



the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Telangana should not become a desert. So Centre gave Rs 15,000 crore without giving special category status to Andhra Pradesh. If special category status was given to AP, TG would have become a desert. The people of Telangana should appreciate Modi for not giving special category status to AP.

- Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJLP Leader

P4

Don't take inflation lightly, Chidambaram cautions
govt

BEYOND FLAVOURS, BEING THE VOICE OF INDIAN RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

'You can expect plenty of action scenes from me in SIMMBA'

DON'T MISS...

Budget a significant boost for ...

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Andhra Pradesh, has applauded the Union Budget 2024 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. They said that the budget signifies a significant step towards the holistic development of Andhra Pradesh, aligning with the vision of economic growth and infrastructural advancement. The major highlight of the budget is the substantial financial assistance of Rs 15,000 crore allocated for the development of Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh. This immediate ...

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Anxiety in older adults may ...

People with anxiety could be at three times the risk of developing dementia compared to those without anxiety, according to a study. People aged 60-70 years with chronic (persistent) anxiety were found to be more likely to develop the mental condition in which memory and decision-making are impaired, affecting daily activities, according to the study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. Researchers, including those from the University of Newcastle, UK, said that people ...

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RBI tightens norms for cash pay-outs ...

The RBI on Wednesday tightened norms related to cash pay-out service at banks, making it mandatory for lenders to keep a record of recipients. Cash pay-out refers to arrangements for amounts being transferred out of bank accounts to beneficiaries not having a bank account. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised its October 2011 framework related to 'Domestic Money Transfer'. The new norms will come into effect from November 1, 2024. For cash pay-out service, the ...

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Indian women team's mantra ...

Senior player Deepti Sharma said India's mantra in the Women's T20 Asia Cup has been to take one game at a time as conditions haven't really changed from the last time the team played here. India marched into the semifinals with a thumping 82-run win over Nepal on Tuesday after fireworks with the bat from Shafali Verma (81 off 48 balls) and Deepti's impressive 3/13 with the ball. India amassed 178 for 3 after batting first and then restricted Nepal to a paltry 98 for 9 in their 20 overs. "From the first game ...

-SPORTS

Will unravel liquor irregularities

Rs 19,000 crore loss due to change in liquor policy: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

While releasing the White Paper on the irregularities in the Excise Department during the previous government on the floor of the Assembly, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said that the State government will soon order for a Crime Investigation Department (CID) probe into the large scale irregularities.

Chandrababu announced here on Wednesday that the support of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), too, will be sought as liquor was sold accepting the payments only in cash but not without any online payments. The Chief Minister said that the State had suffered a loss of Rs 18,860.51 crore with the change in liquor policy after the YSRCP came to power in 2019.

Chandrababu said that the details will be sought from the Health Department on how many people suffered from serious health problems due to consumption of spurious liquor. Expressing serious concern that the economic condition of the State is very alarming, the Chief Minister stated that a detailed study is yet to be conducted on this.

"Because of the poor financial condition of the State, we are now not in a position to present a full scale budget before the Assembly," he added. Pointing out the allocation of funds by the Centre for the State



- "Because of the poor financial condition of the State, we are now not in a position to present a full scale budget before the Assembly."
- We have to increase the State's revenue. This White Paper is being released only to explain to the people what exactly had happened to the State in the past five years, the loss that the State had suffered and what kind of serious damage caused the State

in a special manner, Chandrababu felt that the facility provided by the Centre is only temporary. "We have to increase the State's revenue. This white paper is being released only to explain to the people what exactly had happened to the State in the past five years, the loss that the State had suffered and what kind of serious damage caused the State," Chandrababu explained.

"The past five-year rule is a case study on how the governance should not be and the former chief minister,

Jagan Mohan Reddy, too, is a case study on how the head of the State should not be," he observed. "While some make mistakes to meet the urgent needs while some commit mistakes out of greed. Yet others commit blunders with insanity. In the past five years blunders were committed shereily out of frenzy only to mint money." Chandrababu wished that not only the members of the Assembly, but also the people should understand this White Paper being released on the excise policy. This

Chandrababu said that the details will be sought from the Health Department on how many people suffered from serious health problems due to consumption of spurious liquor. Expressing serious concern that the economic condition of the State is very alarming, the Chief Minister stated that a detailed study is yet to be conducted on this.

White Paper is a classic example on how a person despite committing several blunders can still talk in whichever way he wants, he stated.

Chandrababu is of the opinion that Jagan got 40 per cent vote in the recent elections not because people liked him, but because no awareness was created among the people. If criminals are in politics, politics will turn into a crime and one can easily imagine if a criminal is leading politics, he remarked.

Maintaining that one can easily understand how the previous rulers betrayed the State by going through all the seven White Papers, the Chief Minister said that besides the allocation of funds to the State by the Centre, attempts will be made to bring awareness among the people on how the State was looted in the past five years.

Continued on Page 2



Rs 9,151 cr allocated for Railways in AP: Vaishnav

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said that Rs 9,151 crore has been allocated for the Railways in Andhra Pradesh in the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman the other day. He said that the Centre is committed to allocate more funds to the Railways in the State.

The Union Minister, on Wednesday, told the media that the NDA government under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi has increased the allocation by 10 folds compared to the UPA government. He said that 100 per cent electrification of railway lines has also been done in Andhra Pradesh. Railway project works worth Rs 73,743 crore are progressing in the State. He said that 73 railway stations are being developed under the Amrit scheme.

On the capital rail project, the



Minister said that the works of Amaravati railway project is progressing. "We have designed a project of 56 km connecting Amaravati at a cost of Rs 2,047 crore. NITI Aayog has approved the DPR on railway works. Further permissions may take some time. The Railways is discussing with the state government the allotment of land for setting up a Railway Zone in Visakhapatnam. CM Chandrababu Naidu has already instructed the officials to allocate the land," said the Union Minister.



Houses pass Bills repealing Land titling Act, renaming UHS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the third day of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly sessions on Wednesday, the Assembly passed two crucial Bills -- the repeal of AP Land Titling Act and the renaming of University of Health Sciences as Dr NTR University of Health Sciences.

The members of the Assembly voted for passing of both the Bills as there were no Opposition members in the House. Later, Speaker Ch Ayyana Patrudu made an announcement that the members of the Council have also passed both the Bills.

Earlier, speaking on the repeal of AP Land Titling Act 2024, Minister Anagani Satya Prasad said that there was a conspiracy in introducing the Bill by the previous government. Along with the government lands, the previous government wanted to bring the private lands under their control. Anticipating the disaster with the Land Titling Act, TDP and JSP leaders explained the matter to the people of the State.

Continued on Page 2

'Talliki Vandanam' will benefit all students

All students, irrespective of number of children in the family, will receive Rs.15,000: HRD Minister in Legislative Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Human Resources Nara Lokesh has reaffirmed his government's commitment to implementing the Talliki Vandanam scheme, which aims to provide financial assistance to all students, irrespective of the number of children in the family. He said that under this scheme, each student is set to receive a financial aid of Rs.15,000. Minister Lokesh made it clear that students of both government and private educational institutions come under the scheme.

His remarks were in response to questions raised by members of the Legislative Council on the second day of the 45th session, chaired by Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju, on Wednesday.

Lokesh emphasised that while the scheme is being actively pursued, the government is currently in the process of formulating detailed guidelines for its implementation across the State. "The previous YSRCP government implemented the 'Amma Vodi' scheme, however, only one student benefited from the scheme in a family. The students received Rs.14,000 in the first year and later it was reduced to Rs.13,000," he commented.



Lokesh emphasised that while the scheme is being actively pursued, the government is currently in the process of formulating detailed guidelines for its implementation across the State. "The previous YSRCP government implemented the 'Amma Vodi' scheme, however, only one student benefited from the scheme in a family. The students received Rs.14,000 in the first year and later it was reduced to Rs.13,000," he commented.

The HRD Minister also recalled the rules that were implemented to reduce the number of beneficiaries of the Amma Vodi scheme.

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Job calendar soon, assures Keshav

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Finance, Planning and Legislative Affairs, Payyavula Keshav has made a significant announcement in the Legislative Council that the TDP-led NDA government will release a 'Job Calendar' to give details about job recruitments shortly.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has already issued notification of DSC to fill 16,750 teacher posts. The Job Calendar will be released every year in advance so that the unemployed youths can be prepared, he added.

During the Question Hour in the Legislative Council on Wednesday,



Minister Keshav said that around 2.46 lakh posts were lying vacant as of June 2019. Contract and outsourced employees are working in these posts.

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SHARE IN CENTRAL TAXES

Substantial hike for Andhra

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The share of Telugu states in central taxes and duties for 2024-25 has gone up, according to the Union Budget Estimates.

While the share of Andhra Pradesh has gone up substantially, the hike is marginal in the case of Telangana. Andhra Pradesh's share has gone up by nearly 13 per cent over the

previous financial year. The state will get Rs 50,474.64 crore in central taxes, which is Rs 5,775.65 crore higher than its share in 2023-24.

Andhra Pradesh was allocated Rs 44,698.99 crore in the previous financial year. Andhra Pradesh's share is 4.047 per cent in the total central taxes and duties for all states (Rs 12,47,211.28 crore) during the current financial

year. Telangana's share in central taxes and duties has been fixed at Rs 26,216.38 crore, which is about Rs 3,000 crore over the previous financial year. The state was allocated Rs 23,216.52 crore in the 2023-24 Budget.

Telangana accounts for 2.102 per cent in terms of percentage in overall allocation of central taxes and duties for all states and Union Territories.

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Industry leaders laud Budget for Kopparthi, Orvakal nodes

Fund allocation breathes new life into long-anticipated mega-projects

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's substantial allocation in the Union Budget for the Kopparthi (Kadapa) node in the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) and the Orvakal (Kurnool) node in the Hyderabad-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (HBIC) has been met with unanimous acclaim from captains of industry and the business community. This injection of funds has breathed new life into these long-anticipated mega-projects.

Dr G Sambasiva Rao, Managing Director of Sravan Shipping Services and former chairman of CII (Visakhapatnam), emphasised the pivotal role of the VCIC in Andhra

Pradesh's industrial revival. "Central to Andhra Pradesh's industrial resurgence, the VCIC aims to transform the State's economic landscape through key industrial nodes in Nakkapalli, Chittoor, and now, Kadapa. The fresh infusion of funds is expected to overcome persistent land acquisition challenges, particularly in Chittoor, and expedite project implementation," he stated.

The Chairman of AP Chambers Visakhapatnam, Srinivas Chitturi, stated that the VCIC is envisioned as a catalyst for industrial growth, job creation, and trade facilitation. "Projected to attract investments worth ₹1 lakh crore and generate over 5.5 lakh employment opportunities, the VCIC's strategic location along the 800-kilo-



metre coastline, coupled with a robust network of seaports and airports, positions it as a vital trade corridor with Asia-Pacific nations," he highlighted.

Mallikharjuna Rao Kankatala, president of the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FAPCCI), acknowledged the immense potential of the VCIC, but also pointed out ongoing challenges. "Land identification issues have hampered progress in Nakkapalli, mirroring similar hurdles in Chittoor. Nevertheless, the region boasts over a dozen industrial townships and four manufacturing hubs, with five Greenfield industrial nodes under development across the State," he noted.



18 killed as plane crashes in Nepal

PNS ■ KATHMANDU

A Nepalese airliner crashed and caught fire shortly after taking off from the Tribhuvan International Airport here on Wednesday, killing 18 people aboard, including a child, and seriously injuring the pilot - the lone survivor, in the latest aviation disaster to hit the

Himalayan nation. The Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft of Saurya Airlines, carrying 19 people, including two crew members and technical staff of the airline, was bound for Pokhara International Airport for regular maintenance service when the accident occurred at 11.11 am (local time).

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Naveen's idea of shadow cabinet worthy of emulation

After losing power that he had enjoyed for nearly a quarter century, Odisha's former chief minister Naveen Patnaik has drawn up a shadow cabinet, thus adopting a novel approach that is worthy of emulation by any opposition party for that matter.

Any government may at times adopt certain policies that are against the interests of the public. Such anti-people policies are adopted often to get political mileage or satiate patrons of the ruling parties at the cost of community assets and government land.

Government lands are to be protected forever by rulers in the interests of generations to come. Statesmanship is needed for present-day rulers, most of whom lack foresight. Instead of merely sitting in the



Opposition ranks following their defeat, political parties can form a shadow cabinet by appointing as its 'minister' a legislator for every department. This 'minister' works only to check the functioning of that particular department with view to ensure flawlessness in overall governance of the nitty-gritty of the administration.

The concept of a shadow cabinet, which involves members having no executive power but who share responsibility to scrutinise the policies and actions of the government, may be new to India. Still, it can be tried and implemented effectively. It requires understanding among various sections of people, whose progress is linked to a responsive government. The shadow cabinet is formed only to

Any government may at times adopt certain policies that are against the interests of the public. Such anti-people policies are adopted often to get political mileage or satiate patrons of the ruling parties at the cost of community assets and government land.

ensure good governance and smooth administration with ample checks and balances.

With a shadow cabinet in place, governments will on tenterhooks as they would not know what issue could be raised by any of the opposition parties and that too in the presence of the shadow cabinet.

Former chief minister of Odisha and Biju Janata Dal

(BJD) chief Naveen Patnaik was accused of not being able to function independently. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had declared at a public meeting that the BJP, if voted to power, would go for a thorough enquiry into the real health condition of Naveen Patnaik. Apart from the anti-incumbency factor, the BJP's campaign against the capabilities of Naveen contributed to



his defeat after a long stint of 25 years in power.

The shadow cabinet will keep tabs on the functioning of every department. This will make ruling party attentive to public needs. Due to such close watch, there may even be an opportunity for the ruling

party to take cues from the shadow cabinet for effective administration.

Given a shadow cabinet, there may no lethargic attitude on the part of ministers in the government with regard to the handling of any of the portfolios allotted to them. There would be scope for plugging loopholes in the functioning of various departments.

For example, many ministers in the erstwhile cabinets of both Telugu states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana had made verbal attacks on political opponents despite neglecting their duties. Some of the ministers did not maintain decorum in public life so much so that some of the legislators of the ruling parties declined to follow them while criticizing their opponents. Those ministers did not hold

a single review relating to their departments. People rejected such ministers in the recent elections, with regime change in both the Telugu states. They were fed up with the attitude of those erring ministers.

Such objectionable behaviour of ministers would not have been possible had there been a shadow cabinet to find faults in the right manner. Every department in the government would have constantly monitored its functioning. The shadow cabinet is intended to work like a watchdog over the functioning of the government in all its affairs. It can unearth aspects relating to improper governance by virtue of its close watch. This means that the government will have chance to correct itself, should there be deviations.

Coming back to Naveen, he

has enough legislators to form a shadow cabinet as BJD secured one-third seats in the House. Likewise, in Telangana, the Bharat Rastra Samiti (BRS) can afford to form a shadow cabinet to play the role of a watchdog, given its strength in the legislative Assembly. But the situation is different in Andhra Pradesh, where the opposition party does not even have the status of principal opposition. YSRCP has only 11 seats in the House, most of them are novices to the legislature. This precludes their ability to perform as members of the shadow cabinet even otherwise.

Members of the opposition parties should expose the misdeeds and misgovernance of the ruling party through a shadow cabinet. It would help strengthen democracy in the country.

Atchannaidu assures steps to solve problems of fishermen

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries K Atchannaidu, during the question and answer session on the third day of the Assembly sessions on Wednesday, stated that the previous YSRCP government has made the lives of fishermen difficult with their wicked decisions. They depend on fishing, which is their caste-based occupation, for a living, he said.



He said that having a long coastline is a good opportunity for the fishermen in the State. There are 3,325 small-scale irrigation ponds, 23,920 gram panchayat ponds and 118 reservoirs across the State. The Minister said that the late NT Rama Rao gave these ponds to fishermen's societies so that their lives will develop. However, the previous YSRCP government brought GIO 217 and handed over these ponds

to YSRCP activists through online tenders, which was a big setback to the fishermen community.

The Minister said that the previous government took various measures that severely impacted those caste-based workers.

Minister Atchannaidu added that the alliance government has taken a decision to cancel GO 217 brought by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and to initiate special measures to solve the problems of the fishermen.

Will strengthen Anti-Human Trafficking Wings, says HM

Power to register cases to be given to these wings

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Home Affairs Vangalapati Anitha has stated that the State government is making more effective steps to prevent missing of girls and women and for that, the government is vowing to strengthen the Anti Human Trafficking Wings across the State. She said one Inspector, two SIs, two Head Constables, and two Constables will be posted in these wings to give them powers to register cases.

During the Question Hour in the Legislative Council, the Home Minister reaffirmed that



her government is committed to protecting women. "The government mulls bringing down these cases by effectively implementing policing. As of now, the Crime Investigation

Department (CID) is looking into the missing cases, however, an effective system is required," she opined.

Further, she stated that the State government is taking serious steps against human trafficking. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports, 46,588 missing cases were reported in the State. During the regime of the TDP from 2014 to 2018, only 25,038 missing cases were reported. The number doubled in the YSRCP regime from 2019 to 2024, she commented.

The government is not compromising on law and order in

the State. However, the Police Department has been facing severe funds crunches for several years, and even the police personnel did not get maintenance bills. However, in the other States, the maintenance charges are around Rs.75,000. In this context, the reconstruction of the Police Department is needed, she opined.

Later, she disclosed that 19,999 vacancies are to be filled in the department. During the TDP rule from 2014 to 2019, 8,629 recruitments were made in the Police Department while it was just 411 in the YSRCP rule from 2019 to 2024, she said.



Parties support YSRCP protest in Delhi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Supporting the protest taken up by YSRCP led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in Delhi against the TDP-led Andhra Pradesh government's ongoing violence against YSRCP workers, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav addressed the gathering on Wednesday.

During the event, Akhilesh Yadav strongly condemned the acts of violence and expressed his gratitude to Jagan Reddy for inviting him. He stated that without the invitation, he would not have been aware of the severe violence occurring in Andhra Pradesh. Akhilesh emphasised that the TDP's actions are an attempt to instil fear among the people by targeting YSRCP workers.

Akhilesh highlighted the intolerable nature of the TDP government's harsh treatment towards YSRCP workers and urged CM Naidu to take serious measures to halt the violence and ensure the safety and security of all political workers and people in the State.

The others who came in support of the protest included Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut. He attended a protest led by Jagan Reddy. Sanjay Raut criticised the TDP government for the continuous violence by TDP goons against YSR Congress workers and called for a detailed investigation by the Centre into the prevailing violence. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant expressed solidarity with Jagan and said Andhra could become the new Manipur.

Atrocities unprecedented...

Continued from Page 1

Since the TDP coalition government came to power, there is no protection for life, limb, and the dignity of the people. Leaders and workers of the ruling party, with their barbaric and inhumane activities, are causing widespread fear among the people of the State.

He recalled that as Mahatma Gandhi once said, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. "The actions of the TDP are a direct threat to the justice and equality we all cherish. Due to the unleashing of the self-styled 'Red Book' governance by TDP government, policing is made ineffective. In just 45 days of the new government, more than 30 people have been murdered, 300 and odd murder attempts have been made, 35 people have committed suicide due to TDP harassment, 560 private properties have been destroyed, 490 government properties have been vandalised, and nearly 2,700 families have left their villages due to these atrocities. And

also, over 1,050 incidents of violence and attacks are reported," he alleged.

"On July 17, an YSRCP activist, Rashid, was brutally hacked to death in Vinukonda. This incident happened in the middle of a busy street, and shockingly, the police were in close proximity when it occurred. GV Anjeneyulu, MLA Vinukonda and followers celebrated the incident and yet, there is no case against the MLA," Jagan added.

He further said that TDP goons attacked YSRCP councillor Nadakuduti Girish, who actively participated in the recently concluded elections, and stabbed him multiple times in broad daylight on a busy road despite his attempts to run for his life in Nuzvid town. There are several such incidents happening in the State to corroborate the draconian rule of the present government in Andhra Pradesh. Even YSRCP's elected representatives to Parliament and the State Assembly, as well as candidates who contested the elections, have no protection.

Job calendar ...

Continued from Page 1

Also, 1,21,209 posts were filled between 2014-19 and 2019-24, he said. Further, he said that the State government is planning to release the Job Calendar to prepare the youths to appear for recruitment tests. In the Job Calendar, the government will disclose the upcoming notifications. So, it will be easier for the candidates to prepare for exams, he added.

Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) MLCs KS Lakshmana Rao and I Venkateswara Rao requested the government to fill all 2.46 lakh vacancies by releasing Group 2 and Group 3 exam notifications. Also, the government should regularise contract and outsourced employees, they urged.

Minister Keshav said that CM Chandrababu Naidu recently held a meeting with Telangana CM Revanth Reddy to discuss the pending bilateral State reorganisation issues.

CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION

Govt forms Technical Committee

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) has taken steps to address the stalled construction works in Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, by forming a Technical Committee. The committee consists of Chief Engineers from various departments involved in the construction projects. The decision to form this committee was based on proposals received from the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA).

To formalise the establishment and outline the responsibilities of the Technical Committee, MAUD Special Chief Secretary Anil Kumar Singhal issued Government Order (GOR) No. 541 on Wednesday.

Big scam involved in TDR bonds: Minister Narayana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal and Urban Development Minister Ponguru Narayana has said that a big scam is involved in TDR bonds and told the officials to work according to the rules without bowing to political pressures. The Minister held a review meeting with the officials of the Town Planning Department at Secretariat on Wednesday.

The Minister instructed that the building construction permits should be issued online and made it clear that online permission is mandatory no matter how many floors the building has. Narayana said that when he was minister in the Town Planning Department between 2014-2019, not a single complaint was received, but the situation has worsened in the last five years, he said.

The Minister said that there were huge irregularities in issuing TDR bonds in



Visakhapatnam, Tanuku, Guntur and Tirupati. If 29 bonds were issued in Tanuku, all of them were illegal. In issuing bonds, they were supposed to pay the value according to acres. They said that they committed illegalities by fixing the value of land according to square yards. They calculated Rs 22,000 per square yard instead of Rs 4,500 per square yard which means instead of giving 1:200, they gave 1:400. Three officials who were found guilty of irregularities in the issuance of bonds in Tanuku have been suspended.

18 killed as plane crashes...

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"Shortly after takeoff from runway 02, the aircraft veered off to the right and crashed on the east side of the runway," said a statement issued by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

It said rescue operations were initiated immediately and fire was brought under control.

"One injured person (Captain Manish Ratna Shukya) was rescued and taken to the hospital, and 18 People were found dead," it added. The deceased were identified as co-pilot S Katuwal, the employees of Saurya Airlines and a Yemeni national (Aref

Reda). Manu Raj Sharma, a technician of the airline, his wife Priza Khatriwada and their four-year-old son Adhi Raj Sharma, were among the deceased. Priza worked as an assistant computer operator at the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation. A statement issued by the airline said that Priza and her son were initially identified as employees of the company, but it was later revealed that they were passengers.

Videos posted online showed the plane being enveloped in fire and smoke. Fire engines and ambulances were rushed to the spot after the incident.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: Jul 25 04:40 AM to Jul 26 01:58 AM

Shashthi: Jul 26 01:58 AM to Jul 26 11:30 AM

Panchami: Jul 25 04:40 AM to Jul 26 01:58 AM

Nakshatram:

Purva Bhadrapada: Jul 24 06:14 PM to Jul 25 04:16 PM

Uttara Bhadrapada: Jul 25 04:16 PM to Jul 26 02:30 PM

Rahukalam: 1:59 PM to 3:35 PM

Yamagandam: 5:57 AM to 7:33 AM

Varjyam: 01:10 AM to 02:39 AM

Gulika: 9:09 AM to 10:46 AM

Amritakalam: 08:55 AM to 10:24 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:57 AM to 12:48 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy

Temp: 31°C

Humidity: 76%

Sunrise: 5:46 AM

Sunset: 6:42 PM

Updated: July 24, 2024 5:00 PM

Will unravel liquor ...

Continued from Page 1

Pointing out that the party came to power by making a promise to impose prohibition on the State and also bring down the sale of liquor besides confining the liquor supply to only five-star hotels, Chandrababu said that after assuming power 4,380 shops that were existing at that time were brought down to only 2,934 as just an eye-wash. Immediately and within one year the number was increased to 3,392. While continuing the number of bars which existed in 2019, he said, adding that the fact is that the excise police was totally amended in the name of prohibition.

The percentage of consumers of liquor increased to 6.23 which was 5.55 between 2019 and 2020, he said. The consumption has increased drastically. The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) system was brought in

through GO number 41 only to check illegal transport of liquor, drugs and ganja but the percentage of ganja smuggling went up by 27, while the non-duty paid liquor percentage increased to 66 and the number of arrests too went up to a whopping 161 per cent, he said. The popular brands of beers, too, have been brought down completely while the sale of local brands, which were never found anywhere in the country, have been increased from zero to 12 lakh. As per the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau those who fell victim to liquor consumption has gone up by 100 per cent compared to 2018, the Chief Minister said and added that the mental and sexual harassment cases had increased by 76.40 per cent. Over 52 per cent of persons suffered from lung failure and the percentage of persons of kidney failure, too, has gone up by 54 per cent, he explained.

Houses pass Bills ...

Continued from Page 1

The law brought by the YCP government is like a noose for the land owners, for any land dispute the owner has to move the High Court which the poor cannot afford. SC and ST marginal farmers are not in a position to bear the cost.

On the other hand, Health Minister Satya Prasad spoke and said that by changing the name of Dr NTR University of Health Sciences to Dr YSR University of Health Sciences the students faced many problems in 2022-2023. He said that there was no use of changing the name except troubling the students. He criticised the YSRCP government for the 'crazy act' of changing the name of UHS. He said that all sections were happy with NTR's reforms. The Minister recalled that Kadapa district has been named as YSR district. He asked whether the prestige of YSR has increased due to that or has the importance of Kadapa diminished.

'Talliki Vandanam' will ...

Continued from Page 1

At this stage, the government is more cautious about implementing the scheme effectively and is formulating guidelines, he said. "Considering the concerns of the poor and middle-class families that did not benefit from Amma Vodi, we are trying to avoid all the restrictions such as electricity bills of 300 units, four-wheelers, and government employees in a family," he said.

Meanwhile, Lokesh announced that his government is going to frame a roadmap to strengthen the education sector from the next academic year onwards. Every year, such a roadmap will be designed for the next academic year after consulting all teachers' unions and experts. During the previous government's rule, student enrollment in government schools declined by

around 7.20 lakh. All these issues will be discussed with all teachers' unions and educational experts under this new initiative, he added.

The Minister further said that the State government will continue education in mother tongue Telugu apart from English medium. The government is mulling a study on the Uttar Pradesh model education system as the students of the State will compete globally. For that, the Education Department officials will visit UP soon, he said.

Meanwhile, Lokesh expressed unhappiness over the implementation of the TOEFL exam for the students of Classes III to X in the State. While this question was raised by Jana Sena Party MLC Pidugu Hari Prasad, he replied that as of now there was no possibility to cancel the agreement with ETS.

Substantial hike for ...

Continued from Page 1

The breakup for Andhra Pradesh shows the state will get Rs 15,156.93 crore in corporate tax, Rs 17455.93 crore in income tax, Rs 15,079.39 crore in Central GST, Rs 2,228.46 crore in customs, Rs 469.73 crore in union excise duty and Rs 82.96 crore in other taxes and duties.

Telangana will receive Rs 7,872.25 crore in corporate tax, Rs 9,066.56 crore in income tax, Rs 7,832.19 crore in Central GST, Rs 1,157.45 crore in customs, Rs 2443.98 crore in union excise duty and Rs 43.09 crore in other taxes and duties. The Centre has allocated Rs 1,600 crore for public sector miner Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCL). This includes Rs 1,442.50 crore from internal resources.

SCCL is a joint venture of the Telangana government and the Centre with equity of 51 and 49 per cent, respectively.

An allocation of Rs 620 crore has been made for Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

The Public Sector Unit was allocated Rs 683 crore in 2023-24 (revised estimates).

The allocation for Visakhapatnam Port Trust has also come down from Rs 276 crore to Rs 150 crore.

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Budget a significant boost for development of State: CII AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Andhra Pradesh, has applauded the Union Budget 2024 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. They said that the budget signifies a significant step towards the holistic development of Andhra Pradesh, aligning with the vision of economic growth and infrastructural advancement.

The major highlight of the budget is the substantial financial assistance of Rs 15,000 crore allocated for the development of Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh. This immediate support underscores the Central government's commitment to transforming Amaravati into a vibrant hub of activity and growth. Additionally, the Finance Minister has assured that more funds will be allocated to Amaravati based on future requirements.

The key announcements include urgent allocation of funds for the completion of Phase I of the Polavaram major irrigation project, crucial for the agricultural and water management needs of the State. Dedicated financial packages were announced for



the development of backward areas in Rayalaseema, north Andhra Pradesh, and Prakasam districts in the south. This initiative aims to bridge the regional development gaps and foster balanced growth.

There is provision of special incentives for establishing industries in Andhra Pradesh, as stipulated in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2024. This move is expected to attract substantial investments and generate employment opportunities.

Funds were allocated for the development of the Visakhapatnam-Chennai industrial corridor and the Hyderabad-Bengaluru industrial corridor. These corridors are poised to become major industrial hubs, enhancing

the economic landscape of the region. Funds were also allocated for the development of infrastructure facilities, including highways, internal roads, water, and electricity, for the Koppurthi and Orvakally industrial estates. These estates form integral parts of the industrial corridors. Dr V Murali Krishna, Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh & Managing Director, Mahatma Gandhi Cancer Hospital & Research Institute, expressed his satisfaction with the budget, stating: "The Union Budget is a visionary step towards the comprehensive development of Andhra Pradesh. The substantial financial assistance for Amaravati and the focused investments in industrial and infrastruc-

al development are commendable. This budget not only addresses the immediate needs of the State, but also lays a strong foundation for its future growth."

GS Siva Kumar, Past Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh; D Ramakrishna, Past Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh; Vijay Naidu Galla, Past Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh; DV Ravindranath, Chairman, CII Vijayawada Zone; Dr V Nagalakshmi, Vice Chairperson, CII Vijayawada Zone; V Sudhakar Chowdary, Past Chairman, CII Vijayawada Zone; S Narendra Kumar, Past Chairman, CII Vijayawada Zone and Dr A Venkataramana, Past Chairman, CII Vijayawada Zone, were present.

GITAM varsity celebrates academic excellence at grand graduation ceremony

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Deemed-to-be University hosted its annual graduation ceremony on Wednesday, marking a significant milestone for 3,168 students from diverse academic disciplines. Held at the university's Visakhapatnam campus, the event underscored GITAM's unwavering dedication to academic excellence and innovative research.

Addressing the graduates, chief guest Shilpa Gupta, former Managing Director of Equiris Group, highlighted the importance of leveraging personal experiences and insights for future success. Gupta emphasised that India pro-



vides unmatched opportunities for growth, urging the youth to embrace new challenges and capitalise on the country's burgeoning startup culture. She also underscored the growing significance of women in the workforce, reflecting on her own experiences.

Dr D. Gunasekaran, Registrar of GITAM, commended the academic achievements of the graduates. The ceremony saw 44 students honoured with gold medals for exceptional academic perfor-

mance across various fields. In addition, 99 doctoral degrees were awarded to research scholars. Prof Y Gouthama Rao, In-Charge Vice-Chancellor, spoke about the university's strategic investments in research and development. "GITAM's allocation of Rs. 26 crore towards research infrastructure and the provision of 5,296 scholarships totalling Rs. 35.23 crore highlight our commitment to excellence," Prof. Rao stated.

He also detailed ongoing projects, including 63 funded research initiatives, and emphasised the establishment of a new 5G use case lab, which positions GITAM at the forefront of technological.

Ex-legislators seek increase in pension

AP Former Legislators Forum leaders meet Chief Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Former Legislators Forum (APFLF) has urged Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to enhance the pension amount along the lines of the Telangana State. At present, former MLAs and MLCs are receiving Rs.30,000 as pension per month. The Telangana State has enhanced it to Rs.50,000. In view of increasing family expenses and increasing essential goods costs, the pension amount should be increased in the State, the Forum said.

APFLF honorary president Divi Sivaram (Ex-MLA), president MV Siva Reddy (Ex-MLC), vice-president Jalli Wilson (Ex-MLC) secretaries P Kanaka Sundara Rao (Ex-MLA) and Rudra Raju Padma Raju (Ex-MLC) met the Chief Minister and submitted a representation in this regard at the AP Legislative Assembly on Wednesday. Later, they met Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyannapattu and Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju, Legislative



Andhra Pradesh Former Legislators Forum leaders submitting a representation to CM Chandrababu Naidu to enhance their pension amount, at Assembly on Wednesday

Affairs Minister Payyavula Keshav and BJP and JSP leaders, and submitted representations.

During the meeting with Chandrababu Naidu, the forum leaders said that the pension amount for the former MLAs and MLCs has not been enhanced for the past 10 years. They are working among the public to provide services to them. However, they are facing financial problems. Most of the

former MLAs and MLCs belong to the backward sections, so they are facing financial troubles as the present pension amount is not sufficient, they added.

Further, they asked the CM to examine the enhancement of the pension amount in Telangana and take appropriate steps to increase the pension amount in Andhra Pradesh. For that, they handed over the Telangana State

government Gazette copy to Chandrababu.

Later, they said they were unable to take medicines at either the Secretariat Dispensary or the District Hospital. Many former legislators are unable to take medicines due to their health problems and old age. So, the government should make arrangements to provide medicines at the government-selected branded medical shops, they urged.

They also requested Chief Minister Naidu to allot 500 square yards of house sites in Amaravati at a nominal price as many ex-MLAs and MLCs do not own houses. Additionally, they requested Naidu to provide accommodation for class 3 at the AP Guest House in New Delhi and to amend the present prices. Further, they asked for a room on the premises of the Assembly, protocol facility, exemption from the toll charges for their vehicles and accommodation, and darshan facility at all Grade 1 temples including Tirumala.

Heavy rains hit APSRTC revenue

Number of passengers drastically reduced

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The recent cyclone that lashed the district has inflicted a severe blow to the revenue streams of the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC). Persistent heavy rains over the past five days have drastically reduced the number of passengers, leading to a significant drop in occupancy rates and daily income.

Before the cyclone's onset, APSRTC enjoyed a comfortable 70 per cent occupancy rate during the first 18 days of the month. However, these figures plummeted to 52 per cent between Friday and Tuesday, illustrating the storm's significant impact. This drop in occupancy translates to a substantial daily revenue loss of Rs. 20 lakh, with the average daily income dipping from Rs. 98 lakh to Rs. 78 lakh. The situation has been particularly dire in the Agency areas where roads were inundated and obstructed by fallen trees. Some regions witnessed a complete standstill in bus services, especially



The situation has been particularly dire in the Agency areas where roads were inundated and obstructed by fallen trees.

near a bridge close to Vaddadi in Anakapalli district. Night services to Seeleru and Bhadrachalam were suspended, and daytime services operated with minimal numbers of passengers.

To mitigate the impact of the low passenger count, APSRTC was forced to cancel

several long-distance services. Over the past five days, one service to Hyderabad and two services each to Vijayawada, Kakinada, and Rajahmundry were discontinued. This disruption has not only affected the corporation's revenue, but also left commuters stranded and inconvenienced. However, there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon. Regional Manager Andhavarapu Appalaraju has announced that all services will resume their regular schedule from Thursday onwards. The resumption of services is expected to restore some normalcy for commuters and help recover the lost revenue.

The cyclone's impact has highlighted the vulnerability of the region's transportation infrastructure to natural disasters. As APSRTC works to recover from this setback, there is a growing call for better preparedness and resilient infrastructure to withstand such events in the future. In the meantime, commuters are advised to stay informed about service updates and plan their travel accordingly.

Collector launches programme to employ 10,000 individuals by March

Stresses need for district-wide job fair and establishment of a monthly job calendar

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has initiated a robust employment generation strategy aimed at providing job opportunities to 10,000 individuals by March next year. The plan, presented at a District Level Skill Development Committee meeting on Wednesday, outlines a comprehensive approach to tackle unemployment and stimulate economic growth in the region. District Skill Development Officer G. Saikrishna has been entrusted with the implementation

of this ambitious project, with the State Bank of India's Rural Self-Employment Training Institute (RSTI) playing a pivotal role.

The Collector highlighted the importance of a proactive approach, emphasising the need for a district-wide job fair and the establishment of a monthly job calendar. This calendar will provide detailed information on job vacancies, eligibility criteria, and application processes, enabling job seekers to effectively prepare and apply for suitable positions.

Furthermore, the admin-

istration will collaborate closely with employers across various sectors to identify skill gaps and tailor training programmes accordingly. A particular focus will be on providing career guidance to Class 10 students to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills for future employment.

The Collector expressed optimism about the potential impact of this employment drive, stating, "This initiative is not just about creating jobs; it's about empowering individuals and transforming our district into a thriving economic hub. By pro-

viding targeted training and support, we aim to equip our youth with the skills they need to succeed in the job market."

Representatives from the District Industries Centre, APIC, DRDA, SBI RSTI, NAAC, MSME Training Centre, SC Corporation, BC Corporation, Technical Education Department, and Government ITI attended the meeting. The successful implementation of this plan has the potential to create a ripple effect throughout the community, benefiting individuals, families, and the local economy as a whole.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Training of trainers workshop held in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Health, Medical & Family Welfare, in collaboration with the National Centre for Disease Control, Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, supported by USAID RISE, is organising a training of trainers workshop on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) in two batches for the HICC teams from 22 medical colleges from July 23 to 26. As many as 115 partici-



pants and seven master trainers are participating in the programme. Prominent dignitaries including Medical, Health and Family Welfare Commissioner C Hari

Kiran, Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh, National Centre for Disease Control Additional Director Dr Lata Kapoor, Director of Medical Education Dr DVSL Narasimhan, One Health at Child Health and Family Welfare State Nodal Officer Dr D Mohana Krishna, USAID representatives Vijay Paulraj, and Dr Vineet Kumar attended the training programme. The workshop intends to equip these healthcare professionals from the 22

medical colleges in the State in setting up hospital infection control programmes and equip them with knowledge and skills to effectively prevent and control infections within healthcare facilities based on the National Guidelines for Infection Prevention and Control as per the MoHFW 2020. IPC practices play a crucial role in reducing the burden of infectious diseases, improving healthcare outcomes, safeguarding the health of patients and improving the quality of care.

Women should avail of govt schemes to become entrepreneurs: Collector

Expo and brainstorming conference on women-led industries held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the NTR district, efforts are underway to empower women economically through various government schemes aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and income generation. On Wednesday, an expo and brainstorming conference on women-led industries was held at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada, jointly organised by the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) and NTR District Rural Development Agency (DRDA).



including agricultural drones, drip irrigation sprinklers, mini rice mills, catering units, and sweetpot units. Detailed information on unit costs, available loans from banks, subsidies, and other financial aspects were provided to women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

The conference aimed to raise awareness on govern-

ment schemes, application procedures, and the process of setting up units. Collector Srijana highlighted the crucial role of disseminating accurate information to ensure the schemes reach their intended beneficiaries effectively. She underscored the responsibility of creating awareness about these opportunities.

SRMAP Entrepreneurship Challenge held for students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SRM University organised an innovative entrepreneurial competition, SRMAP Entrepreneurship Challenge-2024, jointly with the Directorate of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The event for school children of Classes 11 and 12 was held at Delhi Public School Amaravati, Guntur. Seventy students from seven schools -- Delhi Public School, Amaravati, Happy Valley School, West Berry School, Vivekananda School, St John's School, Atkinson School, Nalanda Vidya Niketan from Vijayawada, Tenali and Guntur -- were selected to participate in the day-long interactive entrepreneurship competition. The competition provided a live simulation of becoming an entrepreneur for the participants. Divided into 14 groups of five students each, they engaged in learning the tools of entrepreneurship before build-



ing and pitching their innovative venture ideas and finally facing challenging questions from the judges and peers to refine their entrepreneurial ideas.

Prof Siddharth Tripathy, Director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at SRM University-AP, led the programme. Acting as a mentor, he introduced the students to the captivating world of entrepreneurship. Joining him were Udayan Bakshi, Associate Director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Pramod Pandey, Assistant Director of

Admissions from SRM University-AP, Usha Rani, Principal, and Chukkappalli Priyanka, Director of Delhi Public School-Amaravati. The top four presentations were awarded cash prizes. Teams from Atkinson Senior Secondary School and St. John's Public School emerged as joint second runners-up and won a cash prize of Rs 4,000. West Berry School secured the second position and bagged Rs 6,000 as the prize, and the students from Nalanda Vidya Niketan claimed the top prize of Rs 11,000.

MP seeks special allocations for AP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In his inaugural speech in the Parliament on Wednesday, Visakhapatnam MP M Sriharat made an urgent plea for special financial support for Andhra Pradesh, drawing significant attention and prompting widespread debate on political and economic matters.

Sriharat painted a vivid picture of the severe financial difficulties facing Andhra Pradesh, contrasting the current situation with the effective crisis management by former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu during 1995 and 2014. He argued that the current government is dealing with even greater challenges, including a massive debt crisis. He warned that without substantial assistance from the Central government, the State's future could be bleak.

In his speech, Sriharat pro-

posed several key measures, including the reversal of the privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. He suggested that the steel plant should be added to the list of 200 companies where privatisation would be undone. He called on the Central government to provide the necessary guidelines to support this move and emphasised the need for the swift completion of crucial railway zone projects to improve regional connectivity.

Sriharat also commended Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for their forward-thinking budget allocations, which aim to establish India as the world's third-largest economy by 2027. He underscored the importance of strong States in building a robust nation and supported the developmental goals outlined in the budget.

Rs 667 cr released for Vodarevu-Piduguralla NH A-167A construction

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Collector J Venkata Murali has said that Rs 667 crore has been released for the construction of National Highway A-167A from Vodarevu to Piduguralla, stating the national highway would help a lot to Bapatla district.

District Collector J Venkata Murali, accompanied by Joint Collector B Subba Rao, inspected the Vodarevu-Piduguralla national highway construction works on Wednesday. He inquired the engineers and highway officials about the progress of the works.

The Collector also inspected the construction work of National Highway Bridge over Chirala. He inquired about the 47 KMs long



national highway construction work of four lines from Chirala port to Piduguralla. He also examined the national highway road plan and maps and the officials explained to him about the construction process. Later the Collector went to Parchur where he inspected the con-

struction works of the National Highway and Major Bridge across the irrigation canal.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that the National Highway under construction would become very important for export of marine and agricul-

tural products from Bapatla district. He stated that funds of Rs 667 crores had been released for the construction of NHA-167A National Highway from the Vodarevu port to Puduguralla. The NHA-167A begins at Vodarevu port in Chirala mandal and ends at Puruch, stating 35 KMs of NHA-167A goes through Bapatla district.

Collector Venkata Murali clarified that 103 hectares of land required for the construction of the national highway in Bapatla district of which 22.30 hectares belonged to the government while 82.70 hectares of land to be acquired. "The NHA-167A to be constructed with four lanes will be 24 meters wide. Steps are being taken to complete this road in the dis-

trict by the end of December 2025. Four major bridges and six underpasses are being constructed on the highway between Vodarevu and Piduguralla," the Collector explained. The Collector directed the engineering officials not to compromise with quality while carrying out works and advised them to maintain high standards and quality in the highway works. He opined that the sales of marine products from the Vodarevu port will increase further from now on in the district, stating that the highway will also help for the export of agricultural products of Bapatla district. The RDO of various mandals and NGA engineers were among those who accompanied the Collector.

Australian High Commissioner calls on Dy, CM Pawan Kalyan

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Australian High Commissioner Philip Green called on Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan in his residence at Mangalagiri on Wednesday.

Pawan Kalyan discussed with the High Commissioner about the investments by Australia in AP. Pawan Kalyan mentioned that the number of students going to Australia for higher education from Andhra Pradesh is increasing and that appropriate guidance should be provided to inform the details of educational opportunities and educational institutions in that country.

The Australian High Commissioner responded positively for the same. Consul General of Australia in Chennai Silai Zaki, Economic Counselor of Australian High Commission Julian Storm, and Agriculture Counselor of Australian High



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Commission Kiran Karamil participated in this meeting.



59 red sanders logs seized; four held

PNS ■ KADAPA

The police seized 59 red sander logs and arrested four red sander smugglers at Kunta Regimanukonda village in Gopavaram mandal.

DSP Venkateswarla told the media in Badvel on

Wednesday that on a tip off, the police conducted checking of vehicles. They found 59 red sander logs being transported on a Tata Ace vehicle and seized. The police also seized a motorcycle on which one smuggler was going ahead of the Tata Ace vehicle as pilot.

Officials told to enhance standards of education

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi directed the educational officials to take steps to enhance educational standards in the government schools.

The Collector held a meeting with the education department officials here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, she said that the role of mandal education department officials is important in improving the standard of education in government schools, adding that the MEOs should motivate the teachers with special supervision to examine the level of education and the educational standards of the students at the government schools.

"The MEOs should lay special focus to the students who are lagging behind in studies. If they do so, it will not be difficult to increase the educational standards at the government schools," the Collector



told them. The Collector informed the MEOs that a rank would be given to the MEO, who strives hard to enhance standards of education at government schools and he would also be appreciated.

"Steps should be taken to ensure that 'Vidya Kanuka' kits are distributed to all students at the government schools. Steps should also be taken to grow vegetable plants in kitchen gardens. The mid-day meal kitchen should be kept clean and steps should be taken to prevent spoilage of

goods due to monsoons," she instructed the officials. The quality of rice, dal, chicki and eggs which are served in the mid-day meal should be examined, she told the officials.

While speaking at a review meeting with the medical and health officials, the Collector asked them to ensure that the pregnant women and children should be administered the needed vaccinations. "The doctors should be available in the government hospitals in the prescribed duty hours. It is the responsibility of the doctors of the concerned government hospitals to ensure that pregnant women are free from anemia and other health problems by conducting medical examinations from time to time," she told them.

Collector Vetri Selvi appreciated the medical and health officials and staff for providing the best medical services to the flood hit people at Kukkurur and Velerupadu villages.

Aditi Singh takes charge as Joint Collector



PNS ■ KADAPA

Aditi Singh took charge as district Joint Collector here on Wednesday. She took charge as Joint Collector in her chamber and priests blessed her. Later talking to the media, the Joint Collector said that she would work as per the aspirations of people and strive hard to provide better service to the people. She assured of working hard to implement welfare schemes efficiently and flawlessly.

She said that she worked as Municipal Commissioner of Tirupati for six months and also worked as sub-collector in Vijayawada sub-division previously.



Dhatri Reddy takes charge as JC

PNS ■ ELURU

P Dhatri Reddy assumed charge as joint Collector of Eluru district on Wednesday.

Later, the Joint Collector called on district Collector K Vetri

Selvi in the Collector's office. The Collector congratulated Dhatri Reddy on assuming charge as Joint Collector.

Dhatri Reddy earlier worked as Sub-Collector of Paderu.

Sniffer dogs inducted to prevent red sander smuggling

PNS ■ TIRUPATHI

The Task Force police have inducted sniffer dogs into service to check the red sander smugglers.

Two sniffer dogs, Hunter and Ganga, which were trained to find red sander logs, were pressed into service and Task Force SP P Srinivas inspected the dogs on how they could give clues to the police regarding concealed red sander logs.

Task Force SP Srinivas said that they would also focus on using the services of the sniffer dogs to find red sander logs dumped in the forest areas and apprehend the red sander smugglers. He said that the task force has five sniffer dogs, two in Tirupathi and the remaining three in Kadapa and Railway Koduru sub-controls. Along with suspected check posts, vehicles going towards the forest areas will be checked by the sniffer dogs, he said. He said that red sander logs concealed in the forest areas would be



Task Force SP Srinivas said that they would also focus on using the services of the sniffer dogs to find red sander logs dumped in the forest areas and apprehend the red sander smugglers

detected by the sniffer dogs as the dogs were trained in this regard.

The Task force SP said that the functioning of sniffer dogs was checked experimentally in the office premises of the task force and that the dogs completed their work successfully. RI (Operations) Suresh Kumar Reddy and sniffer dog's trainers participated in this program.

6 kg ganja seized; one arrested



PNS ■ TIRUPATHI

The Special Enforcement Bureau officials seized 6 KGs of cannabis while being transported illegally by a person at Budanam toll plaza in Gudur mandal.

An SEB police team led by Gudur Assistant Superintendent of SEB J Ramesh conducted checking of vehicles at the toll plaza. The

police noticed a person named Nanda Sahu, belonging to Odisha state, moving with a bag in a suspicious manner.

The police held him and checked the bag. They found six KGs of ganja in the bag.

On questioning, he told the police that he was taking the ganja to Chennai to sell it at Red Hills areas. Cases were registered against him and he was produced before the court.

Officials told to ensure no power interruptions

FLOOD-HIT MANDALS



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Chandalavada Nagarani directed the electricity officials to take steps to ensure that there would be no power failures in the flood affected mandals.

Collector Nagarani held a meeting with the special officer of floods, General Manager of EPDCL of Visakhapatnam and Executive Engineer of

EPDCL Bhimavaram here on Wednesday and reviewed the power supply in the flood affected mandals.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector ordered the officials to make advance arrangements to ensure that there would be no interruption of electricity supply in the Godavari flood hit villages. The Collector also advised the General Manager of EPDCL to keep the necessary material

and personnel ready to swing into action, if needed.

The officials apprised the Collector that they are ready with all the arrangements and at present they were supplying uninterrupted power as the flood flow was receding. On the occasion, the General Manager explained to the District Collector that the staff has been appointed at all vulnerable points. He told the Collector that if the inflow of Godavari increases, the electricity supply will be disconnected during the day and will be restored only at night. Special Flood Officer and APEPDC Visakhapatnam General Manager PSSV Rammurthy and APEPDC Bhimavaram Executive Engineer P Ahmed Khan were among those who attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Collector Nagarani directed the officials concerned to prepare plans to provide jobs.

TASTY ANNAPRASADAM TTD EO holds meeting with rice millers

PNS ■ TIRUPATHI

As a part of enhancing the taste of Annaprasadam, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive officer J Syamala Rao here on Wednesday met with Rice Millers, which supplies the rice to TTD. During the meeting attended by representatives of the Rice Millers' Association from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana here, Rao asked the Rice Millers Association leads from both states to give specifications that help enhance rice standards during

procurement so that the same might be included while inviting tenders.

While suggesting many parameters that enhance the taste of rice, they also brought to the notice of EO that the cooking equipment in Vengamamba Annaprasadam needs an overhaul as they are over a decade and a half old. The EO said TTD has already contemplated the same and will soon bring changes in the cooking method. Both the JEOs Ms Goutami, Veerabrahmam, Deputy Executive officer Annaprasadam Rajendra Kumar.

CONG TRYING TO MAKE MUSI PROJECT ITS ATM, SAYS MAHESHWAR BJP MLAs walk out in protest against resolution on Union Budget

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said the Congress government is trying to make the Musi Riverfront Development Project an ATM like the BRS government made the Kaleshwaram Project its ATM. He said that there is a big scam behind the Musi Riverfront Project costing Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

Participating in the discussion in the Assembly on Wednesday on the resolution introduced by the Congress government against the Union Budget for not allocating funds to Telangana, Maheshwar said that Telangana would have become a desert if special cat-



egory status had been given to Andhra Pradesh. He made it clear that the Centre has no bias against Telangana. Criticising the statements of the Congress against Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Maheshwar said the Union Ministers are slaves of Bharat

Matha and the people. He said that Telangana Congress leaders have become the slaves of Rahul Gandhi to protect their seats.

The BJLP leader said that it is not proper for the Congress and the BRS to say that the Centre allocated Rs 15,000 crore to Andhra Pradesh. He said that there are Central projects worth Rs 80,000 crore worth in Telangana and the Centre had allocated Rs 9.5 lakh crore to TG in the last 10 years.

The Centre allocated Rs 3500 crore for the Amrut Scheme but the TG government diverted it. He said the Centre had allocated Rs 30,000 crore for the Regional Ring Road

(RRR) project and that Hyderabad will change if RRR is executed.

Maheshwar said that there would not be any priority for the state in the Union Budget, but the Centre will allocate funds to the state. The Chief Minister has no understanding of this as he became the CM directly without any admin experience.

He said that both BRS and Congress leaders blocked him in the House and that BRS and Congress leaders entered into match fixing deals to divert attention from the issue. "The CM allocated Rs 4000 crore to a single constituency in the last budget. Is it neglecting other districts? The

Congress engaged in venomous campaigns against BJP MLAs and MPs. Chief Minister Revanth is afraid of losing his CM seat as the BJP won eight LS seats in Telangana," Maheshwar said.

However, the BJLP staged a walkout from the Assembly protesting against the resolution introduced by the Congress government against the Union Budget. Maheshwar said his party is staging a walkout as the State government introduced the resolution going against the federal spirit. He said they are staging a walkout as the State government is not withdrawing the resolution against the Union Budget.

SHE Teams nab 117

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad SHE Teams on Wednesday revealed that 117 persons were arrested on July 22 and 23 for misbehaving with women during Bonalu celebrations.

The accused were apprehended from various locations for misbehaving with women in public spaces. They will be produced before the magistrate for further action. It was 24/7 handwork of SHE Teams with commitment to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, particularly women during this Ujjaini Bonalu.

This initiative underscores the ongoing efforts to maintain public order and protect the community.

INDIA CORNER

201 Indian pilgrims died during Haj pilgrimage 2024: Govt in LS

More than 200 Indian pilgrims died during the Haj pilgrimage 2024, with a majority of the deaths being attributed to cardio-respiratory and cardio-pulmonary arrests, the government informed the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the government of India has placed significant emphasis on the successful conduct of Haj operations and on ensuring the safety and well-being of Indian pilgrims. "As of 21st July 2024, 201 Indian pilgrims have died during Haj pilgrimage 2024 with a majority of them attributed to cardio-respiratory and cardio-pulmonary arrests," he said. It is to further state that more than 70 per cent of the total fatalities have occurred among pilgrims aged 60 and above, Rijiju added. He said the government is committed to improving the overall Haj experience of Indian Haj pilgrims.



Man kills wife, buries her in agriculture field; held

A man allegedly killed his wife and buried her in an agricultural field with the help of his family members in Gwalior district of Madhya Pradesh, while misleading police with a missing person report, an officer said on Wednesday. Police have registered a case against four individuals and arrested the prime accused and his brother. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shiyaz KM said Janved Kirar, a resident of Jorasi village under Bilaua police station jurisdiction, had filed a missing complaint for his wife, Pragati Kirar (33), on July 11. Police suspected something was amiss when the woman's relatives claimed Pragati Kirar had faced harassment from her in-laws, the ASP stated. Janved initially misled investigators but later admitted to an altercation with his wife on July 8, after overhearing her converse with someone on the phone.



Alert train crew averts accident at Udupi Railway station

The alertness of an express train's loco pilot and his assistant helped avert an accident near the Udupi Railway station on Wednesday, officials said. After noticing that a huge tree had fallen on tracks, they managed to stop the train just in time. According to a statement from the Railways, the incident occurred near the Udupi Railway station. After the train was halted, railway workers quickly arrived at the spot to clear the tracks. According to sources from Konkarn Railway, the Matsyagandha Express was on its way from Barkur to Udupi when the crew noticed the tree on the tracks at 9.18 am. Acting swiftly, they applied the emergency brakes, bringing the train to a stop without any incident. An overhead equipment team (OHT), responsible for track maintenance, promptly removed the fallen tree, allowing the train to continue its journey shortly after.



Trust deficit between farmers, govt, says SC

Proposes panel to talk to protesters at Shambhu border

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that there is a trust deficit between farmers and the central government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday proposed the constitution of an independent committee comprising eminent persons to reach out to the protesters at Shambhu border and address their demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP. The top court directed the Punjab and Haryana governments to suggest the names of suitable individuals for the committee and submit a proposal for removal of barricades on the national highway while ordering a status quo on the border for a week. A three-judge bench headed by Justice Surya Kant said there is a need for a "neutral umpire" who can inspire confidence between farmers and the government.



"You have to take some steps to reach out to farmers. Why would they otherwise want to come to Delhi? You are sending Ministers from here and despite their best intentions there is trust deficit," the bench also comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan said. "Let appropriate instructions be taken within a week. Till then let parties maintain

status quo at the site to prevent flaring up of the situation at the Shambhu border," the bench said while posting the matter after a week. The top court was hearing the Haryana government's plea challenging the high court order asking it to remove within a week the barricades at the Shambhu border near Ambala where protesting farmers have been

camping since February 13.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted that earlier the roads were blocked against the three agricultural laws and now they have new demands. The apex court remarked that the state cannot keep the highway blocked all round the year. Mehta submitted that over 500-600 tanks, which have been modified as "armoured tanks" are positioned at the protest site. He said if they are permitted to travel to the national capital, law and order situation may arise.

Indians in Tanzania important bridge of friendship

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu said Wednesday India and Tanzania have traditionally enjoyed close relations and the Indian community in the East African country serves as an important bridge of friendship between the two nations. Her remark came during a meeting she had with the Speaker of the National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania and President of Inter-Parliamentary Union Tulia Ackson at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. India and Tanzania have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations, Murmu said. According to a statement issued by the President's secretariat, Murmu said the Indian community in Tanzania serves as an important bridge of India-Tanzania friendship and also fondly recalled her wide-ranging discussions with President Samia Suluhu Hassan during her state visit to India in October 2023.

No instance of paper leak during railway recruitment process: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Highlighting transparency and compliance of all laid down guidelines of recruitment process, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Railway Recruitment Board examinations are quite technical in nature entailing large scale mobilisation of men and resources and training of manpower. "Railway overcame all these challenges and successfully conducted the recruitment in a transparent manner following all laid down guidelines. No instance of paper leakage or similar malpractice has occurred during the entire process," Vaishnaw said in a written reply in Lok Sabha to questions raised by DMK MP Kalandi Veeraswamy. Veeraswamy wanted to know the number of vacant posts in the Railways and steps taken by the government to fill them. "Occurrence and filling up of vacancies are a continuous process in Indian Railways considering its size, spatial



distribution and criticality of operation," Vaishnaw said. He added, "Adequate and suitable manpower is provided to cater to the regular operations, changes in technology, mechanisations and innovative practices. The vacancies are filled up primarily by placement of indents by Railways with Recruitment agencies as per operational and technological requirements." According to the railway minister, after easing of restrictions imposed on account of COVID 19, two major examinations involving more than 2.37 crore candidates have

been conducted successfully. "Computer Based Test (CBT) exam for more than 1.26 crore candidates was conducted in 7 phases from 28.12.2020 to 31.07.2021 in 133 shifts in 68 days across 211 cities and 726 centres," Vaishnaw said. "Similarly, CBT was conducted for more than 1.1 crore candidates in 5 phases from 17.08.2022 to 11.10.2022 in 99 shifts in 33 days across 191 cities and 551 centres. Based on these exams, 1,30,581 candidates have been recruited in railways," he added. Drawing a comparison of recruitment done in Indian Railways during 2004-2014 vis-a-vis during 2014-2024, Vaishnaw said 4.11 lakh recruitment were done between 2004-14 while between 2014-24, 5.02 lakh recruitment took place. "Further, as system improvement, the Ministry of Railways has introduced a system of publishing an annual calendar this year for recruitment to various categories of Group 'C' posts," Vaishnaw said.



Nitish shouts at oppn women members inside Assembly

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday drew flak from the RJD for shouting at opposition women members inside the assembly. Kumar's outburst came as opposition members stood in the well of the House, demanding that the state's amended reservation laws be incorporated in the 9th schedule of the Constitution to make it immune from legal scrutiny. Women legislators of the RJD were also in the well shouting slogans like "Nitish Kumar Hai Hai (down with Nitish Kumar)", besides accusing the chief minister of being anti-reservation. The septuagenarian chief minister lost his cool. Waving his fingers at the legislators, especially at Rekha Devi of RJD, Kumar shouted, "You are a woman. Do you realise that it was only after I

assumed power that women started getting their dues in Bihar? You are a woman, (still) you do not know anything. If you say Hai Hai to me, then it's Hai Hai for all," said the furious CM. "It was at my instance that you all agreed to a caste survey after which quotas for SC, ST, OBCs and the extremely backward classes were hiked," said Kumar. He told the House that after the Patna High Court set aside the reservation laws, the state moved the Supreme Court. "A formal request has also been made to the Centre for including those in the 9th schedule," Kumar said. The Bihar government urged the Centre to incorporate the hiked reservation for deprived castes from 50 to 65 per cent in state government jobs and educational institutions in the 9th schedule of the Constitution.

Budget allocates funds for 1 crore houses in cities, says Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Manohar Lal on Wednesday hailed the 2024-25 Budget as people-centric, saying the central government has taken care of every section of society, especially women and farmers. Talking to reporters, the Union housing and urban affairs minister said in the Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman a day earlier, there is also a provision to fund one crore houses in cities. "In the Union Budget, several schemes have been announced for the welfare of every section of society. The Budget has also focused on infrastructure. Allocation has been made for construction of one crore houses," Manohar said. On Tuesday, the government announced central assistance of Rs 2.2 lakh crore over the next five years to meet the housing requirement of one crore urban poor and middle-class families under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban and proposed interest subsidy to provide loans at affordable rates. According to the government, under the PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0, housing needs of one crore urban poor and middle-class families will be addressed with an investment of Rs 10 lakh crore.

Don't take inflation lightly, Chidambaram cautions govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former finance minister P Chidambaram on Tuesday cautioned the government against taking inflation lightly, saying every family is hit hard by price rise and asked why the RBI has not reduced bank rates for 13 months if it was low as claimed. Initiating discussion on the Union Budget 2024-25 in the Rajya Sabha, the senior Congress leader also asked if the proposed employment-linked incentive (ELI) has been mooted as the existing production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes have failed to gener-

ate employment while mocking Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for lifting ideas from the Congress manifesto for the ELI scheme. He said the finance minister in her Budget speech "dismissed the subject in just ten words". "Is inflation such a trivial subject (that) you can deal with it casually and dismiss it in ten words?" he asked, arguing that in the interiors and hinterland of India, "inflation is much higher" than data collected mostly from towns and villages that are along national and state highways and dis-



tribut roads. Chidambaram also took exception to the statement by the Chief Economic Advisor in

the Economic Survey that India's inflation continues to be low, stable and moving towards the 4 per cent target. "It has been moving for the last four years. When will it arrive at the 4 per cent target?" the Congress leader asked. He further said, "I think what the Chief Economic Advisor said in the Economic Survey is the injury, and the honourable finance minister dismissing the subject in ten words is adding insult to injury". He argued that if inflation is low, stable and moving towards the 4 per cent target, why has

the RBI not revised downward the bank rate fixed in June 2023? "Bank rate is a good measure of where inflation is moving. If inflation is moving towards the 4 per cent target, why is the RBI keeping the bank rate at 6.5 per cent for the last 13 months? Why is the MPC, the Monetary Policy Committee, not willing to revise it downwards?" Chidambaram said. He asserted that inflation is a humiliating situation because every family is hit by inflation. "I warn this government, you are taking inflation not so seriously".

BJP to hold 'day-and-night' dharna in Karnataka Assembly, Council over MUDA 'scam

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The BJP in Karnataka on Wednesday announced that it would stage "day-and-night" dharna in both Legislative Assembly and Council over not allowing discussion regarding the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), which involves plots given to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife. The opposition was not allowed to discuss the issue in both the Houses today. The legislature session is slated to end on Friday. Assembly Speaker U T Khader rejected the opposi-



tion's adjournment motion notice on the matter. While the ruling Congress, citing rules, urged the Speaker not to allow discussion on the issue, the opposition BJP, claiming that a needle of suspicion is pointing to the fam-

ily of the "most important person" of the state, demanded that it be allowed. The opposition also alleged a political motive behind formation of the inquiry commission to probe the matter and said it was aimed at denying the House an opportunity to debate the issue. "After hearing both sides, as the adjournment notice that the opposition has given is not an urgent matter and as an inquiry commission has been constituted under a retired judge to probe the charges, also as the matter is also not of immediate occurrence, it has been rejected," the Speaker ruled.

Budget giving backdoor entry to farm laws: SKM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Samyukt Kisan Morcha on Wednesday said the Union Budget will lead to the corporatisation of agriculture and alleged that it also provides for a "backdoor entry" to the provisions of the three farm laws, which were repealed nearly two years ago. Addressing a virtual press conference, Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) leaders said the budget, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, did not have any provisions for improving the situation of farmers, and they will burn copies of the Budget as a protest.

Ashish Mittal of the All India Kisan Maha Sabha (AIKMS) pointed out that the announcement related to natural farming in the Budget may lead to a decline in production, as happened in the case of Sri Lanka. "They are going to train one crore farmers for natural farming. The problem is it will lead to a reduction in production. A similar move in Sri Lanka had led to the food crisis there," he added. Jai Kisan Andolan leader Avik Saha said the Budget was trying to provide a "backdoor entry" to the provisions of farm laws. "Farmers are almost invisible in the Budget. It is trying to give a backdoor entry to the farm laws," he noted. In a statement issued after the press conference, SKM said the Budget will lead to the corporatisation of agriculture at the cost of farmers and workers, and usurp the rights of state governments, violating the basic concept of the federal character of the Constitution of India.

Anxiety in older adults may triple risk of dementia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People with anxiety could be at three times the risk of developing dementia compared to those without anxiety, according to a study. People aged 60-70 years with chronic (persistent) anxiety were found to be more likely to develop the mental condition in which memory and decision-making are impaired, affecting daily activities, according to the study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. Researchers, including those from the University of Newcastle, UK, said that people whose anxiety was resolved did

not have a higher dementia risk compared to those who never had it. Therefore, the researchers suggested that successfully resolving anxieties could help mitigate risk of developing dementia. "The findings suggest that anxiety may be a new risk factor to target in the prevention of dementia and also indicate that treating anxiety may reduce this risk," Kay Khaing from the University of Newcastle and corresponding author of the study said. Previous studies examining links between anxiety and dementia have largely measured anxiety at the start,



according to the authors. However, few studies have looked at how persistent anxiety, along with age when one develops anxiety, impacted dementia risk, they said. For the study, the researchers included more than 2,000 indi-

viduals with an average age of 76 years, of whom close to 450 (21 per cent) had anxiety to begin with. The group was followed for over 10 years. During an intermediate follow-up after five years, the participants were deemed to have

'chronic anxiety' if anxiety persisted and 'new onset anxiety' if they developed it. Anxiety was measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), a 10-item questionnaire used as a brief screen to identify distress levels. Those with chronic anxiety and those who developed anxiety during the study had 2.8 and 3.2 times higher risks of having dementia, respectively, the authors found. The average time taken for dementia diagnosis from the study's start was 10 years, they said. "Chronic and new anxiety were associated with increased risk of all-cause dementia, and this association was significant

in those 70 years and younger," the authors wrote. They also found that anxiety resolved at follow-up lowered dementia risk levels down to those in people who never had anxiety. "These results suggest that timely management of anxiety may be a viable strategy in reducing the risk of dementia," the authors wrote. Possible processes through which anxiety can heighten dementia risk can include inflammation, cell death, along with higher chances of such individuals engaging in unhealthy behaviours, such as physical inactivity and smoking, they said.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Balancing growth with populism

Though the budget 2024 is growth-centric, it has populist overtones and addresses concerns of NDA allies

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the first Union Budget for Modi 3.0 government on July 23, 2024, aiming to bolster India's economic growth while addressing social equity and the interests of the NDA allies. This budget is an exercise in balancing economic growth with political dividends. This budget outlines allocations for infrastructure, green energy initiatives, and the digital economy, reflecting a comprehensive approach to development. The Union Budget 2024-25 focuses on macro-economic growth and fiscal stability but offers limited welfare for the poor, relying on effective policy implementation for success. While the fiscal deficit has improved to 4.9% of GDP, significant disparities persist, with increased capital expenditure intended to boost private investment but widening rural-urban and income divides. The budget maintains a similar outlay as the interim budget, prioritising agriculture, rural development, housing, and MSMEs to create jobs. New measures include direct payments for first-time



employees and incentives for employers to increase hiring. The budget does not adequately address rising inflation, which stands at 5.08%. To support manufacturing, the government has introduced initiatives like the Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs and increased Mudra Loan limits, along with developing industrial parks enhancing agricultural practices through Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and increasing support for natural farming. Despite these efforts, the success of the budget depends on effective implementation and addressing broader economic challenges.

The Union Budget 2024 outlines a comprehensive plan to deal with the rising unemployment by increasing the skill set of the youth. It plans to provide skills to 20 lakh youth over five years. As part of this initiative, 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes will be upgraded into hub and spoke arrangements with a focus on outcome orientation. The course content and design will be aligned with the skill needs of the industry. The budget's positives include the significant investment in infrastructure, expected to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. However, the budget also presents challenges. The ambitious spending plans may widen the fiscal deficit, posing challenges to macroeconomic stability and inflation control. Effective implementation of the proposed schemes and projects remains a critical concern, given historical delays and inefficiencies. The 2024 budget reflects a populist approach, aimed at addressing the concerns of its allies — Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu and has generously allocated funds for their states. The BJP has learned from its performance in the recent Lok Sabha elections, where it faced criticism for not adequately addressing issues like rural distress, job creation, and social equity. By focusing on infrastructure development, rural welfare, and social sector spending, the budget seeks to win back the support of these crucial demographics.

PICTALK



Pigeons fly past the new sculpture 'Natyashastra' installed at Mandi House, New Delhi

RANJAN DIMRI

Indian education system: Building a vibrant nation

By integrating knowledge and skill development with modern practices, we can nurture youth who are proficient and emotionally and physically resilient

Bharat's educational policies are geared towards fostering a balanced approach that integrates learning with modern skills, reduces unnecessary burdens, and nurtures the unique potential of every child. These efforts are crucial for building a future-ready youth capable of seizing new opportunities in a rapidly evolving world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a vocal advocate for educational reforms and skill development. One of the landmark steps taken by the government is the introduction of the New National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, established after almost four decades. The introduction of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has started giving positive dividends. Being a transformative policy, it formalises skill training by integrating it into the education system from Class VI onwards. This policy underpins the importance of combining schooling with skilling, and teaching-learning materials for classes III rd onward are also being made available now. The government's plan to incorporate emerging and



applied areas, such as semiconductor technology, into the school curriculum is a promising step towards meeting the skilling needs of the diverse and talented Yuva Shakti. Additionally, the School Bag Policy aims to enhance student well-being by addressing the physical burden of school bags. This policy focuses on streamlining educational materials, promoting digital resources, and encouraging ergonomic designs. States like Assam and Madhya Pradesh have taken significant steps to alleviate the burden on students, with new notifications set to take effect from the academic session 2024-25. 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' (PPC) outlines the vision and priorities of the government. During the 7th edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC), Prime Minister Modi inter-

acted with students, teachers, and parents, emphasizing the need to create an educational ecosystem where each child's unique individuality is encouraged and fully expressed. The government has been making concerted efforts to achieve this goal, recognizing that cultural and societal expectations often add undue pressure on students. Modi advocates for healthy competition, reminding us that "Teachers are not in a job role but they shoulder the responsibility of grooming the lives of students." With the rapid pace of technological advancements, its adoption in the process of learning is very crucial and technology should be harnessed as a tool for learning, reminding us that "one cannot run away from technology," as the Prime Minister remarked. Reforms are necessary as they can lead Bharat to a higher stage of advancement. The holistic approach involves aligning educational practices with principles that promote mindfulness and resilience. Education should encompass a broad spectrum of human

development, not just intellectual growth. Proper methodologies should be used to assess and nurture various aspects of a child's development. The new education system is all set to enhance individual potential and it also contributes to the nation's economic growth. It is widely admitted that a well-educated population is better equipped to drive economic progress and social mobility, reducing disparities and fostering a more equitable society. Moreover, education contributes to better health, increased civic engagement, and enhanced personal satisfaction. Bharat's examination system needs further reforms. Hence, going forward, the nation is bound to have a more fair, transparent, stress-free, flexible and robust examination system. The holes are being plugged on an urgent basis at all levels. Bharat is on the right path to building a stronger, more vibrant nation where talent, knowledge, and skills thrive. (The author is the BJP Councillor from Narayana, New Delhi; views are personal)



UMANG BAJAJ

The unfulfilled promise of Ram Rajya

The BJP's electoral setback in Ayodhya and UP, despite the grand Ram Temple inauguration, necessitates introspection on the foundations of cultural nationalism



SIDHARTH MISHRA

Covenanted for deity, indifferent to the movement Sidharth Mishra In Hindu tradition, Lord Shiva is the symbol of faith, always speaks the truth, and is Trikaladarshi (knows the past, present and future). In Goswami Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas, there is a reference to Shiva telling his wife Sati, "Hohi Soi Jo Ram 'Rachi Rakha," meaning what happens has been designed by Ram himself. Shiva explains to his wife that Ram is Param Brahma (ultimate creator), and writes the fate of a person based on his or her deeds. To the followers of Ram, this couplet forms the essence of Ram's divinity and majesty. The starting lines of the couplet are followed by Tulsidas saying, "Ko Kari Tark Badhaye Sakha" that is why disputes his decision with inane discussions and then completes the couplet saying "As Kahi Lage Japan Harinama; Gai Sati Jahan Prabhu Sukhdhama," the essence of this being that in seeking refuge in Ram one attains solace as did Sati, Shiva's wife.

Though Tulsidas demands faith in Ram nowhere he mentions that a human being's own 'karma' (deeds) would not have a bearing on Ram's 'rachna' (creation). To those for whom Ram is the symbol of the revival of cultural nationalism, it's time to retrospect on their 'karma' which led to Ram's 'rachna' of the setback that they received in the just concluded Lok Sabha polls. Defeat in Ayodhya is indeed the symbol of the setback, which is spread across Ram's territory of Awadh and beyond it. Ramjanambhoomi movement played an important role in the revival and strengthening of the concept of cultural nationalism.

The consecration of the statue of Lord Ram at the much-awaited temple should have proved to be the culmination of people's faith in Ram and its natural expression in the electoral gains for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It did not happen. Celebrated English poet TS Eliot writes in his epochal poem, Hollow Men, "This is the way the world



ends/Not with a bang but with a whimper." Earlier in the same poem, Eliot writes, "Between the conception/ And the creation/ Between the emotion/ And the response/ Falls the Shadow." The question is why the Ramjanambhoomi movement culminated electorally the way it did, not with a bang but with a whimper. The inauguration of the Ram temple in January this year was the event of the century. The fluttering flags bearing Ram symbols across the states, and the cultural build-up through popular Bollywood renditions had even the sceptics once believed in the movement bearing the soul of our culture and nature. It was complete with immaculate camera coverage, with itinerary being unveiled with clockwise precision, weather at its shining best in generally a gloomy climate and a massive build-up of expectation of dawning of Ram Rajya (the rule of Ram, the ideal form of governance). The event, however, surprisingly did not bring good electoral tidings for the BJP. The party strategists were left befuddled at the morally demoralising electoral setback.

For the pontiffs of cultural nationalism, the reason for 'shadows between the con-



TO THOSE FOR WHOM RAM IS THE SYMBOL OF THE REVIVAL OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM, IT'S TIME TO RETROSPECT ON THEIR 'KARMA' WHICH LED TO RAM'S 'RACHNA' OF THE SETBACK THAT THEY RECEIVED IN THE JUST CONCLUDED LOK SABHA POLLS

ception and creation, between the emotion and the response' will not be known until they decide to come out of the echo chamber of the 'VIP route' and have a 'darshan' of Ram Lalla by joining the milieu of the masses. Rama Rajya has been defined as the ideal state of society as intended by Lord Ram, comprising perfect harmony, justice, dharma and prosperity, where people live in peace and happiness. Gandhi took the interpretation forward, saying that true Ram Rajya would be to ensure equal rights to both prince and pauper.

Ask the Ram Bhakts standing in the line of the paupers, for the darshan of Ram Lalla, if an ideal state had dawned. The management of the whole 'darshan' process at the Ramjanambhoomi temple today is a prototype of how it's a case study of not being the Ram Rajya model. The uncarpeted red sandstone floor of the pathway from the temple entry to the sanctum sanctorum in the heat of the summer leaves the Bhakts with blisters, cursing the temple management for their scorn.

Providing carpets to cover the hot stone floor, functional air coolers on the pathway to beat the sultry weather or water coolers to quench the

thirst from standing in a queue is something that should not be beyond the command of 'caring' temple management. But then that care is lacking.

The whole environment at the temple grapples with the attitude of Suraksha (security) rather than sewa (service). The teeming throng of untrained private security guards stands out as a sore thumb. The curt replies by these guards to the simple queries of the devout worshipper are all adding to the dwindling goodwill about the temple movement, though not for the temple deity. Ram lives in all humans, as notable lyricist Sahir Ludhianvi penned (*mere rom rom mein basne wale ram*) for Bollywood super hit Neel Kamal. This song over the years has become the anthem for all the Ram worshippers. If the attitude of disdain at the Ram temple is not replaced with that of service, Ram Bhakts would continue to vow for their deity albeit without much goodwill for those associated with the temple movement.

(Sidharth Mishra is the author and President of, Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BUDGET REACTIONS

Madam — It is not unusual for mixed opinions to arise on budgets presented by Central or State Governments. While ruling parties typically praise the budget, opposition parties are quick to criticize it. Congress leader Pawan Khera claims that the job-related schemes are merely copied from the Nyay Patra. If this is true, Congress might feel validated for having their scheme adopted. However, this could simply be Khera's personal view. What the opposition says often has little impact on the central government. Opposition parties have labeled the budget as specific to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. It is natural for the opposition to be disappointed with the budget, especially since it does not upset the Chief Ministers of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. They had hoped that by denying special status to these states, discontent would grow, possibly leading to a withdrawal of support from Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu. The budget allocates Rs. 15,000 crore for the development of Andhra Pradesh's capital and grants for its backward regions. Bihar receives Rs. 26,000 crore for various road projects and Rs. 21,000 crore for power. An industrial center is planned for Gaya, and there is a welcome initiative to revive Nalanda University. On the fiscal front, the current budget lacks encouragement for savings. The government seems to believe people have no choice but to deposit their money in nationalized banks, thus avoiding tax deductions for savings. It would have been fair if the Finance Minister had emphasized savings as well. KV Seetharamaiah|Bengaluru

AN HORRIFIC INCIDENT

Madam — A horrifying incident in Rewa (Madhya Pradesh). I am deeply concerned about the recent incident in Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh, where Mamta Pandey and Asha Pandey were partially buried while protesting against

Kamala is the right choice



This would seem to have come about a little late, a mere four months before the decisive election. For Democrats there are two options. One, go for Kamala by nomination, thereby making her a very probable scape goat in lieu of Biden, given Trump's stamped and vivid image of a clenched fist, post the shooting, or stage a grand show where their candi-

dates at the upcoming convention mount the podium and vigorously debate as to how they intend to run the nation rather than run for office. The party convention must set exemplary tenor and substance by navigating through issues on hand than throwing mud on a Teflon coated Trump, on whom nothing will stick. Under extreme pressure and for want of time on its hands, the party could find great sense in gathering both its wits and resolve to have Kamala as their candidate. Kamala is one person who is most suited to take on Trump. Remember Trump carries a heavy baggage of his own and the recent episode can blur some of his glaring negatives, not all.

R.Narayanan| Mumbai

road construction on private land. This inhumane action raises serious questions about women's safety under the current government. On one hand, we hear slogans like "Nari Shakti" and "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," but on the other hand, women are being harassed and buried alive. Is this what we call women's safety, freedom, and security? How long will such incidents continue to occur? The nation cannot tolerate such atrocities. Authorities must address this matter urgently and find a solution to prevent such incidents from happening again. I urge the government to prioritize women's safety and take immediate action to address this issue. Masood Ahmad |Barabanki

surge of 6.5 to 7% in the year 2024-25. The evangelist numbers are welcoming for speeding up the growth trajectory of India, to make it a 5 trillion dollar economy as soon as possible. Although the inflation figures are stressing, as it burdened the pockets of the locals. But the growth figures are surely welcoming for each one of us. This will also help India to target 'Vikshit Bharat' vision, and help ensure balanced regional development for all together. Sectoral growth with equality from agriculture to export will power boost India to practically visualize these figures in real life. There are provisions in the budget which will definitely lead to the spurt in economic activity, especially the push for employment and skill development is likely to create more jobs and give boost to manufacturing sector. However, it will all depend upon the execution of these schemes. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

A BOOST TO THE GDP

Madam — This refers to the front page article, 'India's GDP to surge 6.5 - 7% in 2024-25: Economic Survey', (July 23) this is my response. The economic survey of the year 2024 revealed the positive growth figures of India's GDP

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



GOURAV VALLABH

UNION BUDGET 2024: POINT COUNTER POINT



PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI

Transformative changes for the middle class



The middle class in India has long been the backbone of the nation, driving consumption, innovation, and overall economic growth. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has witnessed transformative changes that have significantly impacted this demographic. In the last decade, we have moved from a Low Growth, High Inflation Nation to a High Growth, Low Inflation Nation. Currently, we are the only large economy in the world to have High Growth and Low Inflation. The GDP growth rate consistently outpaced other major economies, with 8.2% growth in FY 2023-24 compared to 7.0% in FY 2022-23. These economic improvements have directly benefited the middle class. Primarily, what the middle class expects from a Budget is more disposable income in hand, Quality jobs for the next generation, and an improved quality of life.

More Disposable Income in Hand Generally, the government tries to increase the middle class's disposable income by controlling inflation or by giving tax relief to the personal income tax category. This budget and government fiscal policies provide relief by both instruments. Inflation management has been crucial, with the Modi government adopting an inflation-targeting regime in 2016.

This approach stabilized and lowered inflation, which has averaged 5% since 2014, never breaching the 8% mark. In June 2024, retail inflation was 5.08%, with core inflation at its lowest in over 12 years, providing further relief to the middle class and enhancing their purchasing power.

In addition, the budget brings significant tax relief for the middle class. FM has rationalized slab rates under the new tax regime and allowed an additional standard deduction of Rs 25,000, effectively making the total standard deductions Rs 75,000 effective from AY 25-26. The new tax regime continues to be the default tax regime of taxation.

These changes increase disposable income in the hands of the middle class to the extent of Rs 17,500 per

annum. In other words, after these changes, there will be no tax till income from the Salary of Rs 7.75 Lakh under the new tax regime.

Empowering the Backbone of India The Union Budget 2024-25, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, introduces a series of measures aimed at empowering the middle class and ensuring inclusive growth. This budget focuses on employment, skilling, MSMEs, and infrastructure, which are all pivotal for middle-class prosperity. The budget allocates Rs2 Lakh Crore for education, employment, and skilling, directly benefiting the middle class by facilitating job opportunities for 4.1 crore youth over five years. Schemes like the Employment Linked Incentive provide direct benefits to first-time employees, boosting job creation in the manufacturing sector.

Additionally, a new centrally sponsored skilling scheme will train 20 lakh youth, aligning their skills with industry needs and ensuring the middle class remains competitive in the job market. Under the PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0, the housing needs of 1 crore urban poor and middle-class families will be addressed with an investment of Rs 10 lakh crore. This will include the central assistance of Rs2.2 lakh crore in the next 5 years.

A provision of interest subsidy to facilitate loans at affordable rates is also envisaged. For small business owners within the middle class, the budget introduces a comprehensive package for MSMEs, including a credit guarantee scheme for machinery and equipment purchases and support during stress periods.

A Brighter Future The measures outlined in the budget are set to have profound implications for the middle class. Increased employment opportunities, enhanced skilling programs, and support for MSMEs ensure stable incomes and improved living standards. Affordable housing initiatives make homeownership more accessible to the middle class, and the focus on infrastructure development creates a con-

ducive environment for businesses, fostering economic growth and stability. Let us understand this with the help of an example - The story of a middle-class family. Sachin is a middle-class professional living in Delhi. With the recent changes introduced in the budget, his yearly take-home salary has seen an increase of Rs17,500 due to the new tax benefits.

This increment has allowed Sachin to invest more in his children's education and save for the future. The constant control of inflation also eased his household expenses, making it more affordable for his family to maintain their standard of living. Sachin's son, Amit, recently graduated and was worried about finding a job. However, with the government's focus on creating employment opportunities, Amit secured a position in a manufacturing firm that benefits from the Employment Linked Incentive scheme. This job provides Amit with a stable income and gives him the confidence to contribute to the family's finances.

The government's commitment to skilling programs has also allowed Amit to enrol in a training course that enhances his skills, making him more competitive in the job market. In addition, Sachin's wife, Priya, who runs a small business, has benefited from the support extended to MSMEs. The credit guarantee scheme has enabled her to purchase new machinery, increasing her business's productivity and profitability. The Union Budget 2024-25 is a testament to the government's commitment to fostering inclusive growth and empowering the middle class.

By addressing key areas such as employment, skilling, MSMEs, housing, and infrastructure, the budget paves the way for sustained economic growth and prosperity. As the middle class continues to thrive, it will undoubtedly propel India towards becoming a global economic powerhouse, realizing the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' in 2047.

(The writer is Professor of Finance, XLRI Xavier School of Management and BJP Leader; views are personal)

The budget skips pressing issues



The Union Budget of the newly elected alliance government presented its first budget. Smt Nirmala Sitharaman as the Finance Minister of India presented her 7th budget, and a new record was made too. Considering a lot of promises were made to the people of India and lots of challenges they face - unemployment, price rise, stagnant income one would have hoped that BJP would, after its underperformance in the general election have learnt some lessons and course correct. However it was disappointing to see the same mistake of ignoring the Jann ki Baat, Madam Minister also like the Prime Minister delivered her Mann ki Baat speech. This was to be the Union Budget but now can easily be titled PradhanMantri Sarkar Bachao Yojana announcement where huge financial packages have been earmarked for states that are run by their alliance partners and whose crucial support they need for their government to run uninterrupted- JDU in Bihar and TDP in Andhra Pradesh. While a package worth 59000 crores was announced for Bihar, it was 15000 crores for Andhra Pradesh.

However, their demand for special status has so far not been addressed. Making specific politically motivated state budget allocations over other states' interests sets a wrong precedent for future governments to follow. These funds aren't addressing the requirements but rather addressing their political commitments. Alliance-run Maharashtra, a state that pays the highest taxes to the centre got no specific allocation from the PMSBY (PradhanMantri Sarkar Bachao Yojna) besides many opposition-run states.

It is a shame that the centre has blatantly disregarded the principle of equality but chosen to discriminate between states. Maharashtra seeks new airports, a GIFT city like dedicated business /smart city, highways and roads but all of this was ignored. The real BJP hate for Maharashtra stands exposed yet again. The opposition-led state has now made their displeasure over this discrimination obvious by choosing to boycott an upcoming

NITI Ayog meeting to be chaired by the Prime Minister. In the budget, the Finance Minister introduced an apprenticeship program for youth between 20-30 years of age and committed 1 crore internship programmes for youth in the top 500 companies of India. That would mean every company will have to absorb 20000 interns at Rs 5000/pm stipend earmarked from their CSR. This also means that graduates/postgraduates who are part of the record 9.2% unemployment rate and looking for meaningful employment will have to be content with this program, what it doesn't address is creating jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities for the highly skilled youth. This is the corporate Agniveer programme not meant to address the elephant in the room which is unemployment but rather mock the plight of the youth.

Similarly, FinMin spoke of women-led development but fell short of offering anything that would help address the gender pay gap, bring them more jobs, incentive savings through tax breaks or ease their burden of inflation in running family budgets. SAMBAL is an umbrella scheme that includes Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, One Stop Centre, Nari Adalat, Mahila Police Volunteer, Women's Helpline etc. In 2020-21, when these schemes were separate, the BE for just four of those included under SAMBAL was ₹640 crores, which is more than what has been allocated in the BE for 24-25 (₹629 crores).

The Finance Minister and the entire government have been patting themselves on the back for maintaining fiscal prudence and keeping fiscal deficit under check but it is a classic case of operation successful but patient dead with Aam Janta not having enough savings, enough money to invest and consumption growth amongst its weakest ever.

The fact that private final consumption growth was just 4% in 2023-24 against the overall GDP growth rate of more than 8% shows this clearly. The Government has once again managed to turn a deaf ear to the plight of farm-

ers. If shutting down internet services and using tear gas shells to stop the farmers from protesting was not enough, the Union Budget has no mention of a legal guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) for farmers or any support for farm loans through waivers or lower interest rates. With billionaires continuing to have thousands of crore weddings and stamped-like situations occurring over jobs by unemployed youth, the Union Budget has missed out on addressing wealth inequality at large. While packages for youth employment have been introduced, the Budget does not address reducing the gap between the poorest and the richest sections of the population. Despite the economic survey pointing out the disparity in income with the top 10% accounting for one-third of the income, measures to uplift farmers, and labourers or increase wealth taxes are absent. The Finance Minister's announcement of the reduction of tax on long-term capital gains (LTCG) is a bane in disguise. While seemingly, the tax on LTCG has reduced from 20% to 12.5%, the indexation benefits have been eliminated.

This means that profits on sales of property, gold and other unlisted assets will not be adjusted to inflation and a higher amount would be taxable, thus effectively increasing the tax burden on investors, and making investments in property, gold and shares unprofitable. The PradhanMantri Sarkar Bachao Yojana caters to the BJP's essential allies.

The needs of the public, the opposition, and most states have been ignored. While ignoring the concerns of 90% of the nation is not new for this Government, it is disappointing to see it continue after the BJP's performance in the General Elections. One can, however, be hopeful that the increased representation and enthusiasm of the opposition members in Parliament can lead to fruitful deliberations and additions to the Union Budget this session.

(The writer is Rajiya Sabha MP, Shiv Sena -Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray, views are personal)

ESG: The key to sustainable business in a post-pandemic world

Environmental, social, and governance considerations are crucial for sustainability in an era marked by environmental degradation

The interest in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations isn't merely a trend—it's a critical pivot towards sustainability in an era marked by environmental degradation and widening social gaps. At its core, ESG represents a comprehensive framework guiding businesses towards practices that not only ensure profitability but also address pressing global challenges.

As we advance in the post-pandemic landscape, collaboration and cooperation are more crucial than ever. For India, these priorities align with ambitious climate targets, a rapidly growing digital economy, and global trade aspirations. Amid climate change and environ-



PIYUSH NIRANJANA

mental degradation, there is growing recognition that businesses play a vital role in promoting sustainable development. Last year, Business 20(B20) was one of the most prominent Engagement Groups in India's presidency of G20. It has become an increasingly important forum for private sector leaders to deliberate on subjects such as the adoption of ESG standards. One of the

B20 Action Councils has focused on encouraging the rapid and broad implementation of ESG principles among businesses of all sizes and economic contexts.

Their primary suggestions include creating universally applicable ESG standards and ensuring transparent, comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable disclosures across all regions. ESG goals are typically a set of operational standards that require companies to adhere to better governance, ethical practices, environmentally friendly measures, and social responsibility. It emphasizes non-financial factors as a metric for guiding investment decisions in a world where only financial returns are no longer the sole goal for investors or

employees. ESG enables businesses to have a long-term vision instead of a myopic vision. The horizon of ESG has evolved significantly over the years. It is more than simply checking a box on the compliance checklist. Accelerating a shift to cleaner energy carriers and other efficient technologies can improve global standards of life while also contributing to long-term decarbonization goals. For instance, ESG can align with traditional medicine to forge an environmental path by promoting the use of natural, organic, and sustainable resources in Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) practices, thus reducing the environmental footprint. To



promote greater adherence to ESG standards, businesses must be transparent about their practices and their impact on the environment and society. This can include initiatives such as reporting on greenhouse gas emissions, disclosing supply chain practices and engaging with stakeholders to address concerns about labour standards and human rights. The path to a universally embraced ESG

framework is fraught with challenges. Diverse and sometimes conflicting definitions and standards set by various entities have led to inefficiencies in reporting and general sluggishness in adopting responsible practices on a global scale. The solution lies in harmonizing ESG frameworks for disclosure, reporting, and rating. Such a unified approach would streamline efforts, making it easier for companies of all sizes to participate in the global movement towards sustainability. Companies that address ESG risks tend to experience fewer disruptions, gain more trust, and achieve consistent financial results, adhering to a triple-bottom-line strategy that combines financial

returns with environmental and social norms. Progressive ESG reporting standards, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and dialogue between businesses and civil society can address these challenges. Indian corporations are increasingly incorporating ESG considerations into their business decisions, with several asset management firms launching ESG funds. These ESG-indexed companies have outperformed non-ESG-indexed companies, as per data from the National Stock Exchange (NSE). [1] Investors in India are using novel tools to fund social and environmental initiatives. The Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation, which is also listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange, issued India's first

green bond (BSE). The Corporation raised ₹150 crores in capital to help fund the water treatment plant and tertiary sewage. According to a survey conducted by Singapore-based bank DBS and Bloomberg Media Studios, 92% of Indian SMEs said ESG measures are a high priority for their business, compared to 83% of SMEs across Asia. The corporate world is aligning with climate science, with thousands of businesses adopting initiatives like the Science-Based Targets. *(The writer is member Invest India, the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency under DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry; views are personal)*

MONEY MATTERS

CG Power reports Q1 standalone PAT at Rs 232.13 cr

CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd on Wednesday reported a 21 per cent hike in its standalone profit after tax of Rs 232.13 crore for the April-June 2024 quarter. The company, part of the diversified conglomerate Murugappa Group, had registered a profit after tax of Rs 192.06 crore during the corresponding quarter of last year. For the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the standalone profit after tax stood at Rs 1,004.36 crore. Total standalone income during the quarter under review grew to Rs 2,139.76 crore from Rs 1,791.91 crore registered in the corresponding quarter of last year. For the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the standalone total income stood at Rs 7,760.80 crore. In a statement, the company said the aggregate sales for the quarter were higher at Rs 2,106 crore recording a growth of 19 per cent year-on-year. Margins were higher at 15.4 per cent of sales on account of higher realisations, favourable product mix and cost efficiencies in power systems.



RBI cancels licence of Mahabhairab Coop Urban Bank, Tezpur

The RBI on Wednesday said it has cancelled the licence of Tezpur-based The Mahabhairab Cooperative Urban Bank due to its deteriorating financial condition. Following the cancellation of its licence, the cooperative bank ceases to carry on banking business, with effect from the close of business on July 24, 2024. In a statement, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Assam has also been requested to issue an order for winding up the bank and appoint a liquidator. Giving reason for the cancellation of the licence, RBI said the lender does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. "The bank with its present financial position would be unable to pay its present depositors in full," it said adding that continuance of the bank is prejudicial to the interests of its depositors. On liquidation, every depositor would be entitled to receive insurance claim amount of his/her deposits up to Rs 5 lakh from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).



Strongest incentives from the state should be for EVs: BMW

German luxury carmaker BMW on Wednesday said incentives are necessary to support the growth of the electric vehicle segment. The company, which on Wednesday introduced the all-electric MINI Countryman and electric scooter CE04 in the country, said the market here is still evolving and efforts should continue to smoothen and accelerate this transition. In a press conference here, BMW Group Senior Vice President, Region Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa Jean-Philippe Parain stated that the "strongest incentives from the state should be for EVs". Incentives allow to bring an electric model to a price point where transition can happen towards an electric vehicle, he noted. Parain noted that in some countries, where customers drive longer distances, plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) can be a bridge. "But if I were to speak for India,



Abolition of Angel tax will boost startup ecosystem: CBDT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The abolition of Angel tax for all classes of investors will act to "prompt" innovators and venture capitalists to better invest in startups and any instances of money laundering here will be taken care of by the existing legal mechanism, CBDT Chairman Ravi Agrawal said on Wednesday.

He said the removal of this tax will act to boost the startup ecosystem in India. He would urge the community to "please come forward, please invest as the country is waiting for your investment, initiatives and innovations", Agrawal told in a post-Budget interview.

Asked how would a possible case of money laundering through investor funds be tackled after the removal of the Angel tax, he said if such a violation is found or it is detected that the fund has come through "undisclosed" sources, there are provisions in the respective statute and that will be taken care of.

The head of the direct taxes administration of the country responded in the affirmative

when asked if the taxman would make a reference to its sister agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) if a violation of the anti-money laundering law is noticed. "This (money laundering) issue is one. The intention,

always, was never to dissuade the startups. It was never to put any stop on the investments... we in coordination with the DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) had actually provided relaxations insofar

as the investments are concerned...," Agrawal said. This (removal of Angel tax) step of the government would actually prompt the startups and also the angel investors to invest in these initiatives and that will help the country, he said.

'Too high' import duty cut on gold to help contain smuggling, boost exports'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The decision to cut "too high" import duty on gold will help in containing smuggling and boost the country's exports of gems and jewellery, CBIC Chairman Sanjay Kumar said on Wednesday.

In the last financial year, seizures of gold made by Customs formation and the DRI together were around 4.8 tonnes, up from 3.5 tonnes in 2022-23.

The Budget has announced a drastic cut in import duty on the precious metal to 6 per cent from 15 per cent.



The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) Chairman said that the duty was hiked in July 2022 as at that time there was a worsening current

account deficit (CAD) due to the geo-political situation.

To cut down on the non-essential imports, the duty was increased.

Budget projection of 10.5% nominal GDP reasonable: DEA secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth on Wednesday said the Budget has assumed a reasonable nominal GDP growth rate of 10.5 per cent as higher assumption could have led to a larger fiscal deficit.

"As far as the current year is concerned, fiscal prudence places the demand on us that we are realistic or a bit conservative in assuming what the potential revenues may be while at the same time provide adequate provisions for productive priorities of the government. That is what this Budget does," he told PTI in a post-Budget interview.

Between the interim Budget to this Budget, he said there is a higher provision by about Rs 90,000 crore, including for newer schemes.

In that context, he said, "10.5 per cent we feel is a reasonable estimate of nominal growth in

the economy. Because any higher assumptions would then require us to assume more revenues to come and if those revenues don't come in, then we ended up with a higher fiscal deficit." That means more borrowings and it creates its own set of problems, he said, adding it is better to have conservative estimates.

Buoyed by improvement in revenue collection, the government has lowered the fiscal deficit target to 4.9 per cent for the current financial year as against 5.1 per cent estimated in February's interim Budget.

However, the Budget retained the fiscal deficit estimate at 4.5 per cent for 2025-26 as announced in February.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit has accordingly come down to Rs 16.14 lakh crore against Rs 16.85 lakh crore estimated earlier for the current financial year.



Adani Group submits investment proposal to upgrade Nairobi airport

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) on Wednesday said it has received an investment proposal from the Adani Group for the upgradation of the airport in Nairobi.

The investment proposal under the public-private partnership has been submitted by Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL) for Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA).

Currently, AAHL manages seven airports in India and is also developing the Navi Mumbai airport.

In a statement, JKIA Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Henry Ogoye said the proposal came following the Kenyan government approving a medium-term investment plan for the upgradation of the passenger terminal building, runway, taxiway and apron at the Nairobi airport.

Govt earmarks Rs 400 cr for participation in World Expo 2025 in Osaka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has earmarked Rs 400 crore for participation in the World Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, which will be held for six months, beginning April 13 next year. According to the Budget document, an India Pavilion will be set up at the expo.

"The estimated expenditure to be incurred in 2024-25 is Rs 300 crore and Rs 100 crore in 2025-26," it said.

It added that the participation in this mega event will send a message that India will have access to truly global platform to build new connections the world has to offer. "The multi-billion dollar projects associated with the expo will generate significant opportunities for various sections in India. India Trade Promotion Organization



(ITPO) has been appointed as the nodal agency for the event," it added.

Such events help showcase India's industrial prowess and promote exports.

The country has also participated in a similar expo in Dubai in 2020.

A World Expo is an event that brings together people and innovations from around the world in an effort to address issues facing humankind on a global scale.

These exhibitions started with the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and has showcased

innovations like the telephone and microwave.

Further, the document said the government has finalised the "Pradhan Mantri Cha Shramik Protsahan Yojana (PMCSPPY)" and approved for the implementation during 2024-25 and 2025-26.

'Will empower small and medium-scale industries, create jobs'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Budget includes various initiatives to financially empower small and medium-scale industries, which play a crucial role in generating employment, Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy said on Wednesday.

In her Budget speech on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a slew of measures for sectors, including infrastructure, manufacturing, healthcare, education, startups, and green energy, among others.

"This Budget envisages sustained efforts and ample opportunities for all. It includes initiatives to financially empower small and medium-scale industries, which play a crucial role in generating employment. It is a visionary



and far-reaching Budget," the Minister for Steel said in a statement.

In the Budget, nine priority areas have been identified with Rs 1.48 lakh crore allocated for education, employment, and skills development. The goal is to create 4 crore jobs, ensuring

better utilisation of human resources, Kumaraswamy, who also holds the portfolio of Union Minister for Heavy Industries, said.

Meanwhile, Vibhor Steel Tubes CMD Vijay Kaushik said the government has given a major boost to infrastructure

development in the Budget and increased the outlay by 11.1 per cent to Rs 11.11 lakh crore, which would lead to enhanced demand for various sectors, including cement, steel, power, etc.

M C Garg, CMD of special steel maker Goodluck India said, "The substantial increase in defence capital outlay to Rs 1.72 lakh crore is a major boost for the Indian steel industry."

Sumit Jhunjhunwala, Assistant Vice President & Sector Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said the increased cumulative allocation to flagship schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and the sustained strong funding for the Jal Jeevan Mission are favourable for long steel and pipe manufacturers.

RBI tightens norms for cash pay-outs at banks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Wednesday tightened norms related to cash pay-out service at banks, making it mandatory for lenders to keep a record of recipients.

Cash pay-out refers to arrangements for amounts being transferred out of bank accounts to beneficiaries not having a bank account.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised its October 2011 framework related to 'Domestic Money Transfer'. The new norms will come into effect from November 1, 2024.

Disbursed Rs 362 cr to depositors of Sahara Group of Coop Societies so far: Shah tells RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday informed Parliament that Rs 362.91 crore has been disbursed to over 4.2 lakh depositors of Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies as of July 16 this year.

Shah, in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, said this disbursement is facilitated through the CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal, which was established following a Supreme Court order on March 29, 2023, aimed at assisting legitimate depositors in reclaiming their funds.

Presently, the payment of only up to Rs 10,000 is being



disbursed to each genuine depositor against verified claims through an Aadhaar-linked bank account.

"An amount of Rs 362.91 crore has been released to 4,20,417 depositors of Sahara

Group of Cooperative Societies as on July 16, 2024," Shah said in the reply.

He emphasised that applications received on the portal are being processed in a transparent manner on proper identification and submitting proof of their identity and deposits.

The entire disbursement process is digital and paperless, overseen by Justice R Subhash Reddy, a former Supreme Court judge, and Gaurav Agrawal, the Amicus Curiae.

If any deficiencies are identified in a depositor's application, they will be notified to resubmit their claims via a dedicated resubmission portal.

Simplified FDI, reduced tax rates will greatly enhance capital inflows: Deloitte India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The budget announcements of simplifying the FDI and overseas investment regulations, along with reduced corporate tax rates, will greatly enhance capital inflows into the country, Deloitte India said on Wednesday.

Additionally, the abolition of the Angel tax in all forms is a positive step towards encouraging investment in startups, it said.

Rumki Majumdar, Economist at Deloitte India, said that India needs stable capital for investment, and foreign direct investment (FDI) can significantly boost private capex in greenfield and brown-field investments.

However, FDI flows have



been declining globally, and India felt the impact of global liquidity tightening and uncer-

tainties, she said. "While measures have been announced to improve ease of doing business and reduce the fiscal deficit to boost investor confidence, simplified FDI and overseas investment regulations, along with reduced corporate tax rates, will greatly enhance capital inflows," Majumdar said.

On customs duty rationalisation, Saloni Roy, Partner at Deloitte India, said that changes are made to support domestic manufacturing, deepen local value addition and promote export competitiveness.

Changes in basic customs duty (BCD) rate have been announced for various sectors, including medical, mobiles, minerals, solar energy and telecommunications.

"To give further impetus to the phased manufacturing programme and the exponential growth in domestic production and export in the mobile industry, BCD is reduced on mobile phone, mobile PCB (printed circuit board assembly) and mobile charger from 20 per cent to 15 per cent," Roy added.

She said that an increase in BCD rates will discourage the import of concerned items and give direct support to domestic manufacturing.

Siddhartha Tipnis, Partner & Technology Sector Leader, Deloitte India, said that rationalization of custom duties on mobile handsets, components and accessories is a welcome step as this is expected to drive greater handset affordability.

Rupee falls 2 paise to hit all-time low of 83.71 against US \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 2 paise to hit its all-time closing low of 83.71 against the US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by a strong dollar against major crosses overseas amid investors' weak appetite for riskier assets.

Forex traders said the increase in capital gains tax and removal of indexation benefits announced in the FY25 Budget on Tuesday was the main reason for dollar buying as foreign investors sold stocks.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Wednesday as they offloaded shares

worth Rs 5,130.90 crore, according to exchange data.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.69 and touched an intra-day high of 83.68 and a low of 83.72 against the dollar during the session.

It finally settled at an all-time low level of 83.71 against the American currency, registering a fall of 2 paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee declined 3 paise to 83.69 against the US dollar after the government raised tax rates on capital gains in the FY25 Budget.

"The rupee made a new closing low as

buying of dollars continued to attract interest keeping the rupee under pressure.

The government also seems to be interested in keeping the rupee weak as it attracts inflows which are then absorbed by the Central Bank thus increasing the reserves," Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said.

Forex traders said US dollar buying continued to be the theme after the increase in long-term capital gains tax (LTCG) and short-term capital gains tax (STCG) and then the removal of indexation benefits.



ALI FAZAL TO STAR OPPOSITE SAMANTHA IN RAKHT BRAHMAND

Following the success of the character of Guddu Pandit, Ali Fazal is set to join the cast of *Rakht Brahmand* as the lead opposite Samantha Prabhu. The ensemble cast also includes Aditya Roy Kapoor and Warnika Gabbi in key roles. The period drama or fantasy series *Rakht Brahmand* is helmed by the visionary duo Raj & DK, while the series will be directed by Rahi Anil Barve of *Tumbbad* fame. This will be the next major project for Ali following the anticipation of the release of Anurag Basu's *Metro In Dino, Lahore 1947*, produced by Aamir Khan and *Thug Life*, directed by Mani Ratnam. A source revealed, "The project is a marvelous vision of Raj & DK, it's a step forward in its genre of fantasy drama. The cast has finally all been locked and the shoot is set to start next week. Ali will be shooting for the series through August while also completing small schedules for his other projects. The show came to him and the vision of the show was enough to get Ali excited to be part of the series. It's a really interesting part, something he has never done before, both from a character perspective and also genre-wise." The six-part limited series is all set to commence shooting in Mumbai, starting next week.



It's 'role' over 'superstar' for Rohit Shetty!

Throughout his career, director Rohit Shetty has worked with several of Bollywood's top actors. He has directed some tremendously successful blockbusters that remain popular among filmgoers. In a recent interview, the filmmaker revealed his casting method, including his experiences working with some of Bollywood's best actors. During a conversation, the filmmaker was asked about his technique for assembling an ensemble cast for his films. He acknowledged his delight when players for whom the roles were particularly written agreed to collaborate with him. However, he stated that it was not necessary for him to cast a huge celebrity. Rohit Shetty stated, "I am always happy and satisfied about that rather than being, 'See, I got this star for my film.' More than that, it's like, 'We have written and thought of this actor to play this character and they're performing this.' That is the satisfaction that you get." Meanwhile, all eyes are focused on Rohit Shetty's upcoming *Singham Again*. The filmmaker recently completed the shoot and sent a heartfelt message recognising his franchise's legacy.



JOSH CHARLES REUNITES WITH ELISABETH MOSS FOR THE HANDMAID'S TALE

Josh Charles, an Emmy-nominated actor, will join the cast of *The Handmaid's Tale*, a critically acclaimed Hulu series, in its sixth and final season. Charles will reunite with his former co-star Elisabeth Moss for their first on-screen collaboration since the spy drama *The Veil*. While details about his character remain unknown, Charles' inclusion as a series regular promises an intriguing finish to the dystopian thriller. *The Handmaid's Tale*, based on Margaret Atwood's acclaimed novel, depicts a totalitarian society in which fertile women are forced to work as handmaids. The show has grown in popularity and received critical acclaim for its captivating storyline and topical issues. The final season is expected to dive deeper into Gilead's complexity, with unexpected twists and turns as June Osborne's (Elisabeth Moss) story concludes. With filming set to resume later this year, fans can expect the highly anticipated final season to premiere in 2025.

MATTHEW FELT 'MISCAST' IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

While the world swooned over him as Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), Hollywood star Matthew Macfadyen did not believe he was the right match for the part of a lifetime. In an interview, the actor said, "I didn't really (enjoy it). I feel bad saying that. There were moments I had a good time, but I wish I had enjoyed it more. I wish I was less worried about it." "I felt a bit miscast, like, 'I'm not dishy enough.' But it worked out," the actor added. The film, directed by Joe Wright, featured Kiera Knightley, Carey Mulligan and Rosamund Pike, among others. Macfadyen, who will soon star in Marvel's *Deadpool and Wolverine*, said, "The most flattering thing that happens to me now is people saying, 'Were you Mr. Darcy?'" It's around 20 years later. So I figure, "I can't be aging that badly."



CELINE DION TO MAKE HER STAGE COMEBACK AT THE PARIS OLYMPICS

Legendary singer-songwriter Celine Dion, who has been battling a rare neurological condition called stiff-person syndrome, is expected to make her return to the stage at the Olympic Games. The singer is rumoured to be taking to the Paris Olympics stage during the opening ceremony on Friday, as per reports. It will mark the pop legend's first performance since halting her touring schedule and stepping away from the spotlight after being diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome in December 2022. As per reports, the singer arrived in Paris at the Royal Monceau Hotel near the Champs-Élysées, where Lady Gaga, another potential opening ceremony headliner, is also staying. Specific details about Celine Dion's performance are being kept under wraps. The Canadian singer teased that a comeback may be imminent in an April interview with *Vogue France*, in which she said: "I've chosen to work with all my body and soul, from head to toe, with a medical team. I want to be the best I can be. My goal is to see the Eiffel Tower again." She also said that she was working every day to get stronger.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



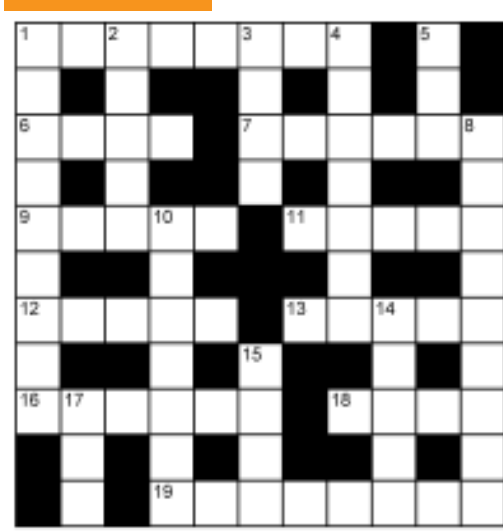
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 8 3 2 4 1 7 9 5 6
 1 9 7 2 5 6 3 8 4
 4 6 5 8 3 9 7 1 2
 7 1 3 5 4 2 6 9 8
 2 5 8 6 9 3 4 7 1
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 3 8 1 7 6 5 2 4 9

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

ACROSS

- Illnesses
- A tool you eat with
- The most destructive type of exploding bomb
- The River Nile flows through this country
- Not as many
- Sooner than expected
- The opposite of fresh
- A keyboard worker
- A clenched hand
- Someone who grows plants
- Glide over snow with long things on your feet
- A worker in wood
- Tugging
- A visitor from another planet
- Mix up with a spoon
- A word of agreement

DOWN

- Not the same
- An apology word
- The mark of an old injury
- Opposite of quickest



GINGER MEGGS



BEYOND FLAVOURS, BEING THE VOICE OF INDIAN RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

The National Restaurant Association of India aims to lead the Indian restaurant industry to greater profitable growth. Sandeep Balasubramanian, the co-chapter head of NRAI, speaks to *The Pioneer* as he discusses the aim and objective of the association.



AARTI SREENATH

As the leading association representing the Indian restaurant industry, NRAI aims to develop and strengthen the Indian food service sector. For our special segment of Community Wise, *The Pioneer* connects with Sandeep Balasubramanian, the co-chapter (Hyderabad) head of the association, sharing his experiences, lessons learned and the vision that drives his current endeavours.

His journey is marked by notable stints at Red Bull India and Pernod Ricard India before venturing into the restaurant business. Now, as a prominent figure in Hyderabad's culinary scene, he shares his experiences, lessons learned and the vision that drives his current endeavours.

As the co-chapter head of NRAI Hyderabad, his responsibilities include representing the restaurant industry and addressing its challenges. "The objective is to give a voice to the industry, which is often misrepresented despite its significant economic contribution," he states. The restaurant industry contributes 2% to the GDP and GST revenue of the country and it indirectly supports numerous jobs through delivery services and other associated sectors. NRAI Hyderabad has launched several initiatives, including the first-ever *Indian Food Services Report (IFSR) for Hyderabad*, highlighting the industry's impact.

Under his leadership, NRAI Hyderabad has focused on engaging with stakeholders and consumers to improve the restaurant industry. They organised the first-ever Indian Restaurant Conclave in Hyderabad



in 2021, setting a benchmark for the industry. This event brought together business owners, employees, vendors and potential partners to discuss challenges, employment, hygiene and collaboration. "We emphasised the importance of collective efforts in addressing issues and advancing the industry," Sandeep highlights.

The association promotes local restaurants and food businesses through networking and collective activities. They collaborate with partners from various sectors, including cloud kitchens, cafes, bars and vendors supplying packaging materi-

als and kitchen equipment. Regular events and activities, such as Iftar parties and CSR initiatives, provide visibility and support to members. "These efforts foster a sense of community and collaboration within the industry," he notes.

One significant trend in Hyderabad is the rapid increase in the number of F&B outlets. However, this growth poses challenges, particularly in terms of staffing. To address this, the chapter launched "Mission Kaam," an initiative to train underprivileged individuals and transform them into skilled labor for the F&B industry. "This program aims to bridge the gap between supply and demand by providing employment opportunities to those in need," he explains.

The director highlighted the substantial economic contribution of the F&B industry in Hyderabad. With a market value of 10,700 crore, Hyderabad ranks as the sixth-largest F&B market in India. "The city's young and cosmopolitan population presents significant growth opportunities for the industry," he says. The diverse employment generat-

ed by restaurants, from house-keeping to kitchen staff, supports the local economy. He believes that as the industry grows, its contribution to the economy will continue to expand.

Community outreach is a vital aspect of the NRAI's vision. Through CSR initiatives, they ensure that underprivileged communities and NGOs receive regular food donations. Collaborations with organisations like the Roti Bank facilitate food distribution during festivals, emergencies and disasters. Additionally, they conducted a blood donation camp to support thalassemia patients, demonstrating their commitment to social responsibility. *Mission Kaam* also plays a crucial role in training and upskilling underprivileged individuals, integrating them into the F&B industry," he emphasises.

The founder concludes on the call for collective effort in the F&B industry. "We emphasise the importance of networking, addressing challenges and working together to improve the industry," he states.

He believes that a shift in consumer mindset towards quality will lead to healthier dining choices and a more sustainable industry.



'People's preconceived notion of me as a 'funny sardar' has been dispelled'

TEJAL SINHA

Think of Manjot Singh and our minds gets bombarded with his characters: Young Lucky Singh in *Oye Lucky Lucky Oye*, Dimpy in *Student of the Year*, or the much-loved Lali in the *Fukrey* franchise.

Oye Lucky Lucky Oye brought him into a bigger picture, bringing him a Filmfare Award to his credit. It was indeed a splendid journey; little did he know that this 'Delhi ka Ladka' would one day wake up going for an audition and get selected for a 15-minute role in the film. Well, would you believe it if we said that, never in his dream, he had a thought of becoming an actor? However, ironically, it did become a dream-come-true moment for him.

Beyond any doubt, his humorous elements have always been something that we've enjoyed the most. Still and all, "It's the situations that have been comic. The main thing about comedy is your timing and that's something nobody can easily learn. My timing is good, so it lands automatically. In real life, I'm a serious man and I do not even know how to make people laugh. It's the script, timing and editing that make it look funny."

Now, with his latest, we get to see a different Manjot altogether! "People have been approaching me saying, 'We see a different Manjot, unlike what we had seen previously.'" To be honest, I've always wanted to take on a role like this one. Versatility has been introduced by the role of an authoritative person. People would have embraced me much sooner if *Wild Wild Punjab* had been my debut project. People's preconceived notion of me as a 'Funny-innocent Sardar' has been dispelled and they now think that Manjot is capable of doing this as well," shares the *Fukrey* star. "I consider it a great accomplishment that I was able to change people's opinions about me. I've never played 'Macho Sardar' before. I'm being challenged to do more of this by the feedback I'm receiving for it. People have been saying 'Manjot 2.0 ka janam hua hai' in reference to my Honey Paaji character, which is really astounding."

He further gushes that makers do not have much time to sit and explore an actor's versatility. Fortunately, Luv Ranjan and Simarpreet Singh, the directors of *Wild Wild Punjab*, saw that he would fit in the best. "Every movie, in my opinion, has a specific fate and timing. For the first time in fifteen years, I'm getting calls from a lot of producers and industry people, just as everyone went crazy over my part in *Oye Lucky Lucky Oye*. I'm even being referred to as the movie's "hero" by some individuals. My character has been an 'alpha-male in this film.'"

honest, in this film, I have worked very hard as compared to other projects. In real life also, just like how Honey Paaji loves his car, Paro, I take pride in maintaining my cars, both inside and out and I always try to keep them tidy and spottless. When it comes to style, even I like to be *ek dum tich*. You wouldn't believe, I used to skip school on days when my uniform wasn't clean when I was younger (he laughs)."

Speaking of the rumours of him being approached for Ranbir Kapoor's *Animal*, he goes on to share, "That is indeed true. I even went to meet Sandeep Vanga and inquired about the possibility of it helping me advance in my work. But he was like, 'There's not going to be anything life-changing', but he just wanted me to be in it because he thought I was a good actor. The script was altered in a few places and the role I was called in for was not really significant. However, Sandeep Sir was the one who contacted me to let me know about it. I think everything works out for the best and I'm happy *Animal* performed so well. While Ranbir Kapoor portrayed the alpha in that movie, I am the alpha in *Wild Wild Punjab*, hehe!"

Being a Cancerian, he shares that he loves romance and that there's a lot that he can do, apart from comedy. "I would certainly learn to take action. I love serious drama. There's a lot of drama that happens in my house too, with my dad. There's a perception that if it is a Sardar, then it's going to be a comedy. However, as the team experimented, I was glad I could be a part of this project. In fact, my mom saw me in this character. For the first time ever, she called me after watching my film and said she appreciated me, thanking the filmmakers too. It was so heartwarming."

As we head towards the end of this chat, Manjot brings an exclusive revelation: 'I was also approached for *Fighter*, but that didn't really go well with me. I also got a *Dharma* film, but again, I wanted to wait for that 'one' project. Now I've been getting calls with roles that differ from comedy.'

Actor Manjot Singh has been enjoying the overwhelming response that he has received for his latest film, *Honey Paaji in Wild Wild Punjab*. He discusses with *The Pioneer* about breaking his image as a comedic star and his inclination towards serious drama, among others



I WAS APPROACHED FOR *ANIMAL*, *FIGHTER* AND ALSO FOR A *DHARMA* FILM. HOWEVER, I DID NOT DO THEM BECAUSE I WAS WAITING FOR THAT 'ONE' PROJECT.

Amending well-being with dietary guidelines for people with Dementia

Dementia, a progressive decline in cognitive abilities, influences thinking, memory and the ability to perform regular activities. While dementia has no cure, a healthy, well-balanced diet plays a vital role in managing it. This goes beyond physical health; a balanced diet impacts cognitive function and by adopting a holistic care approach that addresses cognitive and emotional needs, caregivers can significantly improve the quality of life in elders with dementia.

ASPECTS TO COVER FOR NOURISHMENT AND WELL-BEING
By adhering to proper dietary guidelines, we can support the nourishment and overall well-being of elders with dementia. Here are some foods that may be beneficial:

Nutrient-rich foods

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Working as a prime source of essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, fruits and vegetables may help protect brain cells.
- **Whole grains:** Whole grains provide sustained energy and fiber to elders, and help them in digestion. Brown rice, quinoa and whole-wheat bread are considered to be suitable options.
- **Lean proteins:** As protein is essential for muscle health and brain function, the inclusion of lean meats, fish, poultry, beans and lentils in the diet can prove to be helpful for elders.

Adequate hydration

Dehydration can heavily deteriorate cognitive function and may lead to confusion and disorientation in elders with dementia. Since it is a must for them to take sufficient amounts of fluid every day, it is advisable to offer water frequently throughout the day, even if they don't express thirst. Consider flavoured water, infused water with fruits or herbs, or milkshakes as alternatives.

Social dining

It is commonly known that eating with others promotes social interaction, and for elders with dementia, it is specifically crucial for mental well-being. A calm and relaxed dining environment can encourage conversation during meals, ultimately helping the elders.

Incorporate brain-boosting foods

Certain nutrients are known to have a better impact on the brain health of elders with dementia. It is

advisable to consider foods that are rich in

- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Found in fatty fish, walnuts, and flaxseeds, Omega-3 Fatty Acids support cognitive function in elders and may improve their memory
- **Vitamin B12:** Essential for nerve function, Vitamin B12 is found in meat, fish, dairy products and fortified cereals.
- **Vitamin D:** Deficiency in Vitamin D has been linked to cognitive decline. It is thus advisable to include milk, eggs and fatty fish in the diet of elders.

Adapt to progression of dementia

Understanding the dietary needs of elders with dementia is crucial as the condition progresses. In the early stages, it is ideal to establish healthy eating habits, focusing on a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. These foods provide essential nutrients, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support cognitive function. As dementia advances to the middle stage, caregivers should prepare easy-to-eat meals with softer foods divided into manageable pieces, as this helps with changes in appetite and swallowing difficulties. Visually appealing and consistently textured meals can help reduce agitation and improve meal acceptance. In the later stages, when dementia becomes more severe, it is essential to address the challenges of appetite loss and swallowing difficulties. Prioritizing thickened fluids, pureed foods, and high-calorie, nutrient-rich options like fortified cereals, mashed potatoes, or creamy soups can help ensure adequate nutrition and support overall well-being.

Caring for elders with dementia requires a holistic approach, with diet being a critical pillar. A balanced diet rich in green leafy vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean proteins should be part of their daily regimen. It is important to avoid processed foods, high sugar, and saturated fats. As dementia progresses, dietary patterns and appetite often change. Serving a brain healthy MIND diet (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) can significantly improve their quality of life. The MIND diet is a hybrid of the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) and the Mediterranean diet. Nutritional care involves understanding personal preferences, creating a distraction-free environment, using appropriate crockery and cutlery, and providing the right assistance. Proper hydration is crucial, especially in hot weather. Offering beverages like jeera buttermilk, coconut water, freshly made fruit smoothies, and fresh lime water or the healthy drink they might prefer throughout the day helps maintain hydration.

Compassion and care in dietary management can lead to nourishing and enjoyable experiences, promoting well-being throughout the dementia journey. A thoughtful approach to nutrition not only ensures health but also plays a vital role in engagement, mood upliftment, and motivation, significantly enhancing the quality of life for elders with dementia.

(The author, Neha Sinha, is the CEO and Co-founder of Epoch Elder Care.)



Zubin Bharucha helping us, Lankans should take advantage of Indian retirements: Jayasuriya

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Sri Lanka's interim head coach Sanath Jayasuriya on Wednesday revealed that IPL side Rajasthan Royals' high performance director Zubin Bharucha has helped his batters prepare for the upcoming T20 series against India where he expects them to take advantage of the recent retirements by stars like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli. Rohit, Kohli and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja retired from the T20 Internationals after India's World Cup triumph last month. The T20 series against Sri Lanka will get underway here on July 27. Jayasuriya revealed despite some of the Sri Lankan players' involvement in the Lanka Premier League, they have held a six-day camp with Bharucha. "We just started the sessions just after the LPL. Most of the players are playing the LPL, so they were busy with cricket and what we wanted (for them) was to play cricket as much as possible," he said. "We got Zubin from Rajasthan Royals and we had about six days of work and also with the other cricketers who finished with the LPL. I hope the players have learnt what you (management) wanted to do in terms of practice and their



technique. "The preparation was good, and we have two more days in Kandy before the T20 starts," he added. Jayasuriya said the sessions with Bharucha were intense and the players have been able to learn a lot from him. "It is important to learn as international cricketers new techniques, new approaches and shot making to be effective," he said. India also have a new captain in Suryakumar Yadav for T20Is and Jayasuriya, while acknowledging the struggles of his side, urged them to make the most of the opportunity. "Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are best players in the world.

Looking at their talent and the kind of cricket they have played we all know where they belong, along with Jadeja," Jayasuriya was quoted as saying by Associated Press during a press meet. "Their absence will be loss to the Indian team and we have to take maximum advantage out of that," he said. Heads rolled in the top management of Sri Lanka team after the debacle in the T20 World Cup in the Americas. After Sri Lanka made a preliminary round exit, upon return the team captain Wanindu Hasaranga, head coach Chris Silverwood and high performance consultant Mahela Jayawardena all

resigned. When asked about Sri Lanka's current state, Jayasuriya hoped the players are able to develop themselves. "It is up to the players, we have been doing all the work in terms of practice, we have given training, we have got best coaches. I think Sri Lanka Cricket has provided most of the things and now it is up to the players," he said. "For the present cricketers to come to that level, we have been doing all the necessary work and I hope in next two years there will be a lot of development in these boys," the batting great added. "We need to give a little bit of time. I know, for the cricket-loving public it is frustrating

sometimes but be patient, give us time, we are working on it. It is really hard work on it with the players and they will do well." The 1996 World Cup winner said Sri Lanka have enough talent in ranks to come out of troubled times while acknowledging the frustration of the fans. "We have enough of talent. What we want (from them) is to go out in the middle and deliver -- it is not easy, we know that," he said. "We have delivered when we were playing and now the time has come, people are waiting for this present team to perform and with what we are doing at the moment they will deliver very soon," he added.



Indian women team's mantra has been to take one game at a time: Deepti

PTI ■ DAMBULLA (SRI LANKA)

Senior player Deepti Sharma said India's mantra in the Women's T20 Asia Cup has been to take one game at a time as conditions haven't really changed from the last time the team played here. India marched into the semifinals with a thumping 82-run win over Nepal on Tuesday after fireworks with the bat from Shafali Verma (81 off 48 balls) and Deepti's impressive 3/13 with the ball. India amassed 178 for 3 after batting first and then restricted Nepal to a paltry 98 for 9 in their 20 overs. "From the first game we are

pretty confident about each (match) and every situation and the condition as well. We are looking forward to semi-final as well," Deepti told the media after the match. She said not much has changed in terms of the nature of the pitches and conditions in Sri Lanka from the team's previous tour to the island nation in June 2022. "Nothing (has) changed, just keep it very simple and just focus for another match. I played (here) last time also and yeah, nothing changed," she said. "We (are) only backing ourselves and you know, conditions are really (the) same."

The right-arm off-spinner is topping the bowling charts with eight wickets in three matches and she credited her success to her readiness to bowl in all situations. "I (am) always ready to bowl in any kind of situation. I like to take the challenges from the front. (It's) nothing, just (that) I'm enjoying each and every match, plan accordingly and what we discussed in the meeting, I just apply myself," she said. "If we win the toss, it's (a) positive (approach) from the upfront. As a batting unit also, we are doing really well from the game one and we finished also well," she added.



Ollie Pope reckons England can make 600 Test runs in a day's play

PTI ■ LONDON

Ollie Pope reckons England can breach the 600-run mark inside a day's play in Test cricket while ruling out any let up to their ultra aggressive 'Bazball' approach with the bat. England hold the record for the most runs scored in a day when they piled up 588 for 6 on the second day of the Manchester Test against India in 1936, and Pope believes the current side under Ben Stokes can eclipse that. "Sometimes we might score 280 to 300 in a day but that's OK and probably because we're reading situations. There might also be a day where we go and get 500 to 600 at some point in the future as well. And that's a cool thing to have," Pope was quoted as saying by BBC Sport. In December 2022, England smashed 506 runs on the opening day of the first Test against Pakistan in Rawalpindi. England are currently 2-0 up in

the three-match Test series against the West Indies after they followed up a victory by an innings at Lord's with a comprehensive 241-run win at Trent Bridge, Nottingham last week. The third and final Test starts on Friday at Edgbaston. The win in Nottingham was the first time England scored 400-plus in both innings of a Test match with totals of 416 and 425. Pope (121 in first innings) was one of three England centuries in the second Test alongside Joe Root and Harry Brook. Pope said there might be times England batters will have to "manage the game a little bit more" but that their attacking Bazball style under coach Brendon McCullum and captain Stokes has now become second nature. "I got asked on day one at Trent Bridge 'do you get told to play like that? No, we don't. It's just our natural games and the way we go about it,'" Pope said.

Mind Games: The psychological challenge of being Olympian

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Human excellence is often closely linked to human fortitude and Olympics is the prime example of it. The Paris Games, starting on Friday, will be a gathering of 10,500 athletes, 117 of them from India, competing for a mere 329 medals. Needless to say, talent alone won't decide who finishes on the podium. It will also boil down to the mind and how one can discipline it to cope with the grandeur and pressure of the big moments. Visualisation, blocking out the noise and being focussed are among the techniques that are often talked about but are they as easy to implement in a highly competitive environment? "There is a lot of pressure (already) in sports and when you compete at the Olympics, you have to be someone who has gone through a lot of highs and lows as well," explains Dr Divya Jain, a sports psychologist with Fortis Healthcare. "In sports, you're confronted with winning and losing on a day-to-day basis, so it's not about winning every time; it's about how you recover, how quickly you bounce back from a mistake," she said while explaining the difference between Olympians and other athletes. "There is public scrutiny, staying away from family, the noise of the Games... All of these are aspects that athletes have to cope with at a psychological level," she added. For the next few weeks athletes will try to be at the peak of their form. To do that, they have trained physically and



mentally but the medal winners will be those who are a tad more tenacious and focussed than the rest. "Not only do they have their own high expectations, but they also carry the hopes of their entire country and scrutiny of a global audience," says Keerthana Swaminathan, a sports psychologist and president of the Indian Sport Psychologists Association. "Being away from families, friends and home is a part of sportspersons' lives but in Olympics, with all eyes on them, it could lead to further stress and anxiety. "Olympians often have to deal with extensive travel and long periods away from family and friends, which can be really isolating. This combination can take a serious toll on their mental health, making it crucial for them to have strong support systems and access to mental health resources," she adds. And to ensure that Indian athletes have calmer minds, the first of its kind specialised medical team is accompanying the contingent, featuring wellness specialists, and a sleep scientist among the regular medical staff.

"Representing and competing for one's country can instill a deep sense of responsibility and pride but that also adds an additional layer of pressure as athletes at the Olympics often feel that they are competing for national glory," says Dr Nanaki J Chadha, a Sport and Performance Psychologist. Dealing with distractions is something that every athlete needs to learn since focussing on the 'here and now' goes a long way. "It's also about being able to harness that pressure because it's natural for anyone to be in a high-stress situation, to have certain responses to that pressure. Your heart rate may increase, muscle tension may change, your rhythm may change," explains Dr Divya Jain. "So you need to train yourself to work through that pressure and also to harness that pressure to help do better, actually become stronger, (to) have more explosive movement, recognising that that's the body we are preparing, rather than clearing that kind of competition situation," she explains. That mental health is a crucial aspect of an athlete's overall

competitive preparedness has been stressed quite often by India's first individual Olympic gold-medallist Abhinav Bindra. Bindra has often talked about his own struggles before the Beijing top finish. **WHAT SEPARATES AN OLYMPIC MEDALLIST FROM OTHERS?** "Medallists have an extraordinary ability to maintain unshakable focus and concentration, even in the most intense situations," Keerthana says, "They can block out distractions - whether it's the noise of the crowd, the pressure of the moment, or the actions of their competitors - and stay entirely present in their performance," she adds. It is something that Bindra and some of other top Indian sportspersons have also often pointed out. Being flexible to last-minute changes and self-assurance are also an important aspect. "They trust in their training, abilities and preparation, which helps them take risks when necessary and push their limits without fear of failure. This self-assurance also acts as a buffer against the pressure and expectations they face, enabling them to perform at their peak," Keerthana says. The winners also tend to remain focussed for the entirety of the competition, says Dr Nanaki. "Medallists often possess superior mental resilience, allowing them to perform under pressure and that also helps them recover quickly from setbacks. Now, throughout the competition, the ability to maintain focus and concentration is extremely crucial," she says.



For TT great Sharath Kamal, running into Roger Federer tops favourite Olympic memories

PTI ■ PARIS

From lurching alongside tennis icon Roger Federer to taking a set off Chinese legend Ma Long, India's flag-bearer for Paris Olympics, Achanta Sharath Kamal, on Wednesday recalled the most memorable moments from his five appearances at the Games so far. The 42-year-old table tennis legend helped the Indian men's team qualify for the first time in history and is believed to be set for his final appearance at the Games. The multiple-time Commonwealth Games gold-medallist believes that qualifying as a team could become the catalyst of growth for table tennis in India. For someone who has a huge bank of memories from the Olympics having made his first appearance in 2004, Sharath recalled running into Federer at a dining hall in his debut Games. "One day I was just out for lunch and as I was entering from this side, there was another person coming from the other side with a tennis bag and hair let loose. I feel like I have seen him somewhere. I couldn't recognise who he was with his hair let loose," he said in a release from Ultimate Table Tennis. "We pass each other -- we actually cross paths -- (and) he goes to give his bag at the baggage keeping area. I walk in, take my plate looking at what to eat and it suddenly strikes me. Man, it's Roger Federer!" Sharath said he was rather shy at that time but nonetheless searched for the Swiss ace. "He was sitting at one of the tables all by himself. I went as close as possible. I didn't want to get in his place but still got close and I was eating (on the same table)," he continued. "Suddenly, a guy comes in with a reverse hat and shorts and they are clapping hands. I look at him and it's Andy Roddick," Sharath recalled. With the Tokyo Olympics postponed by one year during

to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sharath recalled facing difficulties in training and yet he was able to make a dent in Long's march to the gold medal. "Out of the five times I have played with him, I have won just one set against him and that was in Tokyo. And I am very proud of what happened there, especially coming in after COVID," he added. "India had a very tough situation especially after the second wave. People in the rest of the world started their training back and, mid-way in the lockdown in India, we were still confined to home workouts, I was playing on my terrace. It was very tough. "I was training all the time in India with the limited resources we had. From that difficult mindset to getting to the Olympics and doing my best, I really feel I did well," Sharath continued. Even though he suffered a knee injury during the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Sharath fought bravely to reach the second round. He defeated Spain's Alfredo Carneros in the first and pushed his Austrian friend Chen Weixing to five sets in the next. Also, in 2008, he was still in awe of international athletes and Sharath recalled observing basketball legend Kobe Bryant and his 'mamba' mentality closely during the opening ceremony. Sharath also remembers his Athens 2004 meeting with double trap shooting silver medallist and former sports minister Rajivvardhan Singh Rathore before the final. "Probably, I disturbed him in his alone time, but he was sitting outside and relaxing. Coach Kamlesh Mehta said, 'Come, let's go and wish him' and then we both went and he spoke very nicely, asked about my match etc.," Sharath recalled. "He went on to win the medal and after he won the medal, it was so easy for me to go and look at the medal because I had already spoken to him the night before," he said.

New Zealand Olympic soccer team complains after Canadian team drone flown over its training session

AP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand says it has complained to the International Olympic Committee's integrity unit after a drone flown over a New Zealand women's soccer team training session was found to be operated by a member of the Canadian team's support staff. Defending Olympic champion Canada and New Zealand meet in their opening match at the Olympic tournament on Thursday. The drone incident occurred earlier this week, the New Zealand Olympic Committee said Wednesday. "Team support members immediately reported the incident to police leading to the drone operator, who has been identified as a support staff member of the wider Canadian Women's football team, to be detained," the NZOC said in a statement. "The NZOC has formally lodged the incident with the IOC integrity unit and has asked Canada for a full review." The Canadian Olympic Committee has



apologized to the NZOC and New Zealand Football. "The Canadian Olympic Committee stands for fair play and we are shocked and disappointed," the statement said. "We offer our heartfelt apologies to New Zealand Football, to all the players affected, and to the New Zealand Olympic Committee." The NZOC said it and New Zealand Football "are committed to upholding the integrity and fairness of the Olympic Games - at this time the NZOC's main priority is to support the New Zealand women's football athletes and wider team as they start their campaign." It's not the first time a Canadian soccer team has been involved in a drone controversy involving an international rival's training session. In 2021 at Toronto, Honduras stopped a training session ahead of its men's World Cup qualifier against Canada after spotting a drone above the field, according to reports in Honduran media.

'You can expect plenty of action scenes from me in *Simbaa*'

AARTI SREENATH

The trailer of the much-anticipated *Simbaa* was released by the makers on Wednesday, impressing all.

Starring Anasuya Bharadwaj and Jagapathi Babu, *Simbaa* is produced by Sampath Nandi and Dasari Rajendara Reddy under the banners of Sampath Nandi Team Works and Raj Dasari Productions. *Simbaa: The Forest Man*, promises to be a thrilling cinematic experience. Anasuya's dedication and enthusiasm for her craft shines through, making this film one to look forward to on August 9th.

The Pioneer quickly rang a call to the lead actress, bringing to you some exclusive insights. Known for her dynamic presence in Telugu cinema, Anasuya delved into the making of the film, her preparation for the role and her perspective on the industry's future.

Reflecting on the journey of making *Simbaa*, the *Vimanam* actress revealed, "We wrapped up filming nearly a few years ago. Meeting my co-actors at the trailer launch felt surreal because, for many of us, it seemed like we had almost forgotten

about the film. It feels really nice that the trailer has come out well, yet I have to say that it appears to be a movie that must be set in the past. The suspense is still intact, which I appreciate."

When asked about her excitement for the film, she expressed, "When I signed up for *Simbaa*, I was thrilled. It's a serious message film, but it's presented in an entertaining way. It's a crime thriller with a lot of action and you can expect plenty of fights from me, which is new for both me and my audience. Jagapathi Babu Sir plays the main lead, and we all share significant screen space."

"There are a lot of shades to the role I play," shares the *Pushpa* star adding, "I can't reveal whether my character is positive, negative, or grey because it's quite unpredictable and that's the plot's

THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED *SIMBAA*'S TRAILER WAS RELEASED BY THE MAKERS ON WEDNESDAY. *THE PIONEER* ON THE SAME EVENING RANG A CALL TO THE LEAD ACTRESS ANASUYA BHARADWAJ, AS SHE SHARES SOME EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS ABOUT THE UPCOMING FILM

essence. My director calls it a supernatural crime thriller, while I see it as a psychological crime thriller. I don't prefer method acting for my roles; I make sure I stay connected with the character. This particular character, Akshika, is very different from my real-life persona. She is composed, while I am more energetic and spontaneous."

She further believes that everyone understands the concept of Vrikso Rakshati

Rakshita. Everyone understands how we are harming the environment and what the implications are. "*Simbaa* has come up with an excellent concept: a supernatural crime thriller. Jagapathi Babu is the film's major strength. Even if someone doesn't enjoy this film, at least it will cause significant change."

As we went ahead in this chat, the *Khiladi* fame also shared her thoughts on the importance of supporting cinema. "I urge every movie lover to give every film a chance. It's important not to judge a book by its cover. There's always a lot of effort and dreams behind making a film. Our film, *Simbaa: The Forest Man*, has a lot to offer. The trailer is just a glimpse; there's much more to explore."

Going further, she reminisced about her time on set, as she shares, "It feels like such a long time, but reuniting with everyone at the trailer launch felt like no time had passed. I mingled well with everyone, including the child actor I shared many scenes with."

In this exclusive chat, the *Rangasthalam* actress also goes on to reveal that she is currently working on two films, but nothing exciting has come her way recently. "What excites me most is returning to television. I've completed seven films in Tamil and Telugu that are yet to release and each role showcases a different side of me. I want my audience to expect the unexpected and hope I can continue to entertain them. I don't have a dream role; I aim to be a director's safe space. I want to work with various technicians and actors and my only worry is missing the chance to collaborate with some of them."

Meanwhile, Anasuya Bharadwaj has revealed that, in one of the upcoming movies of Pawan Kalyan, a song featuring her with the actor will be a highlight. "I am breaking the news for the first time ever. I have done a song with Pawan Kalyan garu. It is going to be a blast."

Though, she did not reveal the name of the film and if the speculations are to be believed, the *Razakar* actress was referring to *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, one of the three delayed projects headlined by Pawan Kalyan.



Ajith to join *KGF* franchise!

Ajith Kumar recently met with filmmaker Prashanth Neel to discuss the potential of working on two films. According to reports, the first film might be a standalone, while the second could be set in the world of Yash's *KGF*. However, these projects will take at least a year to launch. These two films are expected to be produced by Vijay Kiragandur of Hombale Films. The *Valimai* actor is now filming *Vidaa Muyarchi*, directed by Magizh Thirumeni. The film is expected to hit theatres around Diwali 2024. After *Vidaa Muyarchi*, he will move on to filmmaker Adhik Ravichandran's *Good Bad Ugly*. "Their first collaboration, which may be *AK 64*, will be a stand-alone production." The report stated that this will go on floors in 2025 and be released in 2026. Their second project, which could be his 65th or 66th picture, will be a prequel to *KGF 3*. "The climax of the second film will lead to *KGF 3* and Ajith's character is touted to be the biggest of them all in the Prashanth Neel Cinematic Universe," stated the press release. Meanwhile, Prashanth Neel has *Salaar: Part 2 - Shouryanga Parvam* and an untitled project featuring Jr NTR in the works. It remains to be seen whether he will do Ajith Kumar's film in between these two ventures.

DARKNESS UNLEASHED WITH TRAILER OF *DEMONTE COLONY 2*

Director Ajay Gnanamuthu made his debut with the smash hit horror film *Demonte Colony* (2015), which starred Arunithi, Ramesh Thilak, Sananth and Abhishek George. A sequel to the film was announced, with Ajay returning as director.

The makers of *Demonte Colony 2* confirmed on Wednesday that the film will be released on August 15. This is the fourth film released on this date, following Prashanth's *Andhagan*, Vikram's *Thangalaan* and Keerthy Suresh's *Raghu Thatha*. Adding to the anticipation for the release, on Wednesday, star filmmaker Ram Gopal Verma digitally launched the

trailer of the film. Sharing the trailer, RGV also wished the entire team with his best wishes.

Demonte Colony 2 also features Priya Bhavani Shankar, Antti Jaaskelainen, Tsering Dorjee, Arun Pandian, Muthukumar, Meenakshi Govindarajan, Sarjano Khalid and Archana R.

Sam CS composed the music for the horror movie and Harish Kannan did the cinematography. Bobby Balachandran produced *Demonte Colony 2* in collaboration with Vijay Subramanian's White Nights Entertainment and RC Rajkumar's Gnanamuthu Pattarai.



'It's embarrassing to do intimate scenes with the crew present'

Many people have expressed interest in *Zee5's Bahishkarana*. Anjali portrayed the lead in this Mukesh Prajapathi-directed period social drama series.

The success meet was held in Hyderabad and Anjali stated during the event that she is looking forward to taking on more daring and intense parts in her career going forward.

"I don't want to do the same characters anymore. With my OTT productions, I've learned how to play dark roles, which has given me a sense of accomplishment as an actress," Anjali says.

Anjali further said that it is challenging to do intimate scenes with both; be they be a hero or a character actor. "Such scenes are filmed with dozens of crew members, most of whom are men. So, no matter which character I play, the person I am remains the same. It's usually difficult and embarrassing to handle such situations." Anjali also prefers to avoid kissing scenes.

She also says that playing bold parts in *Bahishkarana* was eye-opening and the situations affected her personally.

However, now that she understands how to perform dark roles, she is eager to do more. Ravindra Vijay and Sritej had major parts in this six-episode series.

AHA GODARI MAKES IT BIG AT NEXA STREAMING ACADEMY AWARD

Gyabo Network Pvt Ltd's *Aha Godari*, a film about the River Godavari, won best documentary at the NEXA Streaming Academy Awards, which were held in conjunction with the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA) in Mumbai. The documentary is currently streaming on Aha, which made a remarkable debut at the first-ever NEXA Streaming Academy Awards by clinching an impressive 13 awards.

The awards ceremony also honoured individual excellence. Vijay K Chakravarthy received the Best Cinematographer (Series) award for *Anya's Tutorial*. On this occasion, Gopavajhala Diwakar was awarded Best Documentary Original. Kiran Mamedu was named Best Production Designer (Series) for *Newsense*. Priyamani Raj was named Best Actor - Critics' Choice (Female) for her performance in *Bhamakalapam 1*. Abhimanyu Tadimeti received the Best Story award for *Bhamakalapam 1*, while Niveditha Sathish and Sharanya Pradeep were honoured as Best Supporting Actor in Series (*Anya's Tutorial*) and Best Supporting Actor in Film (*Bhamakalapam 1*) respectively.

Ratthasachi, which is currently streaming on Aha in Tamil, also received several accolades in the original web category, including Best Film, Best Original

Soundtrack by Javed Riaz, Best Actor (Male Critics Regional) to Kanna Ravi and Best Cinematographer to Jagadeesh Ravi. These awards recognise the film's exceptional storytelling, music, performances and cinematography. Ravikant Sabnavis, CEO of Aha, accepted two awards on behalf of the platform: Best Non-Fiction Original for *Unstoppable* and Best Regional Platform. "These awards, awarded for the first time to an OTT platform, mark a historic milestone for Aha as a leader in regional OTT. They also showcase the dedication and creativity of our talented teams and partners in delivering diverse and captivating stories," adds Ravikant.



'Revu songs convey strong emotions with creativity & excellence'

A forthcoming film titled *Revu* stars Vamsi Ram Pendyala, Ajay, Swathi Bheemireddy and Epuri Hari in prominent parts with Murali Giniupalli and Naveen Parupalli co-producing it under Samhith Entertainments and Parupalli Productions. The makers conducted an audio launch event and such exhilaration! Nirman Super Vision journalist Prabhu, along with Parvatani Rambabu, a senior film journalist, are serving as the executive producers for the film. While finishing all of the paperwork, *Revu* is preparing for a big theatrical release in the second week of August! The flick directed by Harinath Puli with an entertaining plot had legendary lyricists Chandra Bose, Ramajogayya Sastry, Suddala Ashok Teja, Ananth Sriram and Kasarla Shyam attend *Revu*'s audio launch event in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Lyricist Chandra Bose voiced during the audio launch. "After coming here and listening to the movie's tunes, I knew I'd found the appropriate choice. It's been a

while since I saw Ashok Teja garu. I am also pleased to meet Ananth Sriram, Kasarla Shyam and Ramajogayya Sastry on this platform. Imran Sastry's songs are as eclectic as his name suggests. The songs convey strong emotions. The music is excellent. We saw both creativity and excellence in the movie." On the other hand, lyricist Ramajogayya Sastry remarked, "After listening to *Revu* songs, I became emotional. If we want diversified and content-rich films, we seek to foreign-language films. However, after hearing *Revu*'s songs, one gains hope in the talent of the next generation. Telugu cinema seems to be in good hands, while at the same time I also believe that the Telugu music directors should get greater opportunity." All of the renowned lyricists present at the audio launch have crowned hit Telugu songs. Consequently, in a struggle for survival, *Revu* depicts the life of a fisherman onscreen and one can't wait to watch this captivating tale!

'The ensemble cast of *Purushothamudu* brought strength to story'

Raj Tarun's upcoming film is titled *Purushothamudu*. Dr. Ramesh Tejawat and Prakash Tejawat are producing this film with a large budget under the label Sri Sridevi Productions. Hasini Sudheer is introduced as the film's leading lady. Ram Bheemana, who has directed films such as *Akatayi* and *Hum Tum*, is currently working on *Purushothamudu*. This film stars Prakash Raj, Murali Sharma, Ramya Krishna, Brahmanandam and Mukesh Khanna. *Purushothamudu* will have a worldwide theatrical premiere on the 26th of this month.

On this occasion, director Ram Bheemana stated, "I have directed two films in the past: *Akatayi* and *Hum Tum*. The producer profited from the movie *Hum Tum*. After a six-year hiatus, I made the film *Purushothamudu*. I am pleased to have found good producers. They gave careful consideration to the film's quality before producing it. I created a clean family entertainer. Our producers cast huge names like Prakash Raj, Ramiykrishna, Mukesh Khanna and Murali Sharma in our film."

Each of them added strength to the plot through their performance."

Purushothamudu tells the story of a wealthy man, who visits a community and what he does there. It appears that the film is similar to Mahesh Babu's *Srimanthudu*. Many films appear to have the same plot. But what is shown in the story is crucial. The makers touched on a point in the film that had never been seen in an Indian film before! Apparently, Raj Tarun has lent his complete support to the film. Hasini Sudhir, the heroine, has an excellent character too. Hasini executed her part flawlessly. Director Veera Shankar was also present at the event as a special guest. Talking at the event, he mentioned that Ram Bheemana is a talented director and he believes that this film will surely be a hit!

