drama.

RAM CHARAN, VIKRAM REDDY'S *THE INDIA HOUSE* LAUNCHED

Global star Ram Charan, in collaboration with Vikram Reddy of UV Creations under V Mega Pictures, and Abhishek Agarwal Arts, known for their groundbreaking films, has embarked on a new cinematic journey with the prestigious pan India project, *The India House*. Directed by Ram Vamsi Krishna, the film promises to be a captivating period drama set in 1905, exploring themes of love and revolution. The grand pooja ceremony for *The India House* took place amidst the majestic surroundings of Virupaksha Temple in Hampi (Kishkinda), marking a fitting beginning for this ambitious venture. The event was attended by the core team, including the lead actor Nikhil Siddharth, lead actress Saiee Manjrekar and veteran actor Anupam Kher, who plays a pivotal role in the film.

Ram Charan, expressing his enthusiasm for the project, stated, "I am excited to venture into film production with *The India House*. We aim to deliver cinema that not only entertains but also leaves a lasting impact on audiences worldwide."

Vikram Reddy of UV Creations added, "We are proud to partner with Ram Charan in this endeavour to create path-breaking cinema. *The India House* is a testament to our commitment to storytelling that transcends boundaries." Abhishek Agarwal, known for his visionary productions, commented, "We are thrilled to collaborate on *The India House*, a film that promises to captivate audiences with its rich narrative and stellar cast."

Director Ram Vamsi Krishna, known for his creative prowess, shared insights about the film, saying, "It's an honor to helm *The India House*, a project that blends historical intrigue with emotional depth. We have assembled a talented team to bring this epic story to life." The film's regular shoot commences on Wednesday (today), promising to showcase the craftsmanship of seasoned technicians. Cameron Bryson will handle cinematography, capturing the essence of the period setting, while Vishal Abani takes charge as the production designer, ensuring authenticity in every frame.



Raashii Khanna reveals *Talakhon Mein Ek* is 'one of the toughest films' she did

After wreaking havoc with the recently released *Aranmanai 4*, Raashii Khanna is gearing up to feature in *Talakhon Mein Ek*, alongside Vikrant Massey. Khanna, who has never shied away from experimenting with roles and films, opened up about *Talakhon Mein Ek* and said, "It is one of the toughest films I have done." Raashii further shared that she has given her "heart and soul" to the film. The young Pan-Indian actress also assured that the audience would get to see her in a "different" role.

Currently, the versatile powerhouse is basking in the success of her horror comedy *Aranmanai 4*. The film not only ended the dry spell at the Tamil box office but also established Raashii as the golden girl of the industry, who scored her third consecutive hit with the Sundar C directorial.

Beyond *Talakhon Mein Ek*, Raashii will be seen sharing the screen space with Vikrant Massey yet again in their upcoming collaboration *The Sabarmati Report*, which is slated for a theatrical release on August 2. Beyond a lineup of these interesting projects, the actress also has a Telugu film *Telusu Kada* in the pipeline.

Revisiting tragic history of Bengal with *Maa Kaali*

In a bold cinematic endeavour, People Media Factory and director Vijay Yelakanti, known for their upcoming project *Karthikaya 2*, are set to illuminate a significant yet often overlooked chapter of Indian history with *Maa Kaali*. This compelling narrative delves into the harrowing events of the 1946 Calcutta Killings, which marked a pivotal moment leading to India's partition. The film stars Raima Sen and Abhishek Singh, a former IAS officer turned actor, in prominent roles. Unveiling the poster for *Maa Kaali*, the makers have announced the teaser launch scheduled for July 4. This true pan-India film aims to shed light on the tragic events of Direct Action Day and the Naokhali massacres, events that left an indelible mark on Bengal's history.

Director Vijay Yelakanti expressed, "*Maa Kaali* is a tribute to the lives lost during the ruthless massacre driven by power and ambition. The events of August 16, 1946, known as 'The Week of Long Knives', continue to resonate as an untold story of human suffering. Through this film, we strive to give voice to the victims and bring their stories to the forefront."

The film, shot in Hindi and set for release in Bengali and Telugu as well, promises to explore the deep-rooted scars left by communal violence in Bengal. Producer TG Vishwa Prasad and co-producer Vivek Kuchibhotla are confident that *Maa Kaali* will spark important socio-political conversations across the nation. Raima Sen, making a powerful comeback to the big screen, plays a pivotal role in *Maa Kaali*, embodying the spirit of resilience and remembrance amidst historical turmoil. As the teaser launch approaches, anticipation mounts for *Maa Kaali*, a film poised to uncover a chapter of history that demands attention and reflection.



Suhas' next with Dil Raju titled *Janaka Aithe Ganaka*

Dil Raju Productions, renowned for their recent blockbuster *Balagam*, is gearing up for another promising venture titled *Janaka Aithe Ganaka*, featuring the talented actor Suhas in the lead role. This marks the prestigious production house's fourth production, following their successful launch in December last year.

Directed by Sandeep Reddy Bandla, known for his work on *Salaar* and presented by Shriish, the film has generated buzz with its intriguing premise and impressive cast. Sankeertana Vipin, known for her elegance, stars opposite Suhas as the female lead, while Harshith Reddy and Hanshitha Reddy are handling the project's production. The announcement of the film's title, *Janaka Aithe Ganaka*, was accompanied by the release of its captivating first look, which hints at a blend of family entertainment and courtroom drama. In the poster, Suhas is depicted holding a slate adorned with the film's title, his expression laden with intrigue. The imagery also features symbols evoking justice, a children's school bag, a school bus and a teddy bear, hinting at the film's thematic depth. Expressing his excitement about the project, Suhas commented, "I'm thrilled to be a part of *Janaka Aithe Ganaka*. It's a departure from my recent roles and promises to offer something unique to audiences. I'm eager for viewers to experience this engaging tale."

The film's teaser, scheduled for release on July 4, is expected to further tantalize audiences with glimpses of its narrative richness and Suhas's compelling portrayal. With cinematography by Sai Sriram and music composed by Vijay Bulganin, known for his work in *Baby*, the technical aspects of the film are poised to elevate its storytelling.

