

SC concern over 'political influence' in criminal trials

'NO TAKERS FOR 18 LAKH JOBS IN FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR'

'I took inspiration from my father-in-law to play a cop in Rippen SWAMY'

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

BRS would not rest until the MLAs who defected to the ruling Congress Party become former MLAs. Constituencies represented by the BRS turncoat MLAs will soon go to by-elections. When YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the chief minister, as many as 12 BRS MLAs switched their allegiance to the Congress. But the conspiracies did not work. Justice triumphed at last.

- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

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DON'T MISS...

Nithin Gadkari urged to speed up...

Andhra Pradesh Minister for Transport M Ramprasad Reddy appealed to Union Minister for Road Transport and Highway Nitin Gadkari to take steps to expedite the ongoing national highway works in Annamayya district. Minister Ramprasad Reddy welcomed Union Minister Nithin Gadkari when he reached Madanapalle on Wednesday. Ramprasad Reddy submitted representations to Nithin Gadkari on the ongoing national highway works in Annamayya district and appealed to him to take steps for the speedy...

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Blushing linked to brain being set...

Blushing - the reddening and warming of cheeks when one becomes self-conscious - could come from increased activity in brain parts involved in emotional arousal when one feels "exposed," a study has found. Researchers said that little is known about what is going on underneath while we are blushing - famously described by biologist Charles Darwin as "the most human of all expressions." The team, including researchers from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, turned to girl teenagers...

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PWC for extension of beneficial tax...

Tax consultancy firm PWC has urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to extend the beneficial tax regime for new manufacturing companies and introduce a comprehensive tax amnesty scheme for cases related to Customs. Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for 2024-25 on July 23. "I think the Make in India is the first thing which comes to mind, and you will recall that in 2019, the government introduced a 15 per cent rate for new manufacturing companies, which lapsed on..."

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Suryakumar holds 2nd spot, Jaiswal...

The big-hitting Suryakumar Yadav is the highest placed Indian at second spot, while young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal occupies the sixth position in the ICC T20I batting rankings issued on Wednesday. Ruturaj Gaikwad has dropped a place to the eighth position in the T20I batters' list, which was updated following India's recent 4-1 series triumph over Zimbabwe. Jaiswal was the big winner following his 141 runs in the series as he rose four places, behind No.1 ranked batter Travis Head of...

-SPORTS

Naidu seeks special assistance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Discusses AP situation with Home Minister Amit Shah

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi and sought special assistance in the budget to overcome the present situation due to State bifurcation and the 'destructive YSRC rule'. The Parliament sessions will commence from July 23.

After reaching the national capital on Tuesday night, the CM met Amit Shah at his Krishna Menon Marg residence and the meeting lasted an hour. During the meeting, Chandrababu requested the Centre to provide special assistance to the State to recover from the current financial crisis. He appealed to the Centre to pay special attention and allocate funds for the construction of Amaravati and Polavaram projects, and to find speedy solutions to the issues mentioned in the Reorganisation Act. The CM sought financial help for the repair of damaged roads. He also appealed to sanction new national highways and railways to connect different parts of the State.

The CM urged that the establishment of Visakha Railway Zone should be completed immediately and the Central government should take the initiative to set up industrial corridors. Taking note of the fact that Andhra Pradesh has the lowest per capita income in South India, Chandrababu requested that incentives be provided for the establishment of industries suitable for job and employment generation in the

- Naidu appealed to the Centre to pay special attention and allocate funds for the construction of Amaravati and Polavaram projects.
- He appealed to sanction new national highways and railways to connect different parts of the State.
- The establishment of Visakha Railway Zone should be completed immediately and the Central government should take the initiative to set up industrial corridors.



“Honouring the mandate given by our people to the NDA, the Central and State governments will devise a comprehensive recovery plan and bring the State's economy back on track. We shall fulfil people's aspirations together, said Chandrababu Naidu.

State. Keeping in view the reconstruction of Andhra Pradesh, the people of the State have given a great victory to the NDA alliance, the CM pointed out. He appealed to make allocations in the budget that will fulfil their aspirations.

Chandrababu posted on X: "Today in New Delhi, I met with the Union Home Minister, Shri @AmitShah Ji, to apprise him of the devastating condition of finances that Andhra

Pradesh had slipped into over the past five years. I also discussed the findings of the four White Papers released, outlining the staggering debt accumulated between FY 2019-24 that spiralled our State's finances out of control. Economic incompetence, gross mismanagement, and rampant corruption by the previous government have caused irreparable damage to our State."

"Honouring the mandate given by

our people to the NDA, the Central and State governments will devise a comprehensive recovery plan and bring the State's economy back on track. We shall fulfil people's aspirations together," said Chandrababu. State Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, Union Ministers Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu and Pemmasani Chandrasekhar and TDP parliamentary party leader L Srikrishnadevaraya accompanied the CM.



12 Naxals killed in encounter with police Gadchiroli

PNS ■ GADCHIROLI

At least 12 Naxalites were killed and two security personnel injured in an encounter with police and commandos in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra near the Chhattisgarh border on Wednesday, officials said.

The heavy exchange of fire broke out in the afternoon between C60 commandos and Naxals in Wandoli village and continued for six hours, Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police Nilotpal said.

Police have recovered 12 bodies of Maoists from the spot besides seven automotive weapons, including 3 AK-47s, 2 INSAS rifles, a carbine and an SLR, he said.

One of the slain Naxals was identified as DVCM Laxman Atram alias Vishal Atram,

The heavy exchange of fire broke out in the afternoon between C60 commandos and Naxals in Wandoli village and continued for six hours.

incharge of Tipagad Dalam. Maharashtra Home Minister Devendra Fadnis has declared a Rs 51 lakh reward for C60 commando teams and Gadchiroli Police, Nilotpal said.

Further identification of Maoists and area search is continuing.

"The injured persons include a sub-inspector of C 60 and one jawan. They are out of danger, evacuated from the spot, and shifted to Nagpur," the SP added.

100% QUOTA FOR KANNADIGAS IN PRIVATE FIRMS K'taka bill on hold due to backlash



PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Wednesday put the reservation bill for Kannadigas in private firms on hold amid fierce criticism from business leaders and tech tycoons.

The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024 was cleared by the state

Cabinet on Monday and was expected to be tabled in the assembly on Thursday. "The bill approved by the Cabinet to provide reservation for Kannadigas in private sector organisations, industries and enterprises has been temporarily put on hold. This will be revisited and decided in the coming days," a statement issued by the Office of the Chief Minister said on Wednesday.

"The bill approved by the Cabinet to provide reservation for Kannadigas in private sector organisations, industries and enterprises has been temporarily put on hold. This will be revisited and decided in the coming days."

Earlier, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also posted on X: "The bill intended to implement reservation for Kannadigas in private sector institutions, industries and enterprises is still in the preparation stage. A final decision will be taken after comprehensive discussion in the next cabinet meeting."

According to the Bill, "Any industry, factory or other establishments shall appoint 50 per cent of local candidates in management categories and 70 per cent in non-management categories." Reacting strongly to the state government move, industry veterans objected to the proposed quota, calling it 'fascist,' and 'short-sighted'. Well-known entrepreneur and former Chief Finance Officer of Infosys, TV Mohandas Pai dubbed the bill as "regressive".

"This bill should be junked. It is discriminatory, regressive and against the constitution," @Jairam_Ramesh (Congress leader) is govt to certify who we are? This is a fascist bill as in Animal Farm, unbelievable that @INCIndia can come up with a bill like this - a govt officer will sit on recruitment committees of private sector? People have to take a language test?" Pai said on X.

Continued on Page 2

Worker killed in chemical factory explosion in Atchutapuram SEZ

Blast, attributed to reactor malfunction, ignited massive fire

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A catastrophic explosion ripped through a chemical factory in the Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on Wednesday, claiming the life of a 44-year-old worker identified as Pradip Rout from Odisha and injuring several others.

The blast, which is believed to have originated from a reactor malfunction, ignited a fierce fire that engulfed the facility.

Emergency responders, including fire brigade personnel, police, and medical teams, rushed to the scene to bring the blaze under control.



Rescue operations commenced amidst the smoldering wreckage to locate survivors and

assess the full extent of casualties and injuries.

Continued on Page 2

Lokesh invites Nasscom to AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

IT and Education Minister Nara Lokesh invited Nasscom to expand the IT, AI and data centre cluster in Andhra Pradesh. An invitation was sent, stating that Andhra Pradesh is ready to welcome Nasscom.

Nasscom was displeased over the Industrial Bill-2024 introduced by the Karnataka government. Meanwhile, Lokesh wrote to Nasscom that the AP government understands the frustration of the company.

IT, IT services, AI and data cen-

tre cluster businesses can be expanded in Visakhapatnam. The proposal said that there is a favourable environment for the establishment of an AI and data centre in the port city, and invited them to transfer their businesses to Andhra Pradesh.

The minister promised to provide the best facilities, continuous electricity and infrastructure for investments in the State. Lokesh further revealed that the Nasscom IT organisation will be provided with unlimited skilled talent from the government.

NITI AAYOG RECONSTITUTED

15 Ministers including NDA allies part of it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi-led NDA government on Tuesday reconstituted the NITI Aayog, with four full-time members and 15 union ministers, including from BJP allies, as either ex-officio members or special invitees.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains the chairperson and economist Suman K Bery will continue to be the vice-chairperson of NITI Aayog, according to an official notification.

Scientist V K Saraswat, agricultural economist Ramesh Chand, paediatrician V K Paul and macro-economist Arvind Virmani will also continue to be full-time members of the government think-tank.

The four ex-officio members will be Union Ministers Rajnath Singh

(Defence), Amit Shah (Home), Shivraj Singh Chouhan (Agriculture) and Nirmala Sitharaman (Finance). The prime minister has approved the revised composition of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), the notification said.

The special invitees in the reconstituted NITI Aayog will be Union ministers Nitin Gadkari (Road Transport and Highways), Jagat



Other special invitees are Union Ministers Virendra Kumar (Social Justice and Empowerment), Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu (Civil Aviation), Jual Oram (Tribal Affairs), Annpurna Devi (Women and Child Development), Chirag Paswan (Food Processing Industries) and Rao Inderjit Singh (Statistics and Programme Implementation).

Prakash Nadda (Health), H D Kumaraswamy (Heavy Industries and Steel), Jitan Ram Manjhi (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises), Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh (Fisheries, Animal Husbandry

and Dairying). Other special invitees are Union Ministers Virendra Kumar (Social Justice and Empowerment), Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu (Civil Aviation), Jual Oram (Tribal Affairs), Annpurna Devi (Women and Child Development), Chirag Paswan (Food Processing Industries) and Rao Inderjit Singh (Statistics and Programme

Implementation).

Kumaraswamy belongs to NDA partner JD-S, Manjhi is from Hindustani Awam Morcha, Rajiv Ranjan Singh is from JD-U, Naidu belongs to TDP and Paswan is from Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas).

National Institution for Transforming India, better known as NITI Aayog, was constituted in 2015 when the Modi government chose to scrap the 65-year-old Planning Commission.

"Embracing a vision for holistic development and innovation, NITI Aayog is on a journey of transformative initiatives that promise to redefine India's future," the Aayog said in a Facebook post.

The government has reconstituted the NITI Aayog following changes in the council of ministers.

Why no assurance from Centre, Sharmila asks CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila Reddy has raised questions about Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's interactions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union ministers after assuming office. She queried why CM Chandrababu Naidu had not secured any assurances from the Union government despite making several visits to New Delhi and meeting with PM Modi and other ministers.

In a press statement here on Wednesday, Sharmila commented that Chandrababu should be playing a vital role in the NDA as a 'big brother', however, he is circling New Delhi. Also, Chandrababu



should have insisted that the Central government fulfil the bifurcation assurances, but he is saluting the BJP leaders, she alleged.

"Though no assurance was fulfilled by the Union government, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu continues his visits to New Delhi.

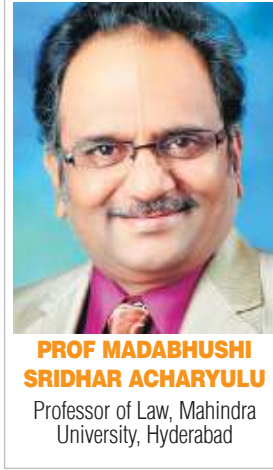
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The true colour of the new 'criminal' law

The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) need not be called 'old British laws', just because they were made in 1973; for, even CrPC empowers the jurisdictional magistrate to grant police custody for up to 15 days in case an investigation cannot be completed within 24 hours. One day in 'jail' is not small, anything can happen in a day.

BNSs would remain 15 days, with provision to be spread over a maximum of two months.

Police have no time to investigate: What generally happens is that the police do not find time to investigate because of political pressures, etc. Under new criminal laws, imprisonment in custody is being increased. For instance, (new criminal law) Section 187 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which seeks to replace the CrPC, says police custody of 15 days can be authorized in whole or in parts at any time during the initial 40 or 60 days out of the 60- or 90-day period of judicial custody.



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU
Professor of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

and continued after that. It means civil rights are in danger and it is opposed to the Fundamental Rights of citizens.

5. Extends the period of police custody: First, we need to understand the claim of the Home Minister about the new criminal laws. The BNS extends the period of police custody of an accused. Addressing a press conference, Shah said the maximum police custody under the BNS too would remain 15 days, like under the IPC. "I want to clarify that in BNS also the remand period is 15 days. Earlier, if an accused was sent to police remand and got himself admitted to a hospital for 15 days, there was no interrogation as his remand period would expire. But, in BNS, there will be remand

for a maximum of 15 days, but it can be taken in parts within an upper limit of 60 days. He also said: the new laws would ensure "justice, instead of punishment" and "speedy trial, instead of delays". Justice would be delivered "up to the level of the Supreme Court" within three years of an FIR being registered.

6. Police have no time to investigate: What generally happens is that the police do not find time to investigate because of political pressures, etc. Under new criminal laws, imprisonment in custody is being increased. For instance, (new criminal law) Section 187 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which seeks to replace the CrPC, says police custody of 15 days can be authorized in whole or in parts at any time during the initial 40 or 60 days out of the 60- or 90-day period of judicial custody.

7. Shocking that it can extend to 60 days of custody! The police custody of 15 days where the offence is punishable with at least 10 years of imprisonment, or 40 days for any other offence. This means the police have become more powerful and can avoid review of judicial examination of arrested persons. This could result in extra-judicial measures. The change in police custody rules is a serious concern, raised by civil rights supporters and lawyers.

(to be continued)

PART-1

were incorporated, except four which were of a political nature. Giving political colour to this change is not good, there are many other issues for politics".

3. The true colour of the new 'criminal' law: It was also claimed that the first case registered under the BNS was related to a motorcycle theft in Madhya Pradesh's

Gwalior at 10 minutes past midnight. "The case was for a value of Rs 1,80,000... The case against a street vendor in Delhi was not the first case registered under the BNS; the police have disposed of the Delhi case by using the provision of review. This is the true colour of the new 'criminal' law.

Constitution. The new criminal law will violate the Constitutional principles, provisions, and the new enactments, which started before the Elections

Multiple MLC ticket aspirants put YSRCP in a spot

Resignation of Vamsikrishna Srinivas has ignited a fierce race for vacated seat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The campaign for the Member of Legislative Council (MLC) ticket within the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has kicked off with high stakes and intense competition, setting the stage for a significant political showdown. The resignation of Vamsikrishna Srinivas from both his party and position less than six months ago has ignited a fierce race for his vacated seat, presenting a formidable challenge for the party.

Vamsikrishna Srinivas, who was elected as an MLC under the local bodies' quota, defected to the Jana Sena Party, prompting the Chairman of the Legislative Council to declare him ineligible for the MLC post. This move left the YSR Congress Party scrambling to

find a replacement, further complicated by the recent general elections that delayed the MLC selection process.

In the local body elections held three years ago, YSRCP secured a majority of seats in Visakhapatnam district, leading to the appointment of Vamsikrishna Srinivas and Varudu Kalyani as MLCs. However, with Vamsikrishna's defection, the party now faces the task of filling his vacant seat amidst heightened internal competition.

Aspirants within the party have emerged as the process to fill the MLC post resumes. Kola Guruvulu, a local party member who previously contested from Praja Rajyam in 2009 and from the YSR Congress in 2014, was not given the opportunity to contest in the 2019

and 2024 elections. Despite being fielded by the party during the MLC elections for posts under the MLA quota in 2023, Kola Guruvulu was defeated due to cross-voting by some MLAs. Subsequently, he was appointed as the district president and entrusted with the role of DCCB chairman. Many party leaders now believe that the MLC position vacated by Vamsikrishna should be allotted to Kola Guruvulu.

However, the recent general elections have shifted the party dynamics. Former minister Gudivada Amarnath, citing his hard work and substantial financial contributions during the elections, has requested the leadership to grant him the MLC position. Amarnath asserts that a legitimate position is necessary for him to

effectively challenge the ruling party while in Opposition. Concurrently, former MP MVV Satyanarayana has appealed to the leadership, seeking the MLC post to avoid potential legal troubles despite his financial stability, after complaining about being targeted by the alliance government.

In this context, Kola Guruvulu remains hopeful that his dedication will not be overlooked. The three leaders have raised the issue with YV Subbareddy, the Uttar Andhra coordinator of the party, who recently visited the city. Reports indicate that Subbareddy was overwhelmed by their demands and suggested they discuss the matter with party president Jagan Mohan Reddy for a final decision.

Praja Darbar receives good response

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

According to the instructions of Telugu Desam Party chief and Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, State ministers should be available at the party headquarters to solve the problems of leaders, activists and common people. As part of that, BC Welfare, Textiles & Textile Industries Minister S Savitha held a Praja Darbar at Mangalagiri TDP National Headquarters on Wednesday.

A large number of applicants flocked to the venue and voiced their concerns to Minister Savitha. The Minister herself received the applications from them and immediately called the officials concerned and



ordered them to solve the problems. Later, the minister spoke to the media. "CM Chandrababu's main aspiration is that if the coalition government comes to power, he can

create wealth and put things back on track. The CM said it is a people's government and the leaders should go to the people and find out the problems and solve them one by one. As part of it, we are

organising Praja Darbar at Mangalagiri party office. Most of the complaints received pertain to land grabs by YSRCP leaders, ganja and missing girls. I immediately called the concerned authorities and resolved those within my jurisdiction."

She said that if the king is good, the kingdom will be good, and asked what Jagan Mohan Reddy did in the past five years though there are 150 MLAs. "Today, the king (Chandrababu) is good and we are moving forward to develop the State. We are implementing the promises given in the election and the proof is the five signatures by CM Chandrababu after assuming charge."

YSRCP follower murdered in public

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a shocking and terrible incident that has shaken the community, a follower of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) brutally murdered a YSRCP supporter in public on a busy road. The deceased is Rashid. The gruesome act took place in full view of the public, leaving bystanders horrified and traumatised.

The incident happened in Vinukonda of Palnadu district.

Puja held at CM's official residence at 1-Janpath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu performed puja at the CM's new official residence at 1 Jan Path in Delhi on Wednesday. After the puja, Chandrababu Naidu returned to Vijayawada. The CM used to stay at 50 Ashoka Road when he came to Delhi. Now, he has been allotted the official residence at 1-Janpath.

Union Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, MPs



Kesineni Sivanath, L Prasad, and others were present.

Ramesh Kandula joins Swatantra TV as Chief Editor



B Krishna Prasad, Managing Director of Ascendas Broadcasting Pvt Ltd, and Swatantra TV, greeting Ramesh Babu Kandula, who took charge as the Chief Editor of Swatantra TV Channel on Wednesday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ramesh Kandula has joined Swatantra TV Channel as Chief Editor on Wednesday. With a vast experience across the media spectrum - in print, web and television; in regional and national; and in English and Telugu - Ramesh has held leadership positions in a variety of news organizations.

His previous stints

include *Eenadu*, *Deccan Chronicle* and *The Tribune*. He also held senior positions in various television channels including TV5 and i-News, and served as the Chief Editor of Andhra Pradesh Magazine by the AP Government.

Ramesh has produced hundreds of news reports, news analyses, informative articles and opinion pieces for print,

web and TV during his more than three decades of rich experience. He is also the author of two non-fiction books. His political biography of NT Rama Rao, *'Maverick Messiah'*, was published by Penguin Random House India.

His recent book in Telugu on Amaravati, *'Amaravati Vivadalu - vashthavulu'*, is a research work on the controversies surrounding the capital.

Delhi Police arrest man for looting 4 kg gold from jeweller in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Delhi Police arrested a man, who along with his associates, looted four kilograms of gold from a jeweller in Telangana and shot at two people during the robbery, officials said on Wednesday.

Sumit Dagar was declared a proclaimed offender in a murder case in Delhi after he did not surrender before the court on March 30, 2022, they said. On March 1, 2019, Dagar and his four associates killed Imran in Delhi over an old rivalry, police said.

"After killing Imran, he was arrested and granted parole. After getting parole, he went to Telangana where he lived with his relatives and got involved in a robbery case," Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime) Amit Goel said. "On December 1, 2023, accused Dagar, along with his associates robbed four kilograms of gold and cash from a jewellery store in Telangana at gunpoint," the DCP said.

Wall removed, Assembly Gate 2 opened



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Assembly Speaker Ch Ayyanna Patrudu, on Wednesday, ordered that the wall constructed across Gate 2 of the Assembly be removed. He said that the gate was closed by the previous YSRCP government so that the plight of Amaravati farmers should

not be heard. Speaker Ayyanna Patrudu ordered the removal of the wall built by the YS Jagan government and opening of Gate 2.

He said that Jagan Mohan Reddy closed Gate 2 and built a wall when the farmers of Amaravati were protesting and agitating against the move to build three capitals and the injustice done to them.

"It is the minimum responsibility of the government to provide an opportunity to the people to voice their problems. In a democratic system, the gates of the Legislature, the home of democracy, should be open to the people. The State now has a democratic government, a government that is accessible to the people," said Speaker Ayyanna Patrudu.

K'taka bill on...

Continued from Page 1

Pharma company Biocon Managing Director Kiran Mazumdar Shaw said, "As a tech hub we need skilled talent and whilst the aim is to provide jobs for locals, we must not affect our leading position in technology by this move. There must be caveats that exempt highly skilled recruitment from this policy."

ASSOCHAM, Karnataka co-chairman R K Misra said on 'X', "Another genius move from Govt of Karnataka. Mandate LOCAL RESERVATION & APPOINT GOVT OFFICER IN EVERY COMPANY to monitor. This will scare Indian IT & GCCs. Short-sighted."

White Paper today on law and order during YSRCP rule

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will release a White Paper on law and order on Thursday. The government has decided to release the White Paper at the State secretariat at 3 pm on Thursday. The White Paper is likely to reveal details about the law and order situation during the past five years, illegal cases, detentions, suppression of opposition, cases registered against citizens, etc.

The White Paper is likely to reveal the manner in which the previous government acted to prevent the freedom of expression,

cases registered against ordinary citizens, attacks on SCs, murder cases etc. It seems that the YSRCP government's action to suppress the Amaravati farmers' movement, Dr Sudhakar, Dalit driver Subramaniam, the previous government's attitude in the chicken knife case, and non-cooperation with the Central investigation agency in Viveka's murder case will be mentioned in the White Paper. It will highlight Habeas-Corpus petitions that have been filed in the High Court against the YSRCP government during the past five years.

Worker killed in chemical...

Continued from Page 1

Authorities haven't yet released official figures, but initial reports suggest that multiple workers were injured, with some potentially in critical condition. Reacting swiftly, Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha directed District Collector Vijay Krishnan to launch a thorough investigation into the cause of the explosion. She emphasised the need for swift medical care for the injured and expedited rescue efforts to ensure everyone's safety. The Minister assured all necessary assistance from the State government.

"Our priority right now is ensuring the well-being of

those affected by this tragedy," Anitha declared. "We are working closely with local authorities to provide all necessary medical attention, counselling, and support to the families of the victim and the injured." This incident disturbingly echoes a similar disaster in June, where a pharmaceutical unit explosion within the same SEZ tragically resulted in six deaths. The recurring nature of these events raises serious concerns about safety standards within the Atchutapuram SEZ.

The Vasant Chemicals explosion has sent shockwaves through the industrial sector. Experts are calling for a comprehensive review of

safety protocols across factories and SEZs nationwide. The focus is on identifying potential causes of the blast, such as improper equipment maintenance, inadequate worker training, or violations of safety regulations.

As investigations progress, there's a growing demand for enhanced safety standards within the chemical industry. This includes stricter regulations, regular inspections, and implementation of advanced safety technologies to prevent future catastrophes. The focus is on prioritising safety of workers and ensuring robust protocols are in place to minimise risks associated with handling hazardous chemicals.

Why no assurance...

Continued from Page 1

He has visited New Delhi for the fourth time and held meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers. But, nothing is happening in favour of Andhra Pradesh," she said.

Meanwhile, she criticised Chandrababu for not securing an announcement from the Central government that the Visakha Steel Plant will not be privatised. There was no specific clarity over the release of funds to the Polavaram Irrigation Project, she said. Also, she asked whether Chandrababu got clarity from the Union government on the capital construction. "Chandrababu should open his eyes and realise BJP's attitude towards the beliefs of the people," she added.

Give priority to loans, better services: Collector to bankers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has asked the bankers to give utmost importance to sanctioning loans to beneficiaries apart from better services to the customers. Banks should create belief in customers to provide quality services to them and then only they can compete with other banks, she said.

Srijana inaugurated the Union Bank of India's new branch at RTC Workshop Road at Vidyadharapuram in Vijayawada on Wednesday. She also handed over a Rs.7-lakh car loan to city-based woman Naga Sunitha.

Speaking on the occasion, she underlined that bankers should give utmost importance to sanctioning loans to beneficiaries apart from pro-



NTR Collector Dr Srijana inaugurating the Union Bank of India's new branch at Vidyadharapuram on Wednesday

viding better services to the customers. Vijayawada is a big business centre and many industries and trading organisations are working here, she said.

She urged the bankers to provide loans to establish industrial units for young, enthusiastic industrialists. Also, the bankers should work for the welfare of farmers by giving crop loans to them. She asked the bankers to come forward to provide loans to government schemes including the Mudra loans.

NTR District Joint Collector Dr P Sampath Kumar, Union Bank of India Zonal Head Bhaskara Rao, Regional Head Muvvula Sridhar Deputy Regional Heads Harish Betha, ISN Murthy and others were present.

Govt plans to gradually reduce use of chemicals in cultivation

Dr Dilli Rao reveals plans to explore integration of advanced technologies in agriculture



Agriculture Department Commissioner and Director Dr S Dilli Rao assuming office at the department headquarters at Mangalagiri on Wednesday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr S Dilli Rao, on Wednesday, assumed office as the Commissioner and Director of the Agriculture Department at its headquarters in Mangalagiri, Guntur district. His induction ceremony included traditional Veda Ashirvachanam performed by Vedic scholars.

On his first day at the new position, Dr Dilli Rao honoured several distinguished farmers such as Pokala Pamulu, Veerishetti Sivaiah, Srinivasa Rao, G Gopala Rao, R Venkateswara Rao, and V Jagan Mohan Rao, recognising their contributions and achievements in the field.

Addressing the media, Dr Dilli Rao outlined the forthcoming welfare measures to be implemented by the Agriculture Department. He emphasised the department's intention to train its officials to educate farmers about reducing the use of chemical products in cultivation gradually. The initiative aims to promote sustainable agricultural practices and environmental stewardship.

Dr Dilli Rao underlined the importance of his commitment to improving farmers' incomes across the State. He highlighted plans to explore the integration of advanced technologies in agriculture, aiming to optimise productivity and efficiency. Emphasising the adoption of best practices,

he underscored the department's focus on leveraging technology to reduce operational costs.

Further, he highlighted the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) initiative, expressing the government's commitment to support it further. He drew inspiration from the international recognition of the 'Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity' to underscore the importance of sustainable farming practices. Dr Dilli Rao emphasized the need to raise awareness among farmers about the detrimental effects of chemical-based farming on soil fertility, advocating for practices that promote long-term soil health.

Regarding economic measures, Dr Dilli Rao stated that the government is actively working to ensure fair and affordable prices for agricultural produce. This initiative aims to benefit both farmers and consumers while boosting agricultural productivity. He extended gratitude to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu, and Chief Secretary Nirabh Kumar Prasad for entrusting him with the responsibility, citing his background with a Master's Degree in Agriculture.

He reaffirmed his dedication to implementing various state and central government schemes aimed at uplifting farmers. Additionally, Dr Dilli

Rao expressed ambitions to increase agricultural growth from the current four per cent to five per cent, focusing on sustainable development and technological integration to achieve this goal.

Dilli Rao further underscored his commitment to ensuring integrity within the agriculture sector by issuing a stern warning to traders involved in the sale of counterfeit fertilisers and pesticides. He emphasised a zero-tolerance policy towards fraudulent practices, signalling stringent actions against offenders to safeguard farmers and consumers alike.

Aligned with the vision of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Dr Dilli Rao expressed his determination to elevate the Agriculture Department to a position of prominence across all sectors. He outlined his strategy to achieve this goal, emphasising the need for comprehensive planning aimed at positively impacting the lives of farmers through innovative policies and initiatives.

The event was attended by key officials including Agriculture Department Deputy Director RVV Swarna Jaya Lakshmi, Agriculture Extension and Training Centre Director B. Prasad, ATMA Director VV Vijaya Lakshmi, Joint Director V. Sridhar, SE T. Balasubrahmanyam, and other notable figures from the agricultural community.



FIRST EKADASHI

Heavy rush at Kanakadurga temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Many devotees thronged the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada, on the occasion of the first Ekadashi on Wednesday. In view of the rush of devo-

tees who have specially come to see the goddess, temple Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao supervised the arrangements to ensure that the devotees do not face any inconvenience. Since the morning, devotees have been coming to the tem-

ple to offer sarees to Durga Devi. The temple authorities performed special puja apart from the regular ones.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh High Court Judge Justice Srinivasa Reddy and his family visited the temple and offered special rituals.

EO KS Ramana Rao accorded a warm welcome to the Judge's family.

Later, Vedic scholars gave them blessings at the Veda Ashirvachana Mandapam. EO Rao presented Laddu Prasadam, Sesa Vastram and the portrait.

GPS, GO, gazette without govt permission: CMO gathering info

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Chief Minister's Office is gathering information on the release of GPS, GO and gazette without government permission. An enquiry has started following the instructions of CM Chandrababu Naidu to find out who, among the people working in the Finance Department and Law Department, is responsible for this. Details are gathered about the role of Finance Department Deputy Secretary Shanti Kumari and Law Department Section Officer Hariprasad Reddy. The higher officials are enquiring about the history of these two officers.

The rules say that the files of the old government's non-implementation decisions in the last six months must be placed before the new government. Sources in the Secretariat revealed that the new government's permission is required for the implementation of the old government's decisions which are not in force. There are suspicions that there is a conspiracy behind uploading the gazette exactly a month after Chandrababu's swearing-in. The government is investigating whether there are any coverts among ministers and officials in various departments.

YSRCP follower murdered in public

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a shocking and terrible incident that has shaken the community, a follower of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) brutally murdered a YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) supporter in public on a busy road. The gruesome act took place in full view of the public, leaving bystanders horrified and traumatized.

The incident happened in Vinukonda of Palnadu district. The victim is Rashid.

'YSRCP followers committed atrocities on tribals'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party leader and former member of SC & ST Commission Konda Reddy Narahari Varaprasad has said that Ekalavya was a great man with concentration, perseverance and devotion. Varaprasad was the chief guest at the Ekalavya birthday celebration that takes place on the first day of Ekadashi every year. Speaking on the occasion, he said that in 108 constituencies across the State, floral tributes were paid to the idol of



Ekalavya. During the past five years of the YSRCP government, Jagan Mohan Reddy's followers and public representatives attacked tribals and grabbed their lands. They treat

ed tribal women as a toy for physical pleasure. Under Chandrababu Naidu's regime, tribals have developed economically, socially and politically. He said 90 per cent of tribals voted for Chandrababu Naidu to win the elections. ST Sangha leaders Govindu Ramakrishna, Bandi Rajesh, TDP ST leaders Garika Rajeshwari, Sri Rama Ajay Kumar, State general secretary Village Ward Secretariat Employees Association Ramana Babu and others were present.

Akshara School mgmt moves court to protect land

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

It sounds like there's been quite a contentious situation in Gudivada involving political figures. It has witnessed former minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao, also known as Nani, and his associates facing a setback, possibly related to their activities in the area.

On the other hand, TDP MLA Venigandla Ramu, who recently defeated Nani in the elections, has been involved in protecting the properties of several individuals from Nani and his group's encroachment. This indicates a complex political and possibly legal conflict unfolding in Krishna district.

One by one, incidents of Kodali's corruption have come out after the formation of the TDP government in the State. Recently, many victims of Kodali Nani and groups have been approaching MLA Ramu and urging him to protect their assets and properties. Also, he is standing with the victims

On Tuesday, the Sarath Theater's management was released from the occupation of Kodali Nani. Earlier, Kodali Nani occupied the theatre and used it as the YSRCP office. Soon after the TDP win, the theatre was taken over by management.

Along these lines, the management of the Akshara School has approached the

One by one, incidents of Kodali's corruption have come out after the formation of the TDP government in the State. Recently, many victims of Kodali Nani and groups have been approaching MLA Ramu and urging him to protect their assets and properties. Also, he is standing with the victims

court to protect its land from the hands of Kolli Vijay, who was a close associate with Kodali Nani. The school's old management told the court that Vijay had threatened them and taken over it at a cheaper cost.

The Akshara School was located at the Teachers Colony and it was worth Rs.8 crore. After seeing the series of incidents after the elections, the old management bravely put a complaint in court. Later, the court directed the officials to conduct a probe in this regard.

Earlier, ex-Minister Kodali Nani and his groups occupied many valuable properties by threatening the owners. For example, Kodali's gang occupied the Vidya Vikas assets of 7.64 acres at Chaitanya Housing Colony. However, soon after the TDP win, the management took over it with the support of MLA Venigandla Ramu.

So, the Akshara School's management approached the court to protect its land. For that, MLA Ramu is extending his support to the management.

Youm Ashura witnesses Muharram self-flagellation ritual

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Shia people in large numbers participated in the Muharram self-flagellation ceremony to commemorate Yom Ashura, also known as Muharram, at Koneru centre of Machilipatnam. The oldest Koneru centre was transformed into a sea of humanity as attendees dressed in black engaged in chest-beating rituals. Notably, Machilipatnam's Shia community consists of two groups, known as Chinna party and Pedda party, both of

whom observe Muharram. Political party leaders and members also took part in the self-flagellation ceremony, honouring the sacrifices of Hussain and others at Karbala. Lime juice and buttermilk were distributed to the public at Koneru centre as symbolic gestures of community and unity.

The Shia groups in Machilipatnam held Maatham processions through the city streets, commemorating the bravery of Hussain, the Prophet Mohammad's grand-



son, and his companions at the battle of Karbala in Iraq. The Shia elders emphasised the long-standing tradition of observing Yom Ashura, dating back to the Mughal period and continuing through British rule to the present day. They mentioned that chest-beating rituals during Muharram are predominantly conducted in Hyderabad, Telangana, and Machilipatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

Shia community members from across Andhra Pradesh participated in the Maatham

procession and chest-beating rituals, followed by a gathering to honour Hussain and his companions, culminating in prayers and recitations. Leaders from various political parties, including YSR Congress, Telugu Desam, Congress, and Jana Sena, paid their respects during the event.

Elsewhere in Vijayawada and Guntur, special prayers and gatherings were held at mosques, while Muharram ceremonies in Vijayawada's Panja Centre saw a significant turnout of Muslim attendees.

AU set to have in-charge VC soon

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to restore stability at Andhra University (AU) after a period of leadership upheaval, the State government is poised to appoint an in-charge Vice Chancellor (VC) within the next few weeks. The university has been grappling with a leadership vacuum since the sudden resignations of VC Prasada Reddy and Registrar Stephen last month. Professor Kishore babu was appointed interim registrar, but the crucial VC position remains unfilled, causing delays in key decisions and stalling development projects.

With the government entrusting Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu with identifying suitable candidates for AU and other universities, a flurry of activity has begun among potential contenders. Approximately ten candidates are vying for the coveted position.



Prominent names include former Registrar Professor Umamaheswara Rao, Professor Dhanunjay (Dean of Foreign Affairs), Engineering College Principal Shashi bhushan, Professor Ranji (current VC of Srikakulam University), and Professor DVR Murthy (Dean of Examination Department). Besides, Sipal MVR Raju, Professor Valli Kumari (Vice Chairman of the Council of Higher Education), senior professors like Sashi, and a retired

VC from Adikavi Nannaya University are also in the running.

The report suggests that some candidates are resorting to political maneuvering. One senior professor reportedly seeks support from a speaker and a senior minister from a neighbouring district, but rumours link him to the previous VC, which may raise concerns for the government. Another candidate lobbies through city leaders, while a

former Srikakulam University VC relies on an MLA's relative in the ruling party.

However, other contenders believe their qualifications speak for themselves. A senior professor highlights his research and international projects, while another is confident his experience aligns with the government's vision for resolving university issues. A third candidate emphasises his past role as Vice Chairman of the Council of Higher Education. Two external candidates are also making a strong case for the position. The chosen candidate will require approval from the Governor, a process that may be delayed due to past resignations under the YCP government. Once approved, the in-charge VC will serve until a permanent VC is appointed through a more extensive process involving notifications, applications, search committee formation, and other steps, which could take six months to a year.

AP plunges into chaos under NDA govt: MLC Varudu Kalyani

State has recorded an average of three murders and six rapes daily

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

YSR Congress Party Mahila Wing president and MLC Varudu Kalyani has voiced apprehension that within 40 days of the TDP alliance government assuming power, Andhra Pradesh has descended into turmoil, presenting grave dangers to the safety of girls and women. Shockingly, the State has recorded an average of three murders and six rapes daily, underscoring a grim landscape of disorder and insecurity.

Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, Varudu Kalyani expressed profound concern over the escalating violence. Criticising Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for their inadequate

response, she highlighted a disturbing trend of victims facing legal repercussions while the YSR Congress Party is sidelined. Incidents of brutal attacks and property destruction have tragically become alarmingly frequent, resulting in loss of life.

Kalyani questioned the government's priorities, citing the swift demolition of Opposition's offices in stark contrast to the lack of effective action against violent criminals. She emphasised the pervasive fear gripping girls and women, preventing them from feeling safe outside their homes. The tragic case in Murchamarri in Nandyal, where a child remains missing after 12 days, underscored the government's indifferent attitude towards grieving families.

Nithin Gadkari urged to speed up national highway works

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Andhra Pradesh Minister for Transport M Ramprasad Reddy appealed to Union Minister for Road Transport and Highway Nitin Gadkari to take steps to expedite the ongoing national highway works in Annamaya district.

Minister Ramprasad Reddy welcomed Union Minister Nithin Gadkari when he reached Madanapalle on Wednesday. Ramprasad Reddy submitted representations to Nithin Gadkari on the ongoing national highway works in Annamaya district and appealed to him to take steps for the speedy completion of the works.

The Minister explained to the Union Minister about the up-gradation of Rajampet-Rayachoty-Kadiri road—from State Highway to National Highway for a length of 135 Km Road from Rajampeta-Rayachoty-Kadiri road is one of the most important State Highway in Andhra Pradesh and the road connects three important National Highways namely, Rampreasad Reddy also explained the Union Minister about NH-716 at Rajampet (Renigunta-Kadapa road), NH-40 at Rayacoty



(Kurnool-Chittoor-Ranipeta road) and NH-42 at Kadiri (Uravakonda-Anantapuramu-Kadiri-Madanapalle-Krishnagiri road), Widening from 2 lane paved shoulder to 4 lane from Kadapa - Rayachoty Road of NH-40 and widening of 6 roads under CRF Scheme of length 72.180 Kms with an estimate of 10970 Lakhs.

Later Union Minister Nithin Gadkari was accorded a warm

welcome when he arrived at Renigunta airport by State Minister for R&B and Infrastructure development BC Janardhan Reddy, R&B Principal secretary Kantilal Dande, MP M Gurumurthy, MLA A Srinivasa Rao and other officials. Nithin Gadkari held a review meeting with the national highway authority officials in the airport lounge on the ongoing national highway projects in the state.

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari reached the hill town of Tirumala on Wednesday evening. On his arrival to Sri Vakulamatha Rest House, he was accorded a warm reception by TTD EO Syamala Rao and TTD JEO Veerabrahmam. The Union Minister will offer prayers to the Lord on Thursday early morning.

Govt committed to provide jobs, education to ST youths: Minister

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu has reiterated that the government is committed to provide employment and education to the youths belonging to Scheduled Tribes.

The Minister participated in the 'Ekalavya Jayanthi' programme organized in Palcole on Wednesday. He garlanded the statue of Ekalavya and paid tributes.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ramanaidu said that he personally loves Ekalavya who excelled in archery without a guru. The Minister recalled that Ekalavya gave his thumb as 'guru dakshina' to Dronacharya which indicates his sincerity and honesty.

The Minister exhorted the youths to draw inspiration from Ekalavya to reach heights. He recalled that every year the 'Ekalavya Jayanthi' is held in Palcole grandly for which a large number of tribal people from nearby taandas and villages attend.

Launching a scathing attack against the previous YSRCP led government, Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu claimed that the funds, meant for the ST welfare, were diverted to other purposes.

During the five years of the previous regime, they did not do much for the uplift of STs, the Minister criticized.

The Minister assured of allocating adequate funds for the ST Corporation to spend for their uplift and for their welfare.

"The Chandrababu Naidu headed government has taken all steps to provide education and employment to the tribal youths. The tribal youths should utilize the opportunities being provided by the government. Steps will be taken to provide needed help to those who are in caste-based professions," the Minister said.

Lashing out the YSRCP led previous government for putting the state in



Minister lays stone for construction of R&B road

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu laid the foundation stone for the construction of an R&B road at Ravipadu village in Poduru mandal Palcole constituency on Wednesday.

The Minister laid the foundation stone for the construction of the R&B road at a cost of 289.45 lakh. The road will connect four villages. He also laid the foundation stone for the construction of a CC road.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the erstwhile YSRCP government had procured paddy from the farmers for which it had to disburse Rs 1650 crore to the farmers.

But the YSRCP led previous government did not disburse the money. Immediately after the Chandrababu Naidu led new government took charge, it had released Rs 1000 crore for the disbursement to the farmers for their paddy pro-



duce, the minister acknowledged.

The Minister underlined the need for prosperity of agriculture and industrial sectors for the development of the state. The NDA led government's aim is to make agriculture a lucrative profession, he observed.

The government has taken up the removal of hyacinth and other wild creepers from

the irrigation canals and drains by spending Rs 90 crore, the minister announced. "The Jagan Mohan Reddy headed previous government had borrowed Rs 36,000 crore on the civil supply corporation," he lashed out. Panchayat Raj EE K Ramakantha Rao, Des G Venkata Ratnam and D Satyanarayan were among those who were present.

debt-trap, the Minister acknowledged that the Chief Minister is making all efforts to bring out the state

from the debt-trap with the help of the Central government. MLC Angara Ram Mohan,

ST Cell secretary J Vengalaiah, TDP, BJP and Jana Sena leaders were among those who took part in the programme.



Vikrant Patil assumes charge as SP

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Vikrant Patil here on Wednesday took charge as the new Superintendent of Police of Kakinada district. Vikrant Patil took charge in place of S Sathish Kumar who was transferred to Guntur as SP.

SP Vikrant Patil told media persons that he would accord priority to women safety and solve the problems of the women as part of maintaining the law and order. He sought the cooperation of the people in curbing the menace of drugs and Ganja and other narcotic substances.

Patil said that he would come down with an iron hand on gambling and betting of any sort and he would welcome any suggestions from the people for effective functioning and maintenance of law and order. Additional SP Administration MJV Bhaskara Rao, Additional SP Armed Reserve Satyanarayana and Special Enforcement Bureau Additional SP Sri Lakshmi were among those attended.

Tushar Dudi takes charge Bapatla district SP

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Tushar Dudi took charge as Superintendent of police of Bapatla district here on Wednesday.

He assumed charge as the new SP at the district police headquarters amid priests reciting Vedic chants.

Later, talking to the media, the SP said that he would pay special attention to check the crimes against women, children and speedy investigation of major cases. He said that he would give importance to using the latest technology to investigate criminal cases.



The SP made it clear that he would insist the police officials and police personnel

to adopt friendly policing and provide impartial services to the people of the district.

In the coming days, a helpline number would be launched especially to receive information from the people on ganja, drugs and anti-social activities., he added. Additional SP TP Vithaleswar, Repalle DSP T Muralikrishna, Bapatla DSP CH Muralikrishna Krishna, Chirala incharge DSP P Jagadish Naik and a host of other police officials were present.

'Rottela Panduga' begins with spiritual fervor

PNS ■ NELLORE

The Rottela Panduga religious event began at Barashaheed Dargah here on Wednesday with spiritual fervor.

Thousands of people, including Muslims and Hindus, thronged the Baara Shaheed Dargah. They had a holy dip in the Swarnala tank before reaching the Dargah. The devotees exchanged Rottelu and fulfilled their vows. Large number of devotees thronged the Baara Shaheed Dargah not only from AP but also neighbouring states. The Rottela Panduga will conclude on July 21. The Rottela Panduga began coinciding with the auspicious day of Toli Ekadashi day.

Minister P Narayana and MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy reviewed the arrangements made for the devotees with the officials.

The seer of Dargah told the media that Gandhamahotsavam would be held in the night at the Dargah. Officials said that over 2000 police personnel were deployed to regulate the devotees at the place.



CI, SI suspended in Muchumarri rape-cum-murder incident

PNS ■ NANDYALA

The Circle Inspector and Sub-inspector of Nandikotkur police station were placed under suspension for dereliction in duty in connection with the sensational rape and murder of a minor girl.

Kurnool Range DIG CH Vijaya Rao here on Wednesday issued orders suspending Nandikotkur police station Circle Inspector Vijaya Bhaskar and sub-inspector Jayasekhar.

The DIG warned the police personnel of initiating stringent action if dereliction is found. It may be mentioned



here that on July 7, three minor boys forcibly took a 9-year-old minor girl to the outskirts of the village, gang raped her and later dumped her body in the Krishna canal backwaters. Two fathers of

two of the accused boys helped to dump the body in the Krishna backwaters. Meanwhile, the police are continuing vigorous efforts to trace the body in the Krishna canal.

Heavy rain forecast over north coastal districts

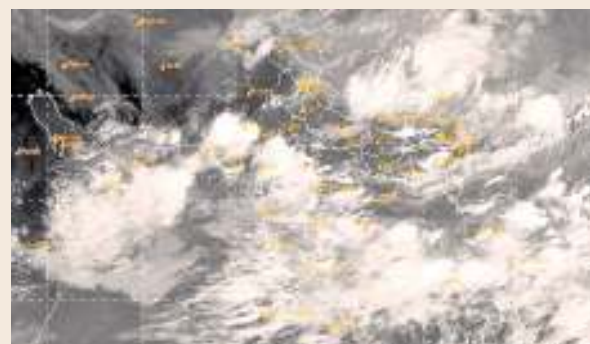
PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy to very heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh from July 18 to 20. The same situation is likely to prevail in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on July 19 and 20.

A fresh low pressure area is likely to form over West Central and adjoining Northwest Bay of Bengal around Friday, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that Tuesday's Monsoon trough at mean sea level now passes through Jaisalmer, Kota, Guna, Narsinghpur, Rajnandgaon, Kalingapatnam and thence eastwards to the central Bay of Bengal and extends upto 1.5 km above mean sea level.

Heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours and on July 21. The same situation is



likely to prevail in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on July 18.

Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and strong surface winds with speed ranging from 30-40 Kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at many places or at a

few places or at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

The southwest monsoon has been normal in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and weak over Rayalaseema. Rain occurred at few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Yanam and at one or two places in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours, the report added.

We will not rest until turncoat MLAs are disqualified: Harish

PNS ■ MEDAK

Former Minister and Siddipet MLA T Harish Rao has said that the BRS would not rest until the BRS MLAs, who crossed over to the ruling Congress Party, will become the former MLAs. The BRS would go to Supreme Court, if need arose. He predicted that the constituencies represented by the BRS turncoat MLAs will soon go to by-elections.

Addressing media after holding the party workers' meeting here on Wednesday in the wake of the Pathancheru MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy quitting the BRS to join the Congress, Harish Rao pointed out that KCR launched the movement for Telangana with a handful of leaders in 2001. Conspiracies were hatched against the TRS (now BRS) even then. When YS Rajasekhar Reddy was Chief Minister, as many as 12 BRS MLAs switched their allegiance to the Congress. But the conspiracies did not work. The justice triumphed at last. KCR fought for Telangana state for 14 years and achieved the statehood. Despite doomsayers, the BRS flourished and captured power twice. He came



Former minister T Harish Rao speaking at a media conference in Medak on Wednesday

down heavily on Mahipal Reddy for deserted the party though the party gave an opportunity to contest from Patancheru thrice successfully. Whenever elections were held in Telangana, the BRS wrest the constituency.

"I came here to boost your (party activists) confidence. The party activists attended the party meeting in thousand and boosted my confidence," Harish Rao said.

Revanth Reddy, who gave a call to the Congress cadres to stone all 12

party MLAs who defected to BRS in the past, has been visiting the homes of the BRS leaders and presenting them with Congress shawls, he pointed out. Charging the government with adopting double standards on the bonus issue to the paddy, Harish Rao pointed out that Revanth Reddy changed the tack saying that the bonus is applicable only to the fine variety of paddy. The Congress is applying the same formula to the loan waiver issue too. Then what is the use of formulating guidelines for the PM-Kisan scheme and the issue of ration cards?

The administration has come to a standstill. Salaries are not being paid on time to government employees, he said, adding that the people would be able to distinguish between milk and water.

He expressed confidence that the people would recognise the good work done by the BRS government. He exhorted the party workers to prepare for the by-polls from now onwards assuring the party support to them. Dubbaka MLA Kotha Prabhakar Reddy, former MLA Bhupal Reddy and others were present at the media conference.

8-year-old girl found dead under suspicious circumstances



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

An 8-year-old girl was found dead under suspicious circumstances at Nelapalli village in Doravari Satram mandal in a forest area on Wednesday.

Police said that about 40 families, who came from Bihar state, were working in a rice mill at Nelaballi village.

A worker of the rice mill, who also belongs to Bihar state, was seen taking the girl into the forest area on Tuesday.

Later, the body of the girl was found behind bushes in the forest area. A police team led by DSP Srinivasa Reddy rushed there and examined the area.

The police also examined the CCTV footage. The body of the girl was shifted to the government hospital in Naidupet for postmortem. It may be mentioned here that a 13-year-old girl was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Chebrolu village in Guntur district on Sunday in a similar manner.

INDIA CORNER

Lakhs witness Lord Jagannath's 'golden attire' ritual in Puri

Lakhs of devotees on Wednesday witnessed Lord Jagannath's "Suna Besha" ritual in which the idol, seated on a chariot in Puri, was adorned with gold ornaments embedded with precious stones. The idols of his siblings - Devi Subhadra and Lord Balabhadra - were also decorated by servants with golden jewellery and attires atop their chariots in front of the 'Singha Dwar' (Lion's Gate) of the famous 12th-century temple. Sources said that the sibling deities wear gold jewellery weighing nearly 208 kg on this occasion. The embellishment of the idols known as "Suna Besha" (golden attire) is held two days after the sibling deities return to Shree Jagannath Temple following their nine-day stay at the Gundicha Temple, considered their birthplace. "The devotees can have darshan of the deities till 11 pm on Wednesday night," Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee told reporters.



6 children die of suspected Chandipura virus in Gujarat since July 10: Minister

Six children have died due to suspected Chandipura virus in Gujarat since July 10, with the total number of cases of the infection rising to 12, state Health Minister Rushikesh Patel has said. Samples of the 12 patients have been sent to Pune's National Institute of Virology (NIV) for confirmation, he said on Monday. Chandipura virus causes fever, with symptoms similar to flu, and acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). It is transmitted by vectors like mosquitoes, ticks and sand flies. The pathogen is a member of the Vesiculovirus genus of the family Rhabdoviridae. Patel said four of the 12 patients were from Sabarkantha district, three from Aravalli, one each from Mahisagar and Kheda in Gujarat, while two patients were from Rajasthan and one from Madhya Pradesh. They received treatment in Gujarat.



Jamia professor suspended over 'sexual harassment' charge by 4 PhD scholars

The Jamia Milla Islamia has suspended a professor and ordered inquiry into complaints of sexual harassment against him by four PhD scholars, one of whom had to cancel her admission. The officiating Vice Chancellor of the university, Mohammad Shakeel, ordered the suspension of the professor using his emergency powers and placed the inquiry before the Internal Complaints Committee of the university, an order said. The suspended professor has been barred from taking classes pending inquiry and is asked to mark his attendance at the chief proctor office until further order. The students have alleged the professor used "uncouth and uncivilised language" against them during a lecture and also made sexual overtures. According to the suspension order dated July 16, "four Ph.D scholars of Centre for Jawaharlal Nehru Studies, JMI, have made specific complaints of sexual harassment by the professor."



SC concern over 'political influence' in criminal trials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that the country's judicial system often finds itself grappling with pervasive issues of prolonged delay and suspected political influence, the Supreme Court has revived the trial of Chhote Singh, former BSP MLA from Uttar Pradesh, in a three-decade-old double-murder case. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Satish Chandra Sharma said, "We also acknowledge that it is evident from the trial court's order dated May 19, 2012 that political power has been leveraged to secure the withdrawal of prosecution of accused Chhote Singh." It noted that the nine other accused were put to trial after their applications for withdrawal of prosecution were rejected without a reasoned order. The bench said the May 19, 2012 order was challenged by both the accused and the vic-



timed, but the matter remained pending before the Allahabad High Court for 12 years, leading to stagnation in the trial proceedings, which is "deeply troubling". Given the gravity of the situation and the risk of miscarriage of justice, urgent action was warranted, it added. "The judicial system of our country often finds itself grappling with the pervasive issues of prolonged delay and sus-

pected political influence within the legal proceedings. The present case highlights the alarming trend where cases, particularly those involving influential figures, face significant delays, obstructing the administration of justice. The undue influence wielded by powerful individuals further exacerbates the situation, raising concerns about fairness and impartiality," the bench observed. It added that the case presents concerning circumstances, wherein politically-influential individuals, accused of a double murder committed in broad daylight, have evaded trial for almost three decades. "Considering the material on record, the political influence of accused Chhote Singh and the trial court's casual approach towards the accusations against the then sitting member of the Legislative Assembly in allowing withdrawal of his prosecution, this court is of the opinion that merely because an accused person is elected to the Legislative Assembly cannot be a testament to their image among the general public," it said. "In the light of the discussion made above, we are inclined to set aside the withdrawal of prosecution of accused Chhote Singh as allowed by the trial court," the bench said.

'No plan to end practice of hiring contractual staff'

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat government on Wednesday rejected a media report which claimed that Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel had decided to end the practice of hiring contract employees and instead ordered to fill vacancies through regular recruitment. The General Administration Department made the assertion after a report over contractual hiring in the state government went viral on social media. "Some news and social media platforms have published a report which claimed that the state government has decided to end the contract system and fill up all government jobs, including Class 3 and 4, through regular recruitment only," the department said in a statement. "This is not true. The state government has neither taken such a decision nor were such instructions given to anyone. This is to clarify that there is no change in the state government's current policy on recruitment," the statement said.

VDGS ASSISTING FORCES TRACK ULTRAS IN DODA

'Won't let terrorists escape'

PNS ■ DODA (J-K)

Dozens of Village Defence Guards (VDGs), armed with .303 rifles, are helping security forces in the Desa forest of Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district in their search for the terrorists who killed four soldiers on Monday night. The VDGs have vowed not to let the terrorists escape the area, but say their slower bolt-action weapons must be replaced by more sophisticated automatic rifles to counter the heavily armed ultras. "We have not slept for 14 hours," said Sudarshan Singh, a member of a VDG group patrolling the Gai and the Banda areas to hunt down the terrorists linked to the banned Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). "They escaped (from the scene of the gunfight in Desa forest on Monday night) but for how long will they keep running, they will die as we are not going to allow them to escape," he told PTI. The groups, earlier known as Village Defence Committees (VDCs), comprising 10-15 members, were

formed in the Jammu region in 1995 to offer self-defence capabilities to villagers in view of terror threats. Officials said between 10:45 pm Tuesday and 2 am Wednesday, security forces and terrorists engaged in gunfights at Kalaan Bhata and near Panchan Bhata, respectively, in the Desa forest area. VDGs also opened fire on observing suspicious movement, while two explosive shells were recovered from the Gandoh area, they said. Sudarshan Singh said they were getting inputs about the movement of terrorists for the past few days but could not ascertain their location. On Monday night, terrorists opened fire on a search party, killing the four soldiers, including a captain, the third major terror incident in the Jammu region of the Union Territory in three weeks. "The terrorists are on the run and we will not allow them to leave this area alive," Sanjay Singh, another VDG member, said and added that VDGs will continue to fight terrorists with or without automatic weapons.

Captain Thapa's mortal remains brought to Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The mortal remains of Captain Brijesh Thapa, who was killed in an encounter with heavily armed terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, was brought by air to Bagdogra in northern West Bengal on Wednesday. Darjeeling MP Raju Bista, former foreign secretary Harshvardhan Shringla and others paid their respects to the mortal remains of the officer at Bengdubi Military Station near Siliguri. His mortal remains will be taken to his ancestral home in Lebonang near Darjeeling town. "As our nation is mourning the loss of our soldiers, we also take pride in the courageous saga of our brave heroes who fought valiantly against terrorists for the honour and glory of our motherland," Bista said after laying wreath on the coffin of Thapa. The MP asserted that the blood of the martyrs, including Captain Thapa, will not be in vain.

Stop diverting attention, create opportunities for youth: Priyanka to PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 'eight crore new jobs created' remark, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday urged him to "stop diverting attention" and ensure new opportunities for the country's youth. Her remarks came after a stampede-like situation occurred near the Mumbai airport where thousands of job aspirants gathered to apply for a limited number of vacancies for the post of loader at the facility. The incident took place on Tuesday morning and the situation was later brought under control, an official from the Sahar police station said. In a post in Hindi on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "A few days ago, the prime minister was saying in Mumbai that we have broken records by providing employment to so many crores of people. Today, a video of a huge crowd of unemployed people who had come to the same Mumbai for a few vacancies is going viral. Before this, 15 lakh unemployed people had come to a hotel in

Gujarat for 25 vacancies and a stampede-like situation had developed." "This shows that the record has definitely been broken, but of extreme unemployment. The country is facing historic unemployment," said the Congress general secretary. "I appeal to the prime minister to please stop making empty promises and diverting attention and think about the youth of the country. The promising youth, who are getting old, need crores of new opportunities," she said. The Congress leader's remarks come days after Prime Minister Modi last week emphasised that creation of eight crore new jobs in the last three to four years has "silenced" those spreading fake narratives about unemployment. Quoting a recent report of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on the employment figure, the prime minister had asserted the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime continues to prioritise stability and growth and added that small and big investors have welcomed his government's third term with enthusiasm.



Concern over adverse impact of climate change: Birla

PNS ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

Lok Sabha Speaker and Kota MP Om Birla on Wednesday expressed concern over the adverse impact of climate change and urged people to make sincere efforts to check the same. At least 11 lakh trees will be planted in the coming years in Kota and Bundi districts as part of 'Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam' campaign for plantation. The Lok Sabha Speaker was addressing a public gathering after planting a tree under the campaign at Guru Gobind Singh Park in Vallabhbari area here. "We should be sincere and serious enough about climate change to perceive its adverse impact not only on the present generation, but also on the generations to come," Birla said. By planting a tree in the name of one's mother, one should bring it up and protect it until it grows up, he further said. As the mother brings up the child, in the same way we should nourish and protect the tree, Birla said. "We worship tree, it is our culture and upbringing so it is our duty and responsibility to serve the mother earth," Birla said.

No need to fear or be apprehensive: K'taka Minister

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Infrastructure Development and Medium and Heavy Industries Minister M B Patil on Wednesday said the government will have wider consultations to protect the interests of Kannadigas as well as industries. The Minister took to 'X' to allay the concerns of business tycoons and industry leaders regarding the proposed Karnataka State Employment of Local Industries Factories Establishment Act Bill, 2024, which mandates reservation in the recruitment of Kannadigas

Reservation Bill

in Group C and D category jobs. Also, it makes the firms accord priority to local residents in other top jobs. The Minister noted that India is currently experiencing a manufacturing and industrial revolution driven by the global China Plus One policy. In this competitive era, states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana are striving to be at their best. It is of utmost importance for all the states to be at their competitive

peak, he noted. "Keeping the interests of Kannadigas paramount, I will discuss this issue with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, IT-BT Minister, Law Minister, and Labour Minister. We will have wider consultations. We will ensure that the interests of Kannadigas are protected, alongside those of the industries." He said, "Karnataka is a progressive state, and we cannot afford to lose in this once-in-a-century race of industrialisation. We will make sure that everyone's interests are safeguarded."

Restrictions could force companies to relocate: Nasscom

The National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) on Wednesday expressed disappointment and concern over Karnataka's new bill mandating reservation for locals in private sector jobs. The Karnataka State Employment of Local Industries Factories Establishment Act Bill, 2024 states that private firms should recruit Kannadigas in Group C and D category posts.

Also, it requires private firms to give priority to local candidates in the jobs. In a statement, the tech body said, "Nasscom and its members are disappointed and express deep concern regarding the passage of the Karnataka State Employment of Local Industries Factories Establishment Act Bill, 2024." The association noted that the tech sector contributes 25 per cent of the state's Gross Domestic Product.

'Muslims in Assam now 40%, demographic change big issue'

PNS ■ RANCHI

Assam Chief Minister Himant Biswa Sarma on Wednesday claimed that the Muslim population in his state has now risen to 40 per cent, contending that demographic change is a "big issue" in the northeastern state. Sarma, who is also the BJP's Jharkhand election co-in charge, made the comments on the sidelines of a party meeting here. "I come from Assam and demographic change is a big issue for me. Muslim population in my state is 40 per cent



now, which was 12 per cent in 1951. It is not a political issue for me, but a matter of life and death," he told reporters. Earlier, addressing party workers, he alleged that the number of Bangladeshi infil-

trators is rising in tribal areas of Jharkhand. The BJP would include a strong action plan against infiltrators in its manifesto for the upcoming Jharkhand assembly election, he said. In a scathing attack on Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Sarma accused him of turning Jharkhand into a "mini-Bangladesh". "The infiltrators come to Jharkhand and marry tribal girls to grab their land. I call for a law in Jharkhand that should have a provision that tribal girls cannot marry infiltrators," he said.

SC to hear today pleas related to NEET-UG 2024

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Thursday a batch of petitions related to the controversy-ridden medical entrance exam NEET-UG 2024 which was held on May 5. According to the cause list of July 18 uploaded on the apex court's website, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra would hear more than 40 pleas, including those filed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) seeking transfer of cases pending against it in various high courts on the NEET-UG row to the Supreme Court to avoid multiplicity of litigations. On July 11, the top court had adjourned till July 18 the hearing on the pleas, including those seeking cancellation of the exam, re-test and probe into alleged malpractices in the conduct of NEET-UG 2024, as the responses of the Centre and the NTA were yet to be received by some parties. The bench had observed that it has received a status report from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the progress made in the probe into the alleged irregularities in the conduct of the exam.

In an additional affidavit filed in the apex court last week, the Centre has said data analytics of the results of NEET-UG 2024 was conducted by IIT-Madras which found there was neither any indication of "mass malpractice" nor a localised set of candidates benefiting from it and scoring abnormally high marks. The government's assertion assumes significance in view of the observations made by the top court on July 8 that it may order a re-test if there were large-scale malpractices in holding the exam. The Centre's fresh affidavit has said experts from IIT-Madras have found that the marks distribution follows the bell-shaped curve that is witnessed in any large-scale examination, indicating no abnormality. A bell curve describes the shape of data conforming to a normal distribution. The affidavit said for 2024-25, the counselling process for undergraduate seats will be conducted in four rounds starting from the third week of July. The NTA has also filed a separate additional affidavit on the similar lines and said it has carried out an analysis of distribution of marks at the national, state and city level.

Blushing linked to brain being set off when feeling 'exposed'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Blushing - the reddening and warming of cheeks when one becomes self-conscious - could come from increased activity in brain parts involved in emotional arousal when one feels "exposed," a study has found. Researchers said that little is known about what is going on underneath while we are blushing - famously described by biologist Charles Darwin as "the most human of all expressions." The team, including researchers from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, turned to girl teenagers performing karaoke

to find out if blushing was a rapid, spontaneous emotional response, or if it was linked to thoughts such as those "about what others think of me". According to the team, female teens are "particularly sensitive to social judgement." "It is known that blushing increases during this life stage, since adolescents are very sensitive to other people's opinions and can be afraid of rejection or leaving (a) wrong impression," said Milica Nikolic, a developmental psychologist from the University of Amsterdam and the first author of the study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences. The team measured the cheek temperatures and brain activity of 40 teenagers as they watched pre-recorded videos of themselves and others singing



karaoke, an entertainment form in which one publicly sings to backing tracks of popular songs. The teens had visited the researchers' lab on a previous occasion, when they were asked to sing "purposefully chosen difficult karaoke songs," which included "Let It Go" from the movie 'Frozen' and 'Hello', originally performed by English singer-songwriter Adele. The researchers found teenagers blushed more when they saw themselves singing, compared to when others were singing. There was an increased activity observed in the teens' cerebellum, which "somewhat surprised" the authors as the brain region is most known for its role in movement and coordination. "Lately, there has been a lot

of research suggesting its involvement in emotional processing," said Nikolic. The authors found, however, that there was no activity in the brain regions traditionally known to be involved in understanding the mental state of oneself, including thinking about what others might be thinking. "Based on this, we concluded that thinking about others' thoughts may not be necessary for blushing to occur," said Nikolic. "Blushing may be a part of the automatic arousal you feel when you are exposed and there is something that is relevant to the self," said Nikolic.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A new lease of life

The Govt reconstitutes NITI Aayog, inducts union ministers and NDA allies to enhance strategic planning

In a significant move to bolster its policy-making prowess, the Indian Government has reconstituted the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog. This reconstitution includes 15 Union Ministers and notable allies from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), marking a strategic shift in the country's planning and development framework. This underscores the Government's commitment to integrating diverse ministerial insights into the policy-making process. These ministers come from various portfolios, ensuring that a broad spectrum of expertise and perspectives is brought to the table. This comprehensive approach aims to address multifaceted national challenges more effectively. The reconstitution also sees the induction of key NDA allies, signalling a collaborative effort to drive the nation's development agenda. By involving NDA allies, the Government aims to foster a more inclusive and cooperative environment within the Aayog. Among the notable ministers included are Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh. Their presence is anticipated to significantly influence the economic, internal security, and defence policies of the country. The inclusion of ministers from portfolios such as Health, Education, and Rural Development indicates a holistic approach to addressing India's development needs.



This reconstitution is seen as a strategic shift from the traditional Planning Commission model to a more dynamic and inclusive NITI Aayog framework. It reflects the government's intention to leverage the collective wisdom of its senior ministers and allies to drive forward its vision of a 'New India'. The Aayog's reconstitution aims to facilitate better coordination between the central and state governments, ensuring that policies are effectively implemented at the grassroots level. One of the primary goals of this reconstitution is to enhance the implementation of policies. The government hopes to streamline the execution of key initiatives and programs. This is expected to result in more efficient policy delivery and improved outcomes on the ground. NITI Aayog was established on January 1, 2015, as a replacement for the Planning Commission. Its primary purpose is to promote cooperative federalism by involving state governments in the policymaking process. However gradually it lost its importance. The Indian government has increasingly favoured a centralised approach, leading to reduced involvement of states in planning and decision-making processes, undermining NITI Aayog's role. It lacks financial powers and direct allocation of funds, limiting its influence on actual policy implementation. Besides, there has been a tendency to prioritize immediate economic and political goals over long-term strategic planning, diminishing NITI Aayog's relevance in sustainable development. As the NITI Aayog embarks on this new phase, there is a sense of optimism about its potential to drive substantial progress. It is anticipated that the Government's latest move will lead to more robust policy frameworks.

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PICTALK



Shia mourners participate in the 9th Muharram procession, on boats, at Dal Lake, in Srinagar

Defying the Western pressure, India prioritises national interests

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Moscow highlights significant gains for India on strategic, economic, and diplomatic fronts, despite Western reservations

Despite a concerted campaign by the US and Western countries to isolate Russia following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, several nations, including India, have prioritized their national interests. This has allowed President Putin to bolster Russia's economy, with India's \$65 billion worth of crude oil imports playing a crucial role in mitigating the impact of US-imposed sanctions. India maintains close strategic ties with the United States, yet it has become the second-largest importer of Russian crude oil after China. This alignment with Russia serves as a counterbalance to US influence. In recognition of this support, President Putin awarded Prime Minister Modi the Order of St. Andrew. The US, as expected, reacted by urging India to ensure that any resolution to the Ukraine conflict respects the UN charter and Ukraine's territorial integrity. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller emphasised the importance of these principles in international engagements with



Russia. In this context, experts view Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow through multiple lenses, highlighting significant gains for India on strategic, economic, and diplomatic fronts: India's geopolitical strategy significantly revolves around balancing China's rising influence. Strengthening ties with Russia serves as a counterbalance to China's aggressive posturing in the region. The visit underscored mutual interests in ensuring a multipolar world order, acting as a strategic buffer against unilateral actions by any major power, including China.

Strategic Gains: A key highlight of Modi's visit was the reinforcement of India-Russia defense ties. Historically, Russia has been one of India's most reliable defense partners. Discussions around the S-400 missile defense system and potential future collaborations in defense technology were central to the visit, enhancing India's military capabilities and contributing to regional stability. Western sanctions against Russia have led it to seek stronger ties with non-Western countries, including India. Both India and Russia advocate for a multipolar world order, balancing US influence. Modi's visit reflects India's independent foreign policy, maintaining strong ties with both the US and Russia. Energy security is a cornerstone of India's economic policy, and Russia plays a critical role with its vast oil and natural gas reserves. Modi's visit focused on long-term supply agreements, investments in energy infrastructure, and collaboration in nuclear energy projects, ensuring a stable and diver-

sified energy supply for India. Boosting bilateral trade and investment was another focal point. Despite historical ties, trade volumes between India and Russia have not reached their full potential. The visit aimed to address this by exploring new trade avenues in sectors like pharmaceuticals, information technology, and agriculture, promising long-term benefits for both economies. Modi's visit signifies a reaffirmation of traditional alliances. Reinforcing ties with Russia offers India a more balanced foreign policy amidst the US's increasingly transactional approach. The visit likely included discussions on expanding cooperation in space exploration and nuclear technology, fostering innovations that benefit both nations. Cybersecurity is crucial in the digital age. Modi's visit likely explored collaboration in these fields, ensuring both nations can safeguard their digital infrastructures and harness economic benefits. (Writer is a political analyst; views expressed are personal)



K S TOMAR

Parliament: Duty over disruption

The opposition can leverage parliament debates to engage with their constituencies but they often waste this opportunity by walkouts and protests



PRAFULL GORADIA

It is difficult to understand, especially since parliamentarians, appeared to overlook an essential of their vocation. That is, that the legislature usually does not take much time. The rest of the session is the opportunity for the opposition to demonstrate their talent and commitment through television. The ruling party or parties do not need the legislature except to have bills passed and enacted into law. If there are no laws that need to be passed urgently, the government and ruling party can do without the legislature virtually for an entire year. Of course, there remains the presenting and passing of the Budget, which can be legitimized only by the legislature, particularly the Lok Sabha. What has been stated hitherto has been well demonstrated by the state assemblies in India. They pass the odd bill once in a while, and the annual budget is the other essential item of business during the year. Most state legislative assemblies meet for three or four days at a time. Otherwise, for the few times they have to statutorily meet, each session is seldom for more than three or four days. However, the members of the legislative assemblies (MLAs) draw their pay and perks for the entire term of the legislative body. This applies to Parliament too, although it has the budget, monsoon and winter sessions, which are long enough. In short, to restate, most of the time the legislatures can work for the benefit of the opposition members, who can display their skills, knowledge, familiarity and touch with their constituencies. With the advent of full-time coverage by television channels—Sansad TV being a prominent one—a great advantage has fallen into the hands of the Opposition. This is a boon for them; it is a free and constant medium to, as it were, communicate with their constituencies. This institution was introduced around the time I was in Parliament. Back then, most Members who spoke made full



use of the television channels by speaking for as long as possible. During the question hour between 11 am and 12 pm, only five or six questions and their answers could be completed, instead of all twenty. The reason was that those who had asked the questions spent as long a time as possible over asking their supplementary question, which was a privilege to the Member(s). The ruling party/parties have a better opportunity of exposure than opposition parties generally get. Yet, the opposition mindlessly throws away a lot of the session time by walking out, protesting otherwise, compelling the Speaker to adjourn the House for several hours or even the rest of the day. July 2 was another example when the Prime Minister rose to thank the President for her inaugural speech. For well over two hours, groups of opposition members took turns shouting slogans in an attempt to drown the Prime Minister's address to Parliament, or perhaps even to prevent him from speaking. Little do they realize that most television channels were telecasting his speech live, duly cutting out the sloganeering.



THE OPPOSITION MINDLESSLY THROWS AWAY A LOT OF THE SESSION TIME BY WALKING OUT, PROTESTING OTHERWISE, COMPELLING THE SPEAKER TO ADJOURN THE HOUSE FOR SEVERAL HOURS OR EVEN THE REST OF THE DAY

The only people who could hear the PM's speech being disturbed by slogans were the Members of the Lok Sabha. All that the sloganeering Members gained was a reputation of being wasters, as members who cost the taxpayer a lot, merely to put in negative effort to try and prevent the Prime Minister from being heard. Each session and day of Parliament cost several crores of rupees. Each Member of Parliament costs several lakh rupees a year to serve the country and its people, and not to prevent Parliament from functioning. There are many better ways of protesting, such as, such as wearing black bends on one's sleeves, sometimes wearing black caps, or sometimes, dressed fully in black. Members can also refuse to take their seats for the entire day, instead, occupying the adjacent aisles for the duration of the session, as a mark of protest, but let the work go on. This would assure all the people, including their constituents that they are spending money on the functioning of Parliament with its thousands of employees constructively and in the interests of the nation. They should realize that the

British departed from India long ago, and such negative activities have no place in our country anymore. Let it be borne in mind that being elected to Parliament (or the state legislative assemblies) is a national duty more than the privilege it has come to be mistakenly understood. What we have witnessed over the two days of July 2 and 3 portends ill for the institution of democracy, which everyone, from the opposition parties to the media and academia, not to forget their cheerleaders overseas, keeps shouting is "under threat in India". But where is the real threat to democracy coming from? This needs to be clearly understood. No democracy can be threatened because its electorate gives a clear mandate for stable governance for a developed economy and a better future. It is the cavalier fashion in which certain parties—and political families living in a sense of entitlement—treat Parliament and its protocols and rules that are emerging as the real threat to democracy. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RBI'S NEW GUIDELINES FOR BANKS

Madam — According to a report, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has mandated that banks cannot label borrowers as frauds without giving them a hearing. Banks must now issue a 21-day show-cause notice before classifying an account as fraudulent. This decision follows a Supreme Court order. The RBI has instructed banks to develop a fraud risk management policy, approved by at least three board members, including one full-time director and two independent or non-executive directors, to ensure compliance with the principles of natural justice. Additionally, banks are required to update their Early Warning Signal (EWS) systems within six months, integrating data analytics to detect unusual patterns. The RBI has set a threshold of Rs. 1 crore for reporting frauds to the state police, with private banks also reporting to the Serious Fraud Investigation Office and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, while public sector banks report frauds above Rs. 6 crore to the CBI, as usual. In consortium lending, if separate offenses are committed, each member may file separate complaints; otherwise, one member can file a complaint with support from the others. In summary, the new RBI rule mandating a 21-day notice before classifying borrowers as frauds enhances borrowers' rights by allowing them to present their cases and defend against allegations, ensuring fair treatment. This rule will improve transparency, foster trust between borrowers and financial institutions, strengthen governance through board-approved risk management policies, and regulate and streamline the processes of borrowing and lending. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

THE PLIGHT OF GIG WORKERS

Madam — This letter addresses the plight of gig workers in our country. Gig workers are a pitiable lot. Regardless of the weather, they must fulfill their cus-

Defeating global warming



A well-defined quadrilateral encompassing solar, wind, green hydrogen, and nuclear clean energies as its four vertices is essential to effectively combat global warming and related weather catastrophes, which lead to loss of lives, assets, and properties. "Well-defined" means urgently establishing both global and national annual

targets for each of the four clean energy sources. What percentage should be allocated to solar energy? What percentage should be allocated to nuclear energy? And similarly, for wind and green hydrogen? Currently, the world lacks direction, resulting in slow progress towards achieving 100% clean energy and 0% carbon emissions. The "greater capacity" and "economic power" of nuclear energy, compared to the other three clean energies, cannot be ignored. Increasing the capacity of existing nuclear reactors is more economical than constructing new ones. It would be much better and safer if all nations signed a pact to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, such as generating clean energy and electricity, rather than for making bombs, weapons, and war paraphernalia. PV Madhu Nivriti | Secunderabad

tomers' demands. I used to wonder how much they earn by zipping and zapping on their bikes, risking their lives in India's urban jungle. My curiosity was answered when I saw a delivery boy working on a rainy day. The bags on his bike were covered with a plastic sheet, but he was drenched to the bone. Since then, I have made it a point to order via the "Cash on Delivery" mode, so that I can tip gig workers generously. Surprisingly, most of the time my tip is politely declined ("Arre sir, yeh to humara kaam hai") or accepted with reluctant embarrassment. Avinash Godbole | Dewas

STRENGTHENING INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS

Madam — In the neighboring country of Nepal, which borders India to the east, west, and south, KP Sharma Oli's appointment as Prime Minister was met with congratulations from PM Modi. India and Nepal have shared a deep bilateral relationship since early days, but the abolition of the monarchy in

2008 introduced challenges. Enhancing trade, investment, and infrastructure development can provide mutual economic benefits. Joint ventures in hydropower projects and tourism can foster economic interdependence. Promoting cultural and educational exchanges can strengthen people-to-people connections, building a stronger foundation for bilateral ties. Short-sighted and selfish politicians sought to please China, which exploited the situation. The Modi government must provide aid to Nepal and invigorate the relationship more than ever before, ensuring that Nepal does not feel the need to turn towards China, which would harm India's interests. India must infuse new energy into its relationship with Nepal, ensuring that both nations work together for mutual growth and regional stability. Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

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**FIRST COLUMN**
TAKE THINGS AS THEY COME

Accepting events as they happen brings a great sense of calmness



RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago in ancient China lived an old farmer who worked on his land for several years. One day his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, a group of neighbours came to commiserate with him. "Such misfortune," the agitated group of villagers reacted. "Maybe," the farmer replied nonchalantly. A few days later the horse returned, accompanied by three wild horses. Another group of villagers approached the house of the agriculturist to sympathise. "Maybe," replied the aged farmer.

The following day, the farmer's son tried to mount one of the untamed horses and was thrown off. The strapping youngster broke his leg. The overwrought neighbours once again queued up to offer their sympathies at this misadventure. "Maybe," was the desultory answer yet again. A few days later some military personnel swooped on the village to draft young men. Looking at the incapacitated stripling, he was disqualified from being recruited. The exuberant neighbours congratulated the old grazier on the turn of events. "Maybe," was the laconic reply yet again. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has succinctly elucidated the significance of the aphorism, 'to accept people and situations as they are' in his teachings.

The 4 Ds of Abnormal Behaviour

Abnormal behaviour can be construed as behaviour that is disturbing (socially unacceptable), distressing, maladaptive (or self-defeating) and often the result of distorted thoughts (cognitions) as per Wikipedia. There are four strains in this abnormal behaviour. These are deviance, dysfunction, distress, and danger. Deviant behaviour is usually different, extreme, and unusual and could even include bizarre behavioural patterns. The second in the series is distressing behaviour.

People who are related to such individuals feel unpleasant and unsettled in their presence. Dysfunctional behaviour discommodates the patient to such an extent that it acts as a deterrent in his day-to-day functioning and behaviour and interferes with his range of activities. Five specific patterns of anxiety disorders fall into this category. The first is termed General Anxiety Disorder. This is a prolonged, vague, quite inexplicable fear having no objective basis, accompanied by hypervigilance, and attached motor tension of the brain. Next is what in quotidian parlance



is called panic disorder. These are none other than perpetual and frequent anxiety attacks which are accompanied by psychological symptoms such as breathlessness, palpitations, a trembling feeling, dizziness and even a sense of total loss of control over the self.

Next in the line of mental disorders are phobias. Humans have irrational phobias such as Acrophobia (fear of heights), Glossophobia (fear of addressing an audience), Claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces), and Aviophobia (fear of flying). In such situations, a human being is preoccupied with a wide range of thoughts, which are normally irrational. Last, but not less distressing – on this ill-fated checklist is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These individuals suffer repeated and recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, impaired concentration, and emotional numbing which invariably follows traumatic or stressful events. Our country is plagued by three major issues namely, addictions, women's issues, and psychological disorders. Generally, citizens approach tantriks, babas, and quacks hoping for a miraculous cure. It is paramount to meet a qualified medical practitioner. The first step to recovery is medication under the expert guidance of a doctor. Next, after a period of treatment, it would be prudent to contact self-help groups, which sustain the treatment. For instance, undergoing the Happiness Course of the Art of Living, where one learns the Sudarshan Kriya breathing technique which harmonises the body and thought. "No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again," said Gautama Buddha.

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

Focus on employment, innovation and skill



DINESH SOOD

The Union Budget 2024 must factor in rising unemployment and need for innovation for boosting the economy and sustaining economic growth



The upcoming Union Budget on July 23 will shed light on initiatives that may reshape economic priorities under the Modi3.0 government. Amid various expectations and commitments, the government's focus on skills, employment, and innovation emerges as a key strategy in addressing current challenges and shaping future opportunities. The decision to rename the Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development to include livelihood emphasizes a shift to provide employable skills to the most vulnerable 67 per cent of the country's underprivileged population.

Placing skill development ahead of employment underscores a proactive approach to addressing the issue of a shortage of skilled workforce, especially in the health & wellness, manufacturing, and technology sectors. This not only recognizes the immediate need for a trained workforce but also positions skill development as a key driver for sustainable employment generation. As the Budget approaches, stakeholders across sectors eagerly await concrete measures that go beyond mere promises and lead to tangible outcomes. The effectiveness of these initiatives in translating into job creation, technological innovation, and sustainable economic growth will be carefully scrutinized. The government's steadfast commitment to enhancing skills holds the promise of unleashing India's potential as a global economic powerhouse in the years ahead.

The rebranding and revitalization of the 15-year-old National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) as the Skill India Mission under PM Narendra Modi has sparked concerns about the effectiveness of the ambitious Skill India program. This program has received support from two governments over 15 years — first the UPA and then the NDA. India is in the midst of an urgent unemployment crisis due to an employment



SKILL INDIA WAS DESIGNED TO ATTRACT UNSKILLED YOUNG PEOPLE AND EQUIP THEM FOR THE JOB MARKET, BUT UNEMPLOYMENT RATES REMAIN HIGH

deficit. Issues such as the delayed implementation of PMKVY 3.0 and lack of placement support are exacerbating this problem. The latest data underlines the severity of India's unemployment crisis, making it crucial to prioritize employment generation to confront the challenges facing the Indian economy, especially with a significant number of young people entering the working age each month.

In July 2015, PM Modi stated that "Skill India aims to build self-confidence among the underprivileged, rather than just providing jobs". However, nearly a decade later, the youth's interest in the program seems to be waning. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has implemented strict attendance monitoring and centralized student information. Unfortunately, this has led to a decline in student retention, with many dropping out due to the rigid attendance requirements. Skill India was designed to attract unskilled young people and equip them for the job market, but unemployment rates remain high. Data from the International Labour Organization reveals that the proportion of educated unemployed individuals has risen sharply from 35.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2023. Established in 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship absorbed the NSDC and other programs to train 300 million people by 2024. Despite partnering with various organizations and raising awareness, the programs have not been as effective as envisioned. Experts argue that even traditional degrees do not guarantee employment, and the education system is outdated and not job-focused. Only a small percentage

of candidates certified by the PMKVY program have found jobs, indicating a fundamental challenge with the current skilling initiatives. Boosting skilling programs and industry partnerships is an urgent necessity to create ongoing skilling avenues and improve employability for school dropouts, and unskilled, or semi-skilled workers who need to secure a livelihood.

Although the announcement of setting up 75 skilling e-labs for simulated learning in the 2022-23 Union Budget is a positive move, we must recognize that our problem is far-reaching. API-based trusted skill credentials and discovery layers to find relevant jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities won't suffice beyond a certain point, necessitating an urgent need to skill the masses and empower the country's youths. We must acknowledge that over 40% of Indians aged 15 to 24 are neither in education, employment, or training, which is significantly higher than the South Asian (30%) and global (24%) averages. Indian firms report substantial skill shortages compared to other countries, and they assess only about 46% of graduates as employable.

The majority of students lack the necessary skills, and the skills they do possess are not aligned with the needs of their employers. Every year, more than 12 million young people in India become employable, yet we are unable to absorb them into the workforce. Many of these individuals hold higher education degrees, but they lack the necessary employable skills. The India Skills Report (ISR) 2024 highlights that only 50.3% of graduates from higher educational institutions are deemed employable. A skill gap study conducted

by the NSDC during 2010-14 indicates that by 2025, India will need nearly 109.7 million additional skilled workers across various sectors. While the government's interventions in promoting skill development are commendable, more needs to be done to bridge the skill gaps. Wish List: In the 2024-25 Union Budget, it is crucial to prioritize upskilling initiatives for gig workers, due to the eight-fold increase in young people's participation in the gig economy from 2019 to 2023, the majority of these youth come from Tier-I and Tier-II cities and rural areas.

While the government is working to make employable skills more accessible through public-private partnerships, there is a need to facilitate and incentivize the establishment of more skill development universities to steer the youth, especially undergraduates towards skills. This will help align the skill courses with global standards and significantly enhance the youth's skills, contributing to the nation's workforce development. I strongly urge a significant budget allocation to provide employable skills, particularly to school dropouts on a priority basis. This will not only empower them but also significantly contribute to the growth of the Indian economy, aiming to reach \$7 trillion by 2030 and position India as the world's third-largest economy.

(The writer is Co-Founder and MD, of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres; Views expressed are personal)

Kerala: Beyond the well-crafted image of a tidy, literate State

Behind its progressive facades lies a struggle with industrial stagnation, healthcare shortcomings, and a surprising reliance on superstition

The assumption among the people outside Kerala is that it is the most literate, intelligent and hygienic State in the country. The ruling CPI(M) leaves no stone unturned to portray it as the land of people with a scientific temper and is the numero uno in all spheres of life. There are no countries in the world where you will not find expatriate Malayalees. S.K Pottekkadu, the best travel writer the State has produced in the last 150 years has written articulately about the Keralites whom he met in South Africa and Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) even in the days when there were no diplomatic ties between India and these countries. The modern-day reality of Kerala is entirely different and far from



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

what is projected by the CPI(M). Malayalees are leaving en masse from Kerala to Europe, Australia, the USA, Canada, Latin America, Africa and of course the West Asian countries in search of livelihood and for higher studies. There are no major industries worth their names in the State other than some public sector companies like FACT, Cochin Refineries and Cochin Shipyard. Industrialists and entrepreneurs have translo-

cated their enterprises to neighbouring States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The claim by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his minister of health Veena George that the State is a role model in health care and well-being for the rest of the country and the world is a great joke. The chief minister boards the first available flight to the USA whenever he is afflicted with the common cold. Recently, a four-year-old girl was admitted to Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode for the removal of her sixth finger.

However, the doctor who performed the surgery operated on her tongue while leaving the finger untouched. Though her parents alerted the hospi-

tal authorities, the initial reaction was denial of the faux pas by the latter.

Remember, the Kozhikode Medical College and Hospital is a most sought-after institution by prospective medical students! This is not an isolated incident as such things happen quite regularly in the State's government hospitals. The doctors have their justification for such mistakes. Most of them say they are overworked and underpaid. When they work under pressure, such errors are bound to happen, claim the doctors! The aim of this column is not to embarrass the doctors or their minister of health who was a mere news reader in one of the many TV news channels that have mushroomed in the State over the last two decades.

The recent controversy about sorcerers digging out (or mining?) copper plates, miniature artefacts and bones of some birds like hens or ducks from the residence and office of K Sudhakaran MP who is president of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee is an issue that shows the large scale obscurantism prevailing among the descendants of Jawaharlal Nehru, the wholesale dealer of scientific temper. According to sources close to Sudhakaran, the sorcery was the handiwork of people in the party itself who wanted to see the KPCC chief remain in bed for the rest of his life.

There are black magicians across Kerala who have the "expertise" to neutralize one's enemies or help you to become a minister or even chief min-

ister! This is not an exaggerated statement as this writer himself has spoken to a sorcerer who was into this kind of business for decades.

When Oommen Chandi was the chief minister (2011-2016), there was this Congress leader who felt left out during the formation of the UDF Government. When his efforts to become a minister failed, he approached a sorcerer from Malabar who offered the former to make him a minister and that too with a plum portfolio by performing puja. The sorcerer said that witchcraft had to be done and it would cost the politician Rs 12 lakh and the latter accepted the proposal with glee. The magician rang up this writer and said that the puja would begin the next morning

and the politician would become the minister in three months. Presto, in three months, the politician was sworn in as a minister with a coveted portfolio! The story did not end there. The sorcerer was not paid the promised money and he had to warn the politician that he had the know-how to get the minister dismissed from the government.

Last heard, the politician (nay, minister) hushed up the issue by paying half the amount he had agreed to pay earlier. Politicians cheating the electorate is quite common but hoodwinking even wizards and warlocks is new information. Sorcery and black magic are not confined to Kerala. They are a global phenomenon with even our Dravidian politi-

cians who swear by rationalism seeking guidance from astrologers, wizards and sorcerers for survival. Some of the countries that played in the World Cup football championship in the 1970s and 1980s used to have an official sorcerer for the team. His mission is to perform witchcraft near the rival team's goalposts to ensure that the ball enters the post without failure! If you feel that sorcery is restricted to politics, business and sports, you are mistaken, Sir. There are many instances of it being used by scientific researchers in the US and Russia. Wait for another occasion.

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

MONEY MATTERS

Seeds Fincap raises US\$ 8.5 mn from Lok, Matrix

Non-bank lender Seeds Fincap on Wednesday said it has raised USD 8.5 million (about Rs 70 crore) in funding led by Lok Capital and Matrix Partners India. The small businesses-focused lender will be using the funds to expand lending capabilities, enhance technological infrastructure, and broaden branch footprint, as per an official statement. The Gurugram-based company provides secured and unsecured loans of up to Rs 5 lakh, it said, adding that the MSME segment is underserved by the lenders at present, which has created a credit deficit of Rs 8 lakh crore. "Our thesis is to invest in high-quality businesses serving this segment with tailored 'right-tech', contextual credit products, especially in underserved geographies like North and Central India," Matrix Partners India managing director Vikram Vaidyanathan said. The 2021-established Seeds has 90 branches in eight states.



Industry body seeks ban on import of chlorinated gloves

Industry body Indian Rubber Gloves Manufacturers Association (IRGMA) on Wednesday urged the government to ban the import of chlorinated gloves to enhance safety in hospitals and healthcare professionals. "It is time that these spurious imports and usage of chlorinated gloves be curbed as it is detrimental to the health of both healthcare providers and patients, and for their safety the government and the authorities must make firm implementations that impede the spurious circulation and import of chlorinated gloves," IRGMA president Sunil Patwari said in a statement. IRGMA further sought that the gloves for government hospitals should be procured through GeM (Government e Marketplace) having BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) approval, which conforms to the consideration and implementation of QCO (Quality Control Order).



Hinduja Tech to acquire Tecosim Group for 21 mn euros

Hinduja Tech Ltd, a subsidiary of commercial vehicle maker Ashok Leyland, on Wednesday said it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Germany-based Tecosim Group for 21 million euros (about Rs 190 crore). This strategic acquisition broadens Hinduja Tech's presence in the European and international markets and solidifies its position as a leading provider of mobility engineering services worldwide, the company said in a statement. In a regulatory filing, Ashok Leyland said the transaction was carried out at an enterprise value of 21 million euros. Headquartered in Wiesbaden, Germany, the group is into the development of technological solutions that promote sustainable transport, safe and clean energy supply, and a competitive industrial landscape. Tecosim recorded a turnover of 40 million euros in 2023.



Cabinet to soon decide on IPEF's clean, fair economy agreements

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet will soon take a decision on the commerce ministry's proposal to seek approval for signing of 14-member IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity) bloc's agreements on clean and fair economy, an official said. Last month in Singapore, 13 IPEF bloc members signed these agreements, while India stated that it would ink the deals after getting domestic approval. The official said the commerce ministry has sent both parts to the cabinet secretariat and soon the cabinet will take it up for approval. Agreement on a clean economy intends to accelerate efforts of IPEF partners towards energy security and transition, climate resilience and adaptation, GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions mitigation; find/develop innovative ways of reducing dependence on fossil fuel energy; promote



technical cooperation, workforce development, capacity building, and research collaborations; and collaborate to facilitate development, access, and deployment of clean energy and climate-friendly technologies. The agreement will facilitate investments, concessional financing, joint collaborative projects, workforce development and technical assistance. Further, the agreement on fair economy intends to create a more transparent and pre-

dictable business environment which can spur greater trade and investment in the markets of member countries; enhance efforts to prevent and combat corruption by strengthening anti-corruption frameworks, support efforts to improve tax transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes between competent authorities. The 14-member IPEF bloc was launched jointly by the US and other partner countries of the Indo-Pacific region on May 23, 2022, in Tokyo.

Together, they account for 40 per cent of the world's economic output and 28 per cent of trade. The framework is structured around four pillars relating to trade, supply chains, clean economy, and fair economy. India has joined all the pillars except the trade. Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the US, and Vietnam are members of the bloc. On November 14, 2023, the IPEF concluded negotiations for a clean economy, fair economy, and the overarching agreement on the IPEF for Prosperity. These two agreements will enter into force after at least five IPEF partners complete their internal legal procedures for ratification, acceptance or approval. The bloc has already signed the agreement on supply chain in November 2023.



Zydus inks licensing pact with Takeda to sell GERD drug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Zydus Lifesciences on Wednesday said it has inked a licensing pact with Takeda to market a drug for the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). The company has entered into a non-exclusive patent licensing agreement with Takeda Pharmaceutical Company to market the novel Potassium Competitive Acid Blocker (P-CAB) Vonoprazan in India, the drug firm said in a statement. The drug will be marketed under the brand name Vault in the country, it added. Under the terms of this agreement.

'No takers for 18 lakh jobs in financial services sector'

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

A top official of the FPSB India (Financial Planning Standards Board) here on Wednesday said India is facing the issue of unemployment in the financial services sector because there were no takers of nearly 18 lakhs jobs last year. GIFT City in Gandhinagar, which employs nearly 6,000 people in the financial services sector, will generate nearly 1.5 lakh jobs in this sector in the next five years, FPSB India CEO Krishan Mishra told here on Wednesday. "Last year, as per the data provided by the National Career Services portal of the central government, India created 46.86 lakh jobs in financial services. Of those, only 27.5 lakh jobs were filled. It shows that there were no takers for 18 lakh jobs. This is because of unemployment. Jobs are there, but people are not capable enough to take them up," said Mishra. "Banks, insurance companies, brokerage houses and



Of those, only 27.5 lakh jobs were filled. It shows that there were no takers for 18 lakh jobs. This is because of unemployment. Jobs are there, but people are not capable enough to take them up," said Mishra

mutual fund companies are always in need of trained people. If you conduct an online job search, you will find that there are about 40 times as many jobs as the number of Certified Financial Planner (CFP) professionals available," he said. FPSB India is the Indian subsidiary of Financial Planning Standards Board Ltd (FPSB Ltd) -- the global standards-setting body for the financial planning profession and owner of the international Certified Financial Planner (CFP) certification pro-

gramme. At present, there are 2,731 CFP professionals in India against 2.23 lakh worldwide. By 2030, there will be around 10,000 CFPs in India against the requirement of 1,00,000 due to huge demand, said Mishra. "Personal finance was ignored in India. People thought financial planning is for the elite. But, in reality, wealth management is for the elite while financial planning is for everyone. We need to be financially educated," said Mishra.

'Current GST rate for PVs outdated; needs a relook'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The current GST rate structure of passenger vehicles in India is outdated and needs to be aligned with the new developments in the auto industry, according to JSW MG Motor India CEO Emeritus Rajeev Chhaba. The government should consider the overall perspective of vehicular emissions, reduction of import bill, sustainable local supply chain and total cost of ownership while formulating policies on the auto sector, he added. Amid speculations that hybrid vehicles could be considered for tax incentives ahead of the Union Budget, he



said only the strong 'plug-in' hybrids, which have the capability to also run as a battery electric vehicle independent from the internal combustion engine, should be considered for such benefits. "Earlier, we said the size of the car was sub-four meters. We said 1.2-liter engine.

Corporate funding in solar sector dips 10% to US\$ 16.6 bn: Mercom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Total corporate funding in the solar sector globally fell by 10 per cent to USD 16.6 billion in January-June 2024 due to uncertainties in major markets including the US, according to Mercom Capital. In the first half of 2023, the global solar energy sector attracted USD 18.5 billion of investment, the US-based research firm said in a report. "Total corporate funding, including venture capital/private equity (VC) funding, public market, and debt financing, in 1H 2024 totaled USD 16.6 billion compared to USD 18.5 billion raised in 1H 2023. The



number of deals increased 9 per cent to 87 deals in 1H 2024 compared to 80 during the same period last year," the 'Solar Funding and M&A Report' said. "This has happened because of uncertainties in major mar-

kets. The financing activity in the solar sector remains restrained despite tailwinds from the Inflation Reduction Act and favourable global policies," said Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group. Besides, high interest rates, an uncertain rate trajectory and timeline, increasing trade barriers, supply chain challenges, concerns about the US presidential election's impact on the sector, and constantly evolving trade policies have created an unpredictable and uncertain climate. This has slowed down development, investments, and decision-making, he added. In the first half of 2024.



Small stocks reap big gains; BSE midcap gauge jumps 30%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Smaller stocks have emerged as markets' favourites so far this year, giving big returns to investors amid optimism over the country's macroeconomic fundamentals and surge in domestic liquidity. Till July 16 this year, the BSE midcap gauge has jumped 10,984.72 points or 29.81 per cent, while the smallcap index has surged 11,628.13 points or 27.24 per cent. In comparison, the BSE 30-share benchmark Sensex has rallied 8,476.29 points or 11.73 per cent so far this year. "The primary reason for the outperformance of mid-

cap and smallcap stocks is the surge in domestic liquidity. A substantial amount of domestic money is flowing into these segments through mutual funds, portfolio management services (PMS), and direct investments," said Sunil Nyati, Managing Director, Swastika Investmart Ltd. We are currently in a structural bull market, where midcap and smallcap stocks tend to outperform, he noted. "While largecap stocks have also performed well, they have lagged behind midcap and smallcap stocks due to selling by foreign institutional investors (FIIs)," Nyati added.



'Measures expected promote investments in clean energy sector'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is expected to announce a slew of measures in the full Budget for fiscal year 2024-25 to promote investments in the renewable energy space, experts say. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the

2024-25 Union Budget in Parliament on July 23. Their expectation is that the government may announce policy-related measures, viability gap funding (VGF) and incentive schemes for the clean energy industry, the experts said. "We expect the focus of the budget to remain green

growth based... We expect the budget to focus more on renewables, storage, transmission and distribution network strengthening schemes. "We expect policy measures to incentivise, and to encourage investments in (battery) storage groups," Girishkumar Kadam, Senior Vice President

& Group Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA Ltd said. There is a slow progress being witnessed in pumped storage projects (PSP) space. Some policy bridges need to be announced to expedite the implementation of these projects as these are going to be very systemically.

NEW MANUFACTURING COS

PWC for extension of beneficial tax regime

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tax consultancy firm PWC has urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to extend the beneficial tax regime for new manufacturing companies and introduce a comprehensive tax amnesty scheme for cases related to Customs. Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for 2024-25 on July 23. "I think the Make in India is the first thing which comes to mind, and you will recall that in 2019, the government introduced a 15 per cent rate for new manufacturing companies, which lapsed on March 31, 2024. "I think that is one extension, which is being expected, and the expectation is also that



and make it viable, feasible and that's the first bit," said Sandeep Puri, Partner, Price Waterhouse & Co LLP. Section 115BAB of the Income Tax Act offers a concessional tax rate of 15 per cent for new domestic manu-

facturing companies. Initially, this benefit was available for companies set up and registered after October 1, 2019, and commencing production by March 31, 2023, which was later extended to March 31, 2024, to account for delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. PwC has also made a case for the introduction of a comprehensive tax amnesty scheme under Customs to clear past litigations on the lines similar to the Sabka Vishwas Legacy Dispute Resolution Scheme, 2019, for pre-GST era indirect taxes and Vivad Se Vishwas scheme for Income tax. As part of the amnesty scheme, the government could provide a partial waiver of the duty in dispute, depending on

the quantum involved and a complete waiver of interest and penalty. On Tuesday, Sitharaman participated in a traditional 'halwa' ceremony, marking the final stage for preparation of the Union Budget 2024-25 to be unveiled on July 23 in the Lok Sabha. The ceremony is a ritual in which traditional dessert 'halwa' is prepared and served to officials and staff members of the finance ministry who are involved in the preparation of the budget. It is organised in the basement of the North Block, which houses the ministry in the national capital and is attended by the finance minister and other high-ranking officials.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds in Italy and discussed plans to take forward the negotiations on the proposed free trade agreement, an official statement said on Wednesday. The bilateral meeting took place on the sidelines of the G7 Trade Ministers' meeting at Reggio Calabria, Italy. The India-UK talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general elec-

India, UK trade ministers discuss plan on proposed FTA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

tion cycles. "Goyal congratulated Mr. Jonathan Reynolds on his appointment and discussed

deepening bilateral economic relations. The conversation included plans to take forward the discussions on FTA between India and the UK," the commerce ministry said. In an FTA, two or more trading partners either signif-



icantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they also ease norms to promote and facilitate trade in services and investments. There are pending issues in both goods and services sectors. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.



VICKY KAUSHAL RECALLS THE TIME WHEN HIS DAD CONTEMPLATED SUICIDE!

While promoting his next movie, *Bad Newz*, Vicky Kaushal thought back to his father Shyam Kaushal's hardships in Punjab before moving to Mumbai and becoming a well-known action director in movies. Vicky said in an interview with Raj Shamani that his father had even considered suicide due to his unemployment, while the actor talked about switching to acting after studying engineering and "getting a job and passing with good marks."

"My parents were very happy with the idea of me having a regular (9-5) job. My grandfather had a small kirane ki dukaan (grocery shop) in our village in Punjab. That's where my parents are from. Dad came to Mumbai in 1978. He had an MA in English literature, but he was still jobless. We had no land back there (in Punjab). One day, after drinking with his friends, he declared that he wanted to die. My grandfather became very concerned, so he sent him to Mumbai with a friend."

He also went on to recall, "In Mumbai, my dad was willing to work as a sweeper even because he knew that nobody in the village would get to know. My dad's youth was full of struggles. There's no job security in this field. While you're working on one project, you're wondering if you'll find something else next. My family was genuinely very happy that finally someone was going

to have a stable income, job security, and off days. He (my father) was so happy. He felt like his struggles had finally paid off. But I just knew that I couldn't do a conventional 9-to-5 job. I had an offer letter, I'd passed with good marks... but I knew that I'd become depressed if I went ahead with it."

Before receiving his big break as an independent action director in 1990, Sham spent several years working as a stuntman. He has over 40 years of experience in the field and has contributed to Hollywood and Bollywood motion pictures. His debut Malayalam action film, *Indrajaalam* (1990), was directed by him. Sham has directed action scenes in Bollywood movies, including *Padmaavat* (2018), *Sanju* (2018), *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013), *PK* (2014) and *Simmba* (2018). Additionally, he has contributed to international productions including *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), which won an Academy Award.

Emma Roberts gets engaged!

Actress Emma Roberts recently got engaged. The *We're The Millers* actress posted a photo to Instagram featuring her fiancé, Cody John, whom she has been dating for a long time. Emma captioned the picture with a LOL, writing, "Putting this here before my mom (Kelly Cunningham) tells everyone." Emma is seen in the picture flashing her engagement ring. Lindsay Lohan commented in the comments area, saying "Congrats." The pair was congratulated by Nina Dobrev. Isla Fisher used several heart emojis in the post's comments section. During a Table for Two podcast with Bruce Bozzi,

Emma, whose father is Eric Roberts and aunt is Julia Roberts, stated, "That's the thing that I always talk about—people kind of only see your wins because they only see them when you're on the poster of a movie. They don't see all the rejection along the way. That's why I'm always very open about things I've auditioned for but haven't gotten the part for. I think it's important to talk about; otherwise, people just think everything's been so great, linear, and easy, and no, it's not at all. But of course, it looks like that to the outside perspective or to the naked eye."



Saba Azad back in action as Dr. Vidhushi

After the roaring success of its debut season, *Who's your Gynaec* is all set for another chapter, packed with more humour, drama and heartfelt moments, as the shoot of its highly anticipated second season goes on floors. Created and produced by The Viral Fever, the second season brings back the cherished cast of Saba Azad, Karishma Singh, Aaron Arjun Koul, Kunal Thakur and Vibha Chibber. The upcoming season will delve into the overarching theme of balance, following a new chapter in Vidushi's life as she oscillates between her career, friendship, family and a blossoming romance!

As her professional responsibilities grow, so do her personal challenges, especially her relationship with Arth and her friendship with Swara. But the burning question remains: Will she be able to juggle multiple priorities? Saba Azad expressed her excitement about reprising her role as Vidushi, sharing, "The love we received for *Season 1* was amazing. I'm just so happy we can tell more of Vidushi's story. I can't wait to play the ups and downs of her journey in *Season 2*. What's most delightful about Vidushi's struggles and triumphs is how real and relatable they are. I think everyone will be able to see a little bit of themselves in her story. The kindness and support from our fans has been so wonderful and we're excited to bring them more laughs, tears, and memorable moments with this new season."

TVF drops new trailer for Arranged Couple!

TVF has always struck the right chord with its audience through its relatable shows and their show, *Arranged Couple*, is proof of the same. The new trailer has been released, presenting another shade of married life. The new trailer for TVF's *Arranged Couple* has been released and it's truly amazing. The way the story covers the different ups and downs of married life between a couple is really relatable.



BLAKE LIVELY TO BE THE LADY DEADPOOL IN DEADPOOL AND WOLVERINE?



Less than ten days remain until the release of *Deadpool and Wolverine* and excitement is finally beginning to grow. The primary actors, Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman, have not been able to create the kind of buzz around the movie that one would have expected from a *Deadpool and Wolverine* team-up, despite going on a global press tour. However, it appears that some girl power may finally work. Disney released a new trailer for the movie on Wednesday, which gave fans a look at "Lady Deadpool" and it quickly

became popular on social media. A variety of Deadpools landing during an action set piece are depicted in the latest promotional video. Three Deadpools are available: a doggy Deadpool, a cowboy Deadpool and, most intriguing of all, a blonde Lady Deadpool. Fans started making assumptions about who might be portraying the part as soon as the teaser was released. The majority assumed—and hoped—that star Blake Lively, Ryan Reynolds' real-life wife, would be involved in the film.

Dave Bautista reveals doing higher-value action in My Spy: The Eternal City



Back on popular demand, *My Spy*'s dynamic duo, veteran CIA operative JJ (Dave Bautista) and his 14-year-old step-daughter and protégé, Sophie (Chloe Coleman), are all set to reunite to save the world yet again! The eagerly awaited sequel to *My Spy*, a 2020 action comedy, *My Spy: The Eternal City* returns as a feel-good family adventure, set in some of Europe's most storied destinations. Dave Bautista, a former WWE wrestler, kicked off his acting career in 2006 with a role in the iconic TV series, *Smallville*. He has since become a sought-after leading man, appearing in dozens of films, including three installments of the *Guardians of the Galaxy* – *Spectre*, *Blade Runner 2049* and *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*. Praising Bautista, *My Spy*'s Director Peter Segal said, "When you get Dave Bautista in your movie, you know you're going to get great action and great emotion. The guy's a fantastic actor."

Sharing his views on his upcoming action flick, Dave Bautista revealed his experience of returning to a role he has cherished since the original film. "I was comfortable with the character from the first day," he recalls. "I

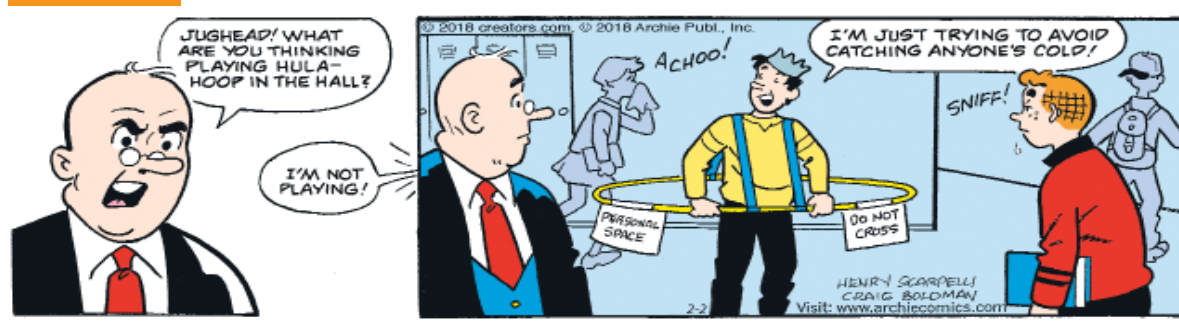
never had to wonder if I was going to click with my cast mates or director. I could fall right back into it." Bautista gets to show off his knack for physical comedy as well as his chiseled physique in full bloom for high-octane action set pieces in this much-awaited spy comedy. "I'm doing a lot more action overall and it's a higher-value action. There's more at stake in the story so the action sequences have to be world-class. And I'd say the film is epic."

Alongside Bautista and Chloe, familiar faces Ken Jeong and Kristen

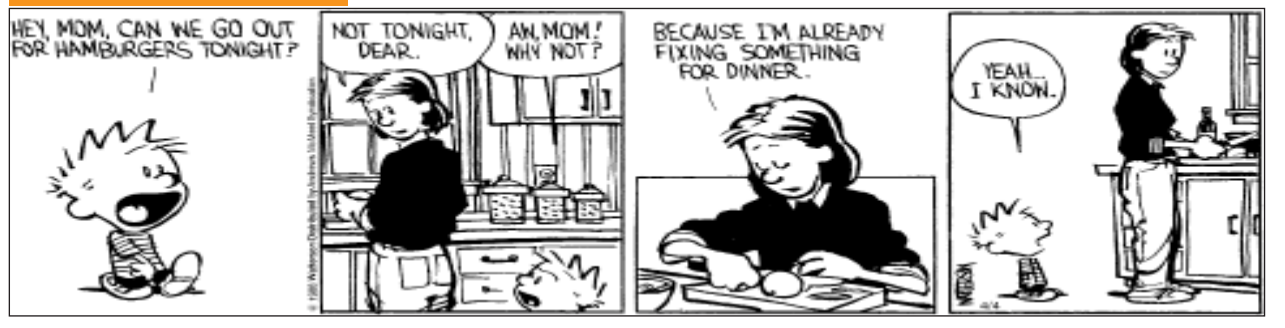
Schaal reprise their roles, joined by Anna Farris, Craig Robinson and Flula Borg, in this all-new international action comedy from director Peter Segal of *Get Smart* and *50 First Dates* fame. The much anticipated sequel takes the drama and action a notch higher as the duo travels abroad, Sophie's high school choir tour of Italy is interrupted by a nefarious nuclear plot targeting the Vatican. *My Spy: The Eternal City* will stream exclusively on Prime Video in India and across 240+ countries and territories worldwide from today.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



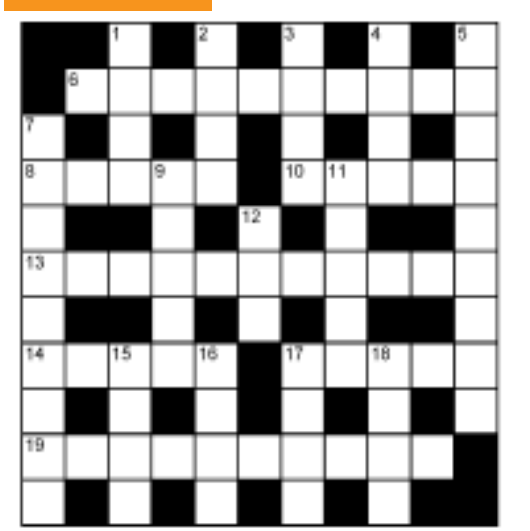
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



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Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



Vijayawada

The past week of **Bigg Boss OTT3** saw the eviction of tarot card reader **Munisha Khatwani**. In an exclusive chat with **The Pioneer**, she speaks of her eviction, contestants being image-conscious and also discusses the incident between **Armaan Malik** and **Vishal**



LAVANYA GUDELLI: **Aspire to inspire, before you expire**



goals. Her father's unwavering support and sacrifices were crucial, despite his lack of formal education. She navigated numerous challenges, from finding college notifications in newspapers to securing admission to an MTC women's college. "I didn't even know it was a women's college when I joined," she laughed, recalling her surprise at finding herself among 200 girls.

Despite insecurities and feelings of inferiority, Lavanya persevered. She switched from engineering to BSc Electronics in correspondence and completed her degree. "When you're passionate about something and you're genuine, you get second chances," she affirmed, her words resonating with a profound truth. Lavanya's first exposure to social work came through an internship with the

Youth Empowerment Foundation. Her zeal for social service and leadership skills quickly shone through.

In July 2018, Lavanya conceptualised 'Be The Change Foundation', inspired by the Gandhian quote, "Be the change that you want to see in the world." Without social media influence or the ability to travel extensively, she gathered over 200 volunteers through a WhatsApp group for their first event, a massive food distribution on Independence Day. "That was the first ever offline event I have done in a big range," she said proudly,

her eyes shining with the memory. Her journey, throughout has had its own challenges.

Health issues, including a bout of facial paralysis and personal struggles did not deter her.

"Despite the challenges, I got my first award in Ravindra Bharati in 2018, followed by the National Youth Icon Award in 2019," she recounted, her voice filled with pride. Lavanya did face criticism from her parents, who initially did not understand her dedication towards social service. "They told me, 'You are not a *crorepati* to go and donate things. First, make money. But money can't make you a rich person. It's your passion and dedication,'" she asserted with conviction.

Be The Change Foundation focuses on various initiatives, with menstrual hygiene and health being a significant area of impact. Lavanya reflected on the success of their event, 'She Inspires' conferences, which acknowledge and celebrate women from diverse backgrounds. "We have done four years of complete She Inspires conferences. This August 15, we are completing six years successfully for Be The Change," she announced.

Focusing primarily on menstrual hygiene and health, especially in slum areas, she explained, "We give free pads and have our associate partners. We tied up with non-profit brands only." The impact of this initiative is significant, reaching over 10,000 women, both directly and indirectly.

Her personal passion extends beyond physical health to mental health. "Many people are suffering with a lot of trauma, a lot of disappointment and a lot of suicidal thoughts," she noted.

To address these issues, she actively engages with various communities. "I go to colleges, schools, orphan homes and curate events. I deliver talks on why we should see life in a positive light," she explained.

Lavanya's role as a guest speaker on YouTube and other platforms further amplifies her message of hope and resilience.

Lavanya's journey underscores passion and the profound impact of individual determination. "We have to do something before we expire. Always aspire to inspire," she concluded, her words a powerful reminder of the impact one individual can have on the world.



AARTI SREENATH

Lavanya Gudelli, a radiant example of hope and fortitude, shared her inspiring journey and the profound motivations that shaped her into the dynamic community leader she is today. As the founder of Be The Change Foundation, her story is a testament to perseverance, passion and the indomitable human spirit.

"The motivation started when I was studying in the 6th grade in my village," Lavanya began with her voice filled with nostalgia. Her true inspiration came from none other than Mother Teresa. She recalled how she was always inclined to give back to the community, even as a young, reserved and introverted child. "Children can get addicted to video games or bad things, but if tuned in the right way, they can create wonders," she emphasised, highlighting the importance of guiding youth towards positive endeavours.

Her spirituality played a significant role in her early life. Missionary books deeply influenced her values and outlook on life. "I am always a giver," she said with conviction. "I don't read missionary books now, but at the time, I used to." Despite the lack of resources and support, her inherent drive to serve others never wavered.

Her educational journey was marked by significant challenges. She was an engineering student in computer science but couldn't complete it due to some personal and financial struggles. "We were four kids and my father, was an auto driver, while my mother worked as a maid. I'm the only graduate from my entire bloodline," she explained.

Despite all of the setbacks, she never lost sight of her



'Entering *BB* house without strategies went against me'

TEJAL SINHA

Rightly termed India's most controversial show, *Bigg Boss* stands out to be true to it. The ongoing *Bigg Boss OTT 3* has certainly been around multiple controversies. Just as the format brings in—also comes the weekly eviction.

The past week saw the exit of Tarot card reader Munisha Khatwani and also the season's first rule break—violence by YouTuber Armaan Malik.

As we get into a chat with the former contestant, though she felt she had the potential to hang in there at the house for more time, she has no regrets about getting out of the house either. "My journey has been very interesting. The show has been memorable for me, especially with all the personal equations that I have made with Lovekesh and Vishal. The best relationship I formed is very clear to everybody; it's with Love, Vishal and everybody knows they are brothers to me and these are the only true relationships I could form in the house."

While many would initially be skeptical about getting into the show, the former actress wasn't really skeptical but rather excited. "Since there was a lot of back and forth in my process, I was finalised pretty late. I got to know that I was entering the *Bigg Boss* house at the very last moment. So yeah, I was excited to get in, though I should have been skeptical (she giggles)."

The fights, the friendship breaks, the backstabs and all the negativity around have been pretty evident for the avid viewers of the show. In fact, Munisha too felt that living with the negativity and politics in the house was the most challenging and difficult part of the show. She believes that she could survive with less food, fewer facilities, or even with no communication, but the negativity and politics just got to her.

"Entering the house with no strategies went against me," says Khatwani, who is, however, proud of the fact that she was stuck with Lovekesh and Vishal till the very end. But again,

"Being honest and introverted doesn't turn out well because I think you need to play differently as you enter the house and I feel I am not capable of that."

However, being spiritual did help her out in the best way possible.

She does feel that with her background in tarot reading, she found out the true aura of her fellow contestants, which turned out to be difficult for her to vibe with them. "I could see that most of them are not authentic."

A lot of people, she says, in the house are image-conscious.

Further in this chat, we also went on to discuss the incident of Armaan slapping Vishal, to which she shares that she does not support any such action. Like most people, she says she too opposes violence. The incident further led to Armaan Malik being nominated for the entire season. However, looking at the other side of the coin, without being objective, she said, "If we look at it from the standpoint of a husband and wife, I believe anyone could have done the same thing and would lose their temper. I'm not saying that's appropriate, but when it comes to their spouse or family, individuals occasionally over-react or get quite protective. I still find it unacceptable."

Going ahead and discussing the issue, she does highlight that, regretfully, because Payal did not use the exact same words, the problem got worse. She shares, "According to what I know about Vishal, he is a kind man with no bad intentions. He has strong family values and comes from a respectable household. The fact that he wasn't given the chance to present his side of the story is unfair. He ought to have been given an opportunity to defend himself, but everyone was free to condemn and boycott him. But by then, everyone had come to their own opinions."

As we head towards the end of the chat, she cordially concludes, saying, "I don't know about Wildcard, but I would surely want to go up on the weekend and speak to Vishal and Love. I am definitely rooting for them and all the wishes to them."

LAVANYA GUDELLI, THROUGH HER BE THE CHANGE FOUNDATION, HAS BEEN WORKING TOWARDS SEVERAL INITIATIVES FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE. SHE TALKS TO THE PIONEER ABOUT HER PASSION FOR THE SOCIAL CAUSE AND MOTIVE BEHIND HER FOUNDATION



In recent years, detoxification or 'detox' diets have surged in popularity, touted as a quick fix to eliminate toxins from the body, promote overall health, and assist with weight loss. But do these diets live up to the hype?

Understanding detox diets

Detox diets are short-term dietary interventions designed to cleanse the body. They often involve a period of fasting, followed by a strict diet of fruits, vegetables, juices and water. Proponents claim that detox diets can help with weight loss, enhance the function of the liver, kidneys and colon and improve overall health.

Science behind detox diets

Despite their popularity, the scientific evidence supporting detox diets is limited and of low quality. Studies on detox diets often have significant design flaws, including small sample sizes, lack of control groups and short durations. Consequently, their findings are not robust enough to draw definitive conclusions.

A 2015 review of National Centre for Biotechnology Information concluded that there is no compelling research to support the use of detox diets for weight management or toxin elimination. Similarly, in 2017 the report highlights, while detox diets, particularly those involving juicing, can lead to initial weight loss due to a severe calorie deficit, this weight loss is usually not sustainable. Once individuals resume their regular eating patterns, they often regain the lost weight.

Potential benefits

While the evidence for detox diets is not strong, some people may experi-

ence temporary benefits. The initial weight loss, for instance, can be motivating. Additionally, detox diets typically eliminate processed foods, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats, leading to a more nutrient-dense intake. This shift can result in a temporary improvement

in energy levels and mood, likely due to increased consumption of vitamins and minerals.

Potential risks

However, detox diets are not without risks. The severe calorie restriction can

lead to nutrient deficiencies, fatigue, dizziness and low blood sugar levels. Moreover, detox diets can disrupt the balance of gut bacteria, leading to digestive issues. For individuals with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, detox diets can be particularly dangerous and should be approached with caution.

Long-term impact

One of the critical criticisms of detox diets is the lack of evidence regarding their long-term effects. No studies have assessed the prolonged impact of detoxification programs on health, weight, or toxin levels. This gap in research raises concerns about the potential for negative consequences that may arise from repeated use of detox diets.

Healthy alternatives

Rather than resorting to extreme detox diets, adopting a balanced, sustainable approach to nutrition and health is advisable. Consuming a diet rich in whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats, can

naturally support the body's detoxification processes. Regular physical activity, adequate hydration and sufficient sleep are also crucial for maintaining overall health and well-being.

Conclusion

While the allure of detox diets is understandable, the current evidence does not support their effectiveness for long-term weight management or detoxification. A balanced, nutrient-rich diet and a healthy lifestyle remain the most effective ways to promote overall health and well-being. Before embarking on any detox diet, it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional to ensure it is safe and appropriate for your individual health needs.

In the end, the best approach to detoxification is one that supports your body's natural processes, rather than relying on quick fixes or extreme dietary interventions.

(The author, Sanchi Tiwari, is a nutritionist, at Lord's Mark Biotech.)

DETOX DIETS: EFFECTIVE OR JUST A FAD?



Suryakumar holds 2nd spot, Jaiswal make gains in ICC T20I batting rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

The big-hitting Suryakumar Yadav is the highest placed Indian at second spot, while young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal occupies the sixth position in the ICC T20I batting rankings issued on Wednesday. Rituraj Gaikwad has dropped a place to the eighth position in the T20 batters' list, which was updated following India's recent 4-1 series triumph over Zimbabwe. Jaiswal was the big winner following his 141 runs in the series as he rose four places, behind No.1 ranked batter Travis Head of Australia and Suryakumar. Shubman Gill, who led India against Zimbabwe in the absence of senior players and was the leading run-scorer of the series with 170 runs from five innings, moved up a whopping 36 places to 37th. No Indian features in the top 10 of the T20I bowlers rankings. Axar Patel, who was rested for the Zimbabwe series, dropped four places to 13th spot. Fast bowler Mukesh Kumar



and spinner Washington Sundar also made upward movements. Mukesh, who scalped eight wickets from three games, has gained 36 places to rise to 46th spot. Washington, who picked up eight wickets in five matches, has risen 21 spots to 73rd rank.

England's Adil Rashid is leading T20I bowlers' chart ahead of South Africa's Anrich Nortje and Wanindu Hasaranga of Sri Lanka. In the T20I all-rounders' rankings, India's Hardik Pandya dropped four places to sixth while Axar slipped one rung to 13th.

Washington (41st) and Shivam Dube (43rd) have risen by eight and 35 places to 41st and 43rd spots respectively. Sri Lanka's Hasaranga continues to top the all-rounders' list ahead of Australia's Marcus Stoinis and Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza.



Roshni scores hat-trick as Hockey Jharkhand wins

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Hockey Jharkhand thrashed Assam Hockey 13-0 in the women's category with the young Roshni Aind (24th, 32nd, 33rd) scoring a hat-trick in the 2nd Hockey India Junior Men & Women East Zone Championship here on Wednesday. The other goal-scorers for the winners at the Netaji Subhas Eastern Centre were captain Rajni Kerketta (11, 27), Barwa Purnima (31, 46), Mundu Sukarmani (46, 56), Parwati Topno (21), Pinki Kumari (29), Hemrom Leoni (43) and Apuriya Soreng (59). Hockey Association of Odisha too scored a lopsided 11-0

win against Hockey Bihar with Kachhap Rimjihim (20, 21, 31, 36) scoring four goals. Najiya Khatun (8, 34), Marandi Rajina (38), Khushi Kumari (44), Sugandha Sonam (49, 50), and Kumari Sharda (57) too were on target. Hockey Bengal defeated Manipur Hockey 8-3 with Lalitanchungi (4, 39, 49, 56), Shanti Horo (6, 33), and Lalpeksangi (23, 24) on target. For Manipur Hockey, Tanu Shoresangbam (26), Devi Mutum Priya (41) and Devi Laishram Ritu (48) scored the consolation goals. In the men's section, Hockey Association of Odisha defeated Manipur Hockey 7-0

with Rohit Kullu (14, 60), Sunil Lakra (22), Deepak Pradhan (28, 50), Premdayal Giri (41) and Deonath Nanwar (47) on target. Hockey Jharkhand crushed Hockey Bihar 9-0 with Abhishek Tigga (6), Jolen Topno (20, 59), Rohit Pradhan (21), Roshan Ekka (37), Ghuran Lohra (38), Adisan Minj (42), Faguwa Horo (44), and Doday Sandeep (53) scoring the goals. Hockey Bengal registered a 5-1 win over Assam Hockey. Karan Shaw (22, 39) led the goal-scoring efforts for the winners while Prince Gabrial Dhan (28) and Bishnu Paswan (34) too scored a goal each.



England great Lucy Bronze joins Chelsea from Barcelona

AP ■ LONDON

England defender Lucy Bronze joined Chelsea from Barcelona on Wednesday on a two-year deal. Five-time Champions League winner Bronze completed her move to the Women's Super League (WSL) champion after two years with Barcelona. "To know I'm a Chelsea player still feels a little bit surreal. It's obviously a club I know so much about and have done for such a long time," she said. "I'm really excited to be back in England. My family are so excited as well to get to more of my games." Bronze is one of the most successful players in the history of the women's game after winning major titles with clubs and country. The 32-year-old right-back won the European Championship with England in 2022 and was a losing finalist at last year's World Cup. She won three Champions League titles with Lyon and two more with Barcelona. Bronze won eight league titles in England, France and Spain with Liverpool, Manchester City, Lyon and Barcelona. She was runner-up for the Ballon d'Or award in 2019 and named FIFA Best Women's Player of the Year in 2020. "Lucy will bring leadership to the group. She is a serial winner and a versatile defender. She has lots of experience and a winning mentality which we feel will fit well into the squad," Chelsea general manager Paul Green said. Chelsea has dominated women's soccer in England and is the five-time defending WSL champion. It was managed by Emma Hayes before she left for the United States Women's National Team at the end of the season.

Analysis: Tiger Woods playing all the majors, but for how much longer?

AP ■ TROON (SCOTLAND)

Tiger Woods is playing all four majors for the first time since 2019, which at the start of the year would have been cause for great optimism. The results paint a different picture. He set a Masters record by making his 24th consecutive cut at Augusta National. And then he was gone by the weekend at the PGA Championship and the U.S. Open. He hasn't broken par since a 69 in the second round of the 2022 PGA Championship, and he needed that simply to make the cut. His performance is starting to raise questions of how much longer he will play - how much longer he should play - to avoid lasting memories of a great champion slapping it around. Leave it to Colin Montgomerie to put those thoughts into words found in a Times of London interview ahead of the British Open, when he said at one point, "What the hell is he doing?" The entirety of what Montgomerie told the Times: "I hope people remember Tiger as Tiger was, the passion and the charismatic aura around him. There is none of that

now. At Pinehurst he did not seem to enjoy a single shot and you think, 'What the hell is he doing?' He's coming to Troon and he won't enjoy it there, either." Woods already has enjoyed one aspect of his stay at Royal Troon. That came Tuesday when he was asked about Montgomerie's comments. Woods relishes a chance to push back on criticism, particularly when the source is someone known for never winning a major. "Well, as a past champion, I'm exempt until I'm 60," Woods said, speaking to his time at the British Open. "Colin's not. He's not a past champion, so he's not exempt. So he doesn't get the opportunity to make that decision. I do." It brought up memories of an Open tradition some 20 years ago. Stewart McDougal was the press officer at the time, and he would ask Open champions who came into the press center to sign the table. At the end of the week, McDougal auctioned off the table for charity. Montgomerie came in one day, saw all the signatures on the table and reached for pen. "I'm sorry, Colin," McDougal told him. "It's only for Open champions."



Poor Monty. The questions are fair enough, but there is something to be said about golfers being able to decide when their time is done. And given all that Woods has done in the game, it's probably not the best idea to show him the door no matter what numbers he is posting. His 82 in the third round of the Masters was his highest in a major.

The 78 on the Old Course two years ago in what likely will be his final time at St. Andrews. He still draws the biggest crowd and generates the loudest buzz. And two numbers worth remembering are four and 15. He had four surgeries on his lower back, the last one to fuse his spine, and two years later he won his 15th major at the Masters. Another number worth noting is 59

- the age of Tom Watson when he was an 8-foot par putt away from winning the British Open at Turnberry in 2009. The year before, Greg Norman was 53 when he had the 54-hole lead at Royal Birkdale. Courses for the U.S. Majors might be getting too big for the 48-year-old Woods, whose body is held together by hardware. But there is something about links golf that is timeless. "The older you get, the less you can carry the golf ball," Woods said. "But over here, you can run the golf ball 100 yards if you get the right wind and the right trajectory. ... You can play on the ground with a 1-iron, 2-iron, 3-wood, whatever." "I think that's one of the reasons why you see older champions up there on the board because they're not forced to have to carry the ball 320 yards." Woods always will be linked with Augusta National because of his watershed win at age 21 when he won the 1997 Masters by 12 shots, and it is the major he has won the most times. But for all his power as a younger man, no one hit irons like Woods. The flight of his shots was ideal for the links golf. It still is. Woods showed up Tuesday wearing shorts, with a black compression

sleeve covering his right leg. That was a clear reminder that age isn't as big an issue as health. Woods has been forthright in explaining his dilemma. His body won't allow him to play a full schedule, and when he shows up at the majors, he has to deal with competitive rust. He could play more and risk not playing where it matters. That's something he will have to sort out. And it was telling that the PGA Tour created an exemption category exclusively for him to play in the \$20 million signature events by adding him to the field - he wouldn't be taking a spot away from another player. How much he plays next year will be worth watching. In the meantime, Woods has been at Royal Troon since Sunday. He has high hopes. Maybe they are unrealistic based on the scores he is posting, but they are his hopes. "There is a time for all sportsmen to say goodbye, but it's very difficult to tell Tiger it's time to go," Montgomerie said. "Obviously, he still feels he can win. We are more realistic." The truth is probably somewhere in between. But perhaps Woods still feels he can win because unlike Montgomerie, he has done it before.

Scottie is adjusting to links golf and his role as best player in the world

AP ■ TROON (SCOTLAND)

The first stage of Scottie Scheffler's rise to the top of golf felt like warp speed. He went from No. 15 in the world to No. 1 in the span of five tournaments, and that was before he won the Masters for the first time. Now he's on a level not seen since Tiger Woods was in his prime. Scheffler is not the biggest draw at the British Open, not with Woods in the field. Rory McIlroy remains a big attraction, especially in the U.K., and he comes into Royal Troon as a sentimental favorite from his sad collapse in the U.S. Open and going 10 years without a major. But any conversation at the final major of the year starts with Scheffler, a heavy favorite as he has been in every major this year. And that has taken him time to fully appreciate his status in the game. "I never really thought of myself as anything but a golfer," Scheffler said Tuesday. "I was never trying to be famous. I didn't want to be a celebrity or whatever. I just wanted to become a good golfer and get the most out of myself. It's brought me this far, so I continue to just try to keep my head down and put in the work that got me here and just continue to practice and hopefully continue to get better." His six PGA Tour victories before the calendar turned to July are the most since Arnold Palmer in 1962. Someone pointed out to Scheffler that Palmer's seventh victory that year was a claret jug he won at Royal Troon. He wasn't sure how to react to that except to shrug his



shoulders and say, "Yeah, that would be great." "I love the history of the game, and there's certain things that I know and certain things that I don't. That was something that for some reason I just never stumbled across," he said, searching for the right answer. "So I had no idea that that was a thing." The British Open figures to present his biggest test. Scheffler is still relatively new to links golf - everything about his rise to No. 1 is new - having played this style in 2021 for the first time. He has learned to adjust the flight of his ball since links turf creates a little more spin on certain shots. The greens can be slower. Bunkers are to be avoided. He is a two-time Masters champion, missed a U.S. Open playoff by one shot at The Country Club and was runner-up in the PGA Championship at Oak Hill. But he has never seriously contended in golf's oldest championship. Even so, the love of the links is there. He went to the J.P. McManus Pro-Am in Ireland a few years

ago and took side trips to Lahinch and Ballyunion. He began this trip across the Atlantic Ocean by skipping the Scottish Open at The Renaissance Club - links style, but not links turf - and going to Turnberry with Sam Burns for a match with their caddies, both good players. "A tremendous amount of fun," he said. And then it was time for work at Royal Troon, the links renowned for having the longest hole (the 623-yard sixth) and shortest hole (the 123-yard eighth) in the British Open rotation. Most peculiar about Troon is that the outward nine - typically with at least a wee breeze at the players' back - has two par 5s and measures 3,539 yards. The inward nine with the wind in the face has one par 5 and is 3,846 yards. "It's basically a tale of two nines on this course," McIlroy said. "You feel like you have to make your score on the way out and then sort of hang on coming in." McIlroy has far more experience on links golf - and a

claret jug to show for it from his victory at Royal Liverpool in 2014 - but it still takes time to adjust because "you play 11 months of your golf every year in very different conditions." Players also are preparing for weather described as "mixed," a gentle way of saying it probably won't be terribly pleasant for most of the week. Sunshine gave way to spells of rain on Tuesday, and that was before lunch was served. PGA champion Xander Schauffele might be the second-most consistent player in golf behind Scheffler - nothing but top 20s in his last 10 starts and 51 cuts in a row - and has acquired a taste for less-than-pleasant conditions, particularly in the Open. "If the weather gets really bad, you just have to take the bunkers out of play and really try and plot your way around," he said. "It doesn't have to be super pretty. Just kind of place the ball around the property and really just try and get it in the hole in as few shots as possible." That's what Scheffler has been doing all year. Along with winning the Masters for the second time and The Players Championship, his other four wins have come in signature events against the strongest fields - on long courses and short, dry conditions and soft. And with that has come a level of notoriety - the bizarre arrest at the PGA Championship certainly contributed - he wasn't expecting but has come to appreciate. "Being out here playing in front of great crowds and having them scream your name and holler when you make putts and be truly rooting for you is a great feeling," he said.

AP ■ TROON (SCOTLAND)

Jon Rahm felt like one of the most popular players when he arrived at Royal Troon, even if it had nothing to do with him or with his golf. Spain is on quite the run at the moment. Carlos Alcaraz won Wimbledon on Sunday for his second Grand Slam title of the year, right before Spain defeated England in the European Championship final. It's the latter that made the Scottish fans celebrate the Spaniard. No one in these parts likes to see England win anything. "Played all 18 holes, and I think I got more congratulations for something that I didn't do than I ever have in my life," Rahm said Tuesday. "I don't know what they've done, but anytime anybody plays against the English national team, every other country in Europe just unifies against them." "I think because we've heard It's Coming Home so many times the last few years that nobody wants to see it come home at this point." Throw in Sergio Garcia winning his first LIV Golf event at Valderrama, and Rahm

Jon hoping to ride Spanish momentum to



would like nothing more than to extend Spain's run of winners. Mostly, he needs it for himself. The major championship season ends

with the British Open, and Rahm has been a no-show. He was the reigning Masters champion when he left for the Saudi riches of LIV Golf last December and he still hasn't won. His last victory was the Masters some 15 months ago. He barely made the cut at the Masters. He missed the cut at the PGA Championship. And he didn't even get to play the U.S. Open because of a foot infection. "Last year from the Masters on I didn't really play my best," Rahm said. "Ryder Cup was the only resemblance to maybe the early part of the year. But Nashville and last week (LIV events), I felt closer to getting to a higher level of golf where maybe there isn't as many thoughts on my process. Maybe I'm playing a little bit more freely and seeing the ball flight that I want to see more often." "I'm getting much closer to what it might have been early last year."

US women's soccer team fights the heat, plays to a draw against Costa Rica in final Olympic tune-up

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The heat was on for the U.S. Women's soccer team's final exhibition tune-up game before the Paris Olympics, with sweltering temperatures in the air and plenty of chances to score. The goals did not come in a 0-0 draw against Costa Rica on Tuesday night, just the second time - and first since 2015 - the U.S. Did not win its last game before a major tournament. But the match showed the Americans could handle the kind of high temperatures that could await later this month. "The last two games have been insane," defender Casey Krueger said, referring to back-to-back exhibition games before the team's cross-



Atlantic flight. "I feel like this is going to be even hotter, so if we can play in this, it gives us confidence going into France, for sure." It was 98 degrees Fahrenheit (37 Celsius) at kickoff after Washington tied the hottest day on record in the nation's capital at 104 (40C) hours earlier. It was still 94 (35C)

when the match was over. Coach Emma Hayes figured it would be a nice test for her players, given the forecast for nearly this level of heat during upcoming games in Marseille later this month. "That's added value," Hayes said Monday. "It's perfect preparation. It's pretty hot down there, so this is a great opportunity for us to experience what we're going to face." It played a role in Rose Lavelle being a precautionary late scratch because of leg tightness in warmups. "No risks," Hayes said afterward. "She was a bit tight in her groin and I took no risks. ... I want to go into the Olympics with everybody available." Korbin Albert replaced Lavelle

in the starting lineup in the game taking place on a worn down field torn up by recent football, soccer and rugby matches and attended by 18,972 fans. Players either criticized the field or offered up no comment. "The corners, there's no secret that it was definitely like I was kicking into dirt," forward Mallory Swanson said. "It was fine. Sometimes that's just the way it is going to be, and I think this team has always overcome adversity." The U.S. Generated plenty of chances throughout - 26 shots total and 12 on goal - and was repeatedly denied by Costa Rica goalkeeper Noelia Bermudez, who was arguably one of the best players on the field.

'I took inspiration from my father-in-law to play a cop in *Rippen Swamy*'

Kannada superstar Vijay Raghavendra, who was recently present at the IIFA Utsavam press conference held in Hyderabad, speaks exclusively with *The Pioneer* about hosting IIFA 2024, his craft and deets about his upcoming projects

AARTI SREENATH

Anticipation soared to unprecedented levels as the global festivities of IIFA Utsavam kicked off with a grand official India Press Conference at Novotel in Hyderabad. It set the stage for the highly anticipated two-day extravaganza, which is all set to celebrate the achievements of South Indian cinema and honour the vibrant Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada film industry cinematic luminaries. The event was attended by a glittering array of celebs from South India, including Rana Daggubati, Rockstar DSP, Vijay Raghavendra, Teja Sajja, Raashi Khanna, Sreeleela, Pearle Maaney, Pragna Jaiswal, Malashree Ramanna, Aradhana Ram, Sudhev Nair, Simran Rishi Bagga, Resul Pookutty and Kushboo. *The Pioneer* had the exclusive opportunity to sit down with Kannada superstar Vijay Raghavendra. In our interaction, Vijay shared insights into his illustrious career and his thoughts on the evolving landscape of Kannada. Vijay Raghavendra, a.k.a. Chinnari Mutha, is a prominent Kannada actor known for his versatility and talent. He started his career as a child artist, also crediting a National Award for his performance in *Kotreshi Kanasu*. Raghavendra continues to shine in Kannada cinema and recently took part in a press conference for the IIFA Utsavam 2024. He will also be hosting IIFA 2024 for the Kannada audience. When asked about his thoughts on being a part of IIFA Utsavam this year, Vijay's enthusiasm was palpable. "The most important thing is the uniting of all of us across the nation, irrespective of the region and language. All the superstars meet at a place to become just actors; they come down to become friends in one common place, looking up to each other and appreciating each other. I think IIFA is all about celebration. The very word 'Utsavam' means celebration." Reflecting on his beginnings in Kannada cinema and what inspired him to pursue acting, the *Kadda Chithra* actor shared, "I come from a cinema family. Dr. Rajkumar being my uncle, I spent my childhood watching his films and going to his shoots. By the time I finished my B.Com, I knew I had to pursue my career in acting. I did my acting course in Chennai and was fortunate to get the role in the remake of a Telugu film *Nuvve Kavali*. In Kannada, it was called *Ninagagi*, which was a huge success. From then on, there's been no looking back. I've been getting good roles. No doubt the career graph has been erratic at times, but I've learned a lot."

When inquired about how IIFA influences and the global perception of Indian cinema, particularly Kannada films, Vijay credited the recent successes for the shift. "These days, from the past two to three years, thanks to movies like *KGF* and *Kantara*, also thanks to the producers and makers who made it possible. The world today recognises Kannada cinema as Indian cinema."

That's a huge link to us, belonging to the film fraternity." As an actor in the Kannada region, Vijay expressed his pride in the recognition of regional cinema on international platforms like IIFA. "We feel proud. We are getting to the place where we actually belong, where our stories deserve to be told globally. People are drawing inspiration from Kannada films, like they were 25-30 years ago. Something was missing in between, but now we are getting the hang of it and we are able to collaborate with other actors coming to Kannada and working with us, appreciating the talent down here." On the topic of how events like IIFA can help evolve Kannada cinema on a global scale, Vijay emphasised the importance of evolution.

"It has to evolve; the process is always there. Evolution has always been a part of our nature. When cinema evolves, it also means that people are evolving with it, along with the audience. The audience is ready to receive content because they get to see a good story, irrespective of the language. Thanks to platforms like OTT and events like IIFA, bringing them all together, celebrating and showcasing them in a way that the entire world gets to see them on one platform. This becomes a very important part of the evolution of cinema."

Discussing the challenges he faced while preparing for roles, the *Marichi* actor highlighted a recent experience. "There is one called *Rippen Swamy*, which is getting ready for release. I'm playing a totally negative role. The audience have never seen me in a negative role. It's something I'm looking forward to and to stretch myself as an actor. In this film, I play the character of a cop, a character that I have never played. When I got the opportunity, it was challenging—looking like a cop to an extent but convincing the audience that a police officer is actually emoting particular scenes, was the toughest part. It requires a lot of observation. I had to observe people and listen to their experiences. My father-in-law is a retired ACP and I heard stories from him. I had to add a pinch of myself to the character, in a very subtle way."

Regarding future roles, Vijay shared his passion for intense and relatable characters. "I have always loved to play intense roles—roles that people connect to easily, roles that have the capacity to convey something to people without actually preaching. That is something I would love to do." When asked about films that influenced him, Vijay mentioned *Bangaarada Manushya*. "It was directed by S. Siddalingaiah sir, decades ago. Such films could be called a mass success or commercial success because, when we preach in a film that it's appreciated; it's when we emot and the message is conveyed and received by the audience. Right from the front-seat audience to the highest-placed person in society, everybody's family got to watch that film and got influenced by its quality and narration. That has influenced me as an audience and

my perception of cinema." As we went ahead in this chat, the *Raagu* actor went on to discuss his desired directors, he looks forward to work with. "I'm a greedy person; three would definitely not be enough. There's always Mani Ratnam sir. I would like to work with Pradeep Ranganathan, the *Love Today* filmmaker and we have fantastic directors in Kannada too. I would love to work with Rishab Shetty sir." As he continues to take on challenging roles and push the boundaries of regional cinema, audiences can look forward to more stellar performances from this beloved actor. Meanwhile, the IIFA Utsavam continues to be a celebration for Indian cinema, providing a grand platform that not only honors the achievements of the South Indian film industry but also unites actors and filmmakers from various regions under one roof.



DASARA, HI NANNA, BABY, BALAGAM RULE THE ROOST

PNS | HYDERABAD

Natural star Nani has once again captured the spotlight with his exceptional performances in *Dasara* and *Hi Nanna*. Both films have earned substantial recognition, securing multiple nominations at two of the most prestigious awards ceremonies in Indian cinema: the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA) and the Filmfare Awards.

At the SIIMA Awards, Nani's *Dasara* and *Hi Nanna* have made a remarkable impact. *Dasara* has received an impressive 11 nominations, reflecting the film's widespread acclaim and Nani's standout performance. *Hi Nanna* is also garnering attention with 10 nominations, further showcasing Nani's versatility and the film's success.

The Filmfare Awards have similarly recognised the star's remarkable contributions, with *Dasara* being nominated in 8 major categories and *Hi Nanna* receiving 9 nominations, underscoring the film's resounding impact and Nani's celebrated role.

As fans and industry profes-



sionals eagerly await the awards ceremonies, the recognition of Nani's work in both *Dasara* and *Hi Nanna* reaffirms his status as one of the most talented and influential actors in contemporary cinema.

On the other hand, last year's biggest box office hit, "Baby," garnered numerous awards and accolades, solidifying its status as a cult favorite that resonated strongly with audiences and garnered industry recognition. Directed by Sai Rajesh, the film stars Anand Devarakonda, Vaishnavi

Chaitanya, and Viraj Ashwin in pivotal roles, and is produced by SKN under the Mass Movie Makers banner.

The film secured 8 major nominations in the Filmfare Awards, marking a significant achievement for a production that started as a small film and ended up as the year's biggest blockbuster. *Baby* has been nominated across various categories, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor in a Leading Role (Male), Best Actor in a Leading Role (Female), Best Music Director, Best Singer, and Best Lyricist.

The film's music, songs, and lyrics have been widely praised and are strong contenders for recognition at the awards ceremony. Meanwhile, Priyadarshi star

Balagam is proving that when good cinema is made, the accolades never stop pouring in. The film, which already bagged many international awards, made another achievement. It was nominated in 7 categories for the 2024 Filmfare Awards! The 12th edition of the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA) is scheduled to take place in Dubai on September 14 and 15, with extensive preparations underway. This year, an online voting system will be introduced to determine the winners. Fans can support their favorite films and stars by casting their votes on the official SIIMA website and Facebook page. It has to be awaited and seen how many awards these movies will bring home.

Bharateeyudu 2 trimmed by 11 mins 51 seconds

In a move designed to fine-tune the cinematic experience, the film *Bharateeyudu 2*, starring Universal Star Kamal Haasan and helmed by acclaimed director Shankar, has undergone a significant edit. The new version of the film, which is now 11 minutes and 51 seconds shorter, has officially hit theaters from the matinee shows on Wednesday. Produced by Lyca Productions, *Bharateeyudu 2* has generated a whirlwind of responses since its release. While the film has received a spectrum of reviews on social media, ranging from enthusiastic praise to critical feedback, it is

undeniably making a substantial impact

among audiences.

The decision to cut the film by nearly 12 minutes comes as part of an effort to streamline the narrative and enhance viewer engagement. The editing adjustments are expected to refine the pacing and potentially address some of the critiques leveled at the original cut. The revised version of *Bharateeyudu 2* is now available in all theaters, promising a fresh take on what has already been a talked-about release. The film's performance in this new format will likely influence its ongoing reception and box office success.



Vidudala Part 2 first look reveals film's intensity

Following the tremendous success of director Vetrimaaran's *Vidudala Part 1*, expectations for the sequel have reached new heights. The blockbuster debut of the first installment has fueled immense curiosity and excitement among both fans and industry insiders for *Vidudala Part 2*.

Producer Elred Kumar of RS Infotainment is thrilled to reveal the first look of *Vidudala Part 2*, which will be showcased in both Tamil and Telugu. The film stars Vijay Sethupathi and Soori in lead roles, further igniting anticipation for the next chapter.

Elred Kumar expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "It's incredibly heartening for our entire team to receive such overwhelming support and appreciation from film enthusiasts. The success of the first installment has far surpassed our expectations. It's invigorating to hear from industry professionals and trade circles that the *Vidudala* franchise has effectively bridged the gap between commercial and parallel cinema, setting a new benchmark for future directors. We have every reason to celebrate.

Actor Soori's career has seen a remarkable surge following the success of *Vidudala Part 1* and *Garudan* and Vijay Sethupathi's recent blockbuster hit *Maharaja* has only added to the excitement. With so many positive elements surrounding *Vidudala Part 2*, we are eager to present the film in the best possible light. Vetrimaaran has put in meticulous effort to shape the sequel, and Isaigani Ilaiyaraaja's musical contributions will add depth to our story. We are nearing the completion of the film's shooting and aim to release it by the end of this year. The film also features performances from Bhavani Sri, Rajeev Menon, Gautham Vasudev Menon and Chetan. It also introduces a new array of talented actors, including Manju Warrier and Anurag Kashyap." Fans can expect announcements regarding the film's trailer, audio release and worldwide theatrical debut soon.

NAVEEN POLISHETTY OPENS UP ON MULTIPLE FRACTURES IN HAND!

In a recent social media post, young actor Naveen Polishetty confirmed that he is currently recovering from multiple fractures in his hand. The star, known for his string of blockbuster hits, opened up about the challenges he is facing during this difficult time, sharing an emotional and heartfelt note with his fans.

Naveen Polishetty, who has been making waves in the industry with consecutive hits, has been notably absent from the media and public appearances recently. The injury, which he described as a significant setback, has been the reason for his low profile. Despite this, Polishetty assured his fans that development work on his upcoming projects is progressing robustly.

In his emotional update, Polishetty expressed gratitude for the support he has received and acknowledged the tough road ahead for his recovery. He remains hopeful and determined to return to the big screen, stronger than ever. "Recovery has been tough, but I am immensely grateful for the support from my fans and well-wishers. This injury has been a challenging chapter, but I am focused on getting back to full strength. In the meantime, work on my upcoming films continues in full swing, and I can't wait to be back in action," Naveen Polishetty wrote. The young actor's absence has been keenly felt by his fanbase, who are eagerly anticipating his return. Polishetty has an exciting lineup of films with prominent production houses such as Sithara Entertainment, Mythri Movie Makers, Niharika Entertainment, and others. Fans are looking forward to his charismatic return to the big screen, and the industry buzz around his forthcoming projects remains high.

Meanwhile, his film *Miss Shetty Mr. Polishetty* with Anushka Shetty released on September 7 last year achieved great success. The film has shown its strength in the recently announced Filmfare South 2024 nominations, receiving nominations in three major categories.

Naveen Polishetty has been nominated for Best Actor Male, while Anushka Shetty has been nominated for Best Actor Female. *Miss Shetty Mr. Polishetty* has also received a nomination in the Best Movie category. Naveen Polishetty not only entertained audiences with his stand-up comedy but also delivered emotionally stirring performances that impressed. Anushka Shetty's portrayal touched audiences with its depth of emotion.

Chidambaram makes B'wood entry

Renowned for his directorial brilliance in Malayalam cinema, Chidambaram is all set to make his mark in the Hindi film industry with an exciting new project in collaboration with Phantom Studios. The announcement was officially made by Srishti Behl, CEO of Phantom Studios, signaling a significant step for both the director and the production house into new creative territories.

Phantom Studios took to their Instagram handle to make the announcement that read, "We're thrilled to commence a new collaborative journey with the immensely talented Chidambaram! He's made his mark in the south with his unique vision and storytelling prowess, and we're excited to work on his debut in Hindi cinema! Chidambaram was applauded for his work on *Manjummel*

Boys, which has been a critical as well as a commercial success. According to the box office report, the film opened with Rs. 3.3 crores at the box office and went on to break several box office records by earning Rs. 242.3 crores lifetime collection. *Manjummel Boys*, which was made on a budget of Rs. 20 crores, became the first Malayalam film to cross more than Rs 200 crores at the box office leaving behind the record set by 2018 which was released in 2023. It also emerged as one of the highest grossing Indian films of 2024.

Chidambaram has succeeded in understanding the pulse of the audience and crafts narratives that are compelling and engaging. Known for his knack for creating visually appealing and grand spectacles, which includes elaborate sets, stunning cinematography and choreographed action sequences that give the audience some

adrenaline pumping moments, it is assured that his films are designed to entertain. Speaking about his debut in Hindi cinema, Chidambaram expressed his excitement, stating, "I am very excited to take this step forward to Hindi mainstream cinema. Although *Manjummel Boys* will always remain special, I am honored and excited to collaborate with Phantom Studios for my first Hindi feature film. It's an opportunity to explore new narratives and reach out to a wider audience, while staying true to the essence of storytelling that defines my work." As the project moves forward, all eyes are on Chidambaram and Phantom Studios, eagerly anticipating the unveiling of their collaborative masterpiece that is sure to leave an indelible mark on Hindi cinema.



Allu Sirish' *Buddy* to now release on Aug 2

The next big-screen release from megastar Allu Sirish, *Buddy*, is helmed by San Anton. The movie was originally supposed to come out on July 26, 2024, but it will now come out on August 2, 2024.

This revised release date is in line with the release of four other Telugu movies: *Alanaati Ramachandrudu*, *Usha Parinayam*, *Operation Raavan* and *Tiragabadara Saami*. It will be interesting to watch *Buddy*'s performance during

this competition. Hip-hop Tamizha composed the music for the film, which stars Gayatri Bhardwaj, Mohammed Ali, Ajmal Amir, Prisha Singh, Mukesh Rishi and others in important parts.

