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QUOTE OF THE DAY



Senior Congress MP Jairam Ramesh said that the 'PM Fasal Bima Yojana' was a total failure and has been used to fatten private insurance companies. Interestingly, the Congress government of Telangana is rolling out the red carpet for the same scheme. Similarly, Rahul Gandhi criticises Adani as a benefactor of the BJP, but the Revanth government is signing multi-crore deals with the Adani group. The Congress should clarify who is right: The Delhi Congress or the Telangana Congress.

- Harish Rao, BRS MLA TG

P4

DPIIT recognises 1.40 lakh entities as startups as on June 30

'WAKING UP SEEING WOMEN MAKING RANGOLIS FEELS SO BEAUTIFUL IN HYD'

Sai Durga Tej donates Rs 5 lakh to film JOURNALISTS

DON'T MISS...

Date palm cultivation suitable..

State Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Industry Development and Fisheries Minister K Atchannaaidu has said that date palm cultivation will be encouraged in the State. The date palm farmers from Rayalaseema met the Minister and told their problems at his chamber in the secretariat on Friday. Responding positively, Minister Atchannaaidu directed to take appropriate measures to promote date palm cultivation. In Rayalaseema districts, 700 acres of date palm crops is already being cultivated, besides reducing ...

-PAGE: 4

MSP legal guarantee issue ...

Opposition parties led by the Congress on Friday created a ruckus and obstructed proceedings in the Rajya Sabha, as they were not satisfied with Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's reply on providing a legal guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) to farmers. The trouble began during Question Hour when Chouhan listed steps taken by the government for the welfare of farmers and spoke about the committee looking into strengthening the MSP system but stopped short ...

-PAGE: 5

Married traders have edge over ...

Markets regulator Sebi has delved into the patterns of intraday trading, revealing a surprising new factor influencing trading performance: relationship status. The regulator's analysis suggests stark differences between the trading behaviours and outcomes of married and single traders, as well as between male and female traders. The Sebi's study, on intraday trading in equity cash segment, found that married traders tend to outperform their single counterparts in several key areas. During the ...

-PAGE: 8

World champions India look to ...

India's newly-forged coach-captain combination of Gautam Gambhir and Suryakumar Yadav will look to make instant impact against a Sri Lankan team in disarray when the familiar South Asian rivals face off in a limited-overs series, starting with three T20s, here on Saturday. Two-time World Cup winner Gambhir is now at the helm of the ship as India's head coach while the T20i reigns have been handed over to one of the best batters in the format, Suryakumar. Gambhir, who has built his coaching reputation in the ...

-SPORTS

CM NAIDU RELEASES WHITE PAPER ON FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES DURING YSRCP GOVT

'Jagan landed AP in crisis'

Says debt burden soared to Rs 9.74 L cr in past 5 years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has accused the previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government of exacerbating Andhra Pradesh's financial crisis. On the fifth day of the Legislative Assembly session on Friday, Naidu released a white paper detailing financial irregularities under the YSRCP regime, revealing that the state's debt has surged to Rs 9.74 lakh crore over the last five years.

Naidu criticised the former administration for decreasing state income while significantly increasing debt. He alleged that funds intended for various programmes were diverted and public property was mortgaged to secure loans. "If we collectively understand what transpired between 2019 and 2024, it will clarify our future course of action," Naidu said.

The Chief Minister expressed grave concern over the prolonged delay in completing the Polavaram project and the mismanagement of funds. He suggested that the state is on the brink of bankruptcy, citing the extensive mortgaging of public property and heavy borrowing by the previous government.

Continued on Page 2

- CM claims the previous administration diverted funds and mortgaged public property.
- The delay in the Polavaram project and wasteful spending have put the State near bankruptcy, CM says.
- Telangana's progress in various sectors is partly attributed to urban development, including Hyderabad.
- Naidu reflects on past TDP achievements and investments as evidence of AP's potential.
- Amaravati's development could have made it a world-class city if continued, according to Naidu.
- Naidu to relaunch Anna Canteens



- Naidu calls for creative administration and innovative ideas to advance the state despite financial constraints.
- He aligns with national development goals and advocates for a focus on eliminating poverty and economic imbalances.

Naidu holds talks with NDB team on tieups

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu held a meeting with New Development Bank (NDB) representatives on Friday in

Amaravati.

In a tweet, the CM shared, "Had a productive discussion with NDB Director-General DJ Pandian today in Amaravati. We explored potential collaborations in several

crucial areas, including financial support for the CRDA's capital construction, essential infrastructure projects, rural road connectivity, and joint ventures in ports and green energy."

CM assures all help to flood-hit ryots

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu announced that the government will provide all possible support to the people and farmers affected by the recent heavy rains and floods in the state. Addressing the members of the house on Friday, the CM reported that East & West Godavari, Konaseema, Kakinada, Eluru districts, along with ASR district, were significantly impacted by the floods. Approximately 4,317 acres of crops were damaged and 1.06 lakh acres of paddy saplings were submerged.

The CM directed Agriculture Minister Atchannaaidu and Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha to visit the flood-affected areas and meet the victims. He also instructed the respective district ministers to collect and submit detailed reports on the damage in their regions.

- 1.06 lakh acres of paddy crop submerged
- Rs 3,000 each to families losing shelter



In addition to paddy, 3,160 acres of maize and 960 acres of cotton were also damaged. These preliminary damage estimates are expected to

increase as officials conduct field visits. In East Godavari district, 273 acres of crops remain submerged.

Continued on Page 2

Srisailem Project sees surge in inflows

Water level rises above 861 feet reaching 109 TMCs at present

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Srisailem Project is experiencing a substantial inflow of floodwater, with current inflows reaching 2,58,069 cusecs. This includes 2,29,929 cusecs from the Jurala spillway, 20,854 cusecs from the powerhouse, and 7,286 cusecs from Sunkesula. The average inflow has been recorded at 2,11,208 cusecs. The outflow, which is utilised for power generation through the Right and Left power-

houses, stands at 45,236 cusecs. The Full Reservoir Level (FRL) of the Srisailem Project is 885 feet, with a storage capacity of 215.80 TMCs. Currently, the project level is at 861.01 feet, with 109 TMCs of water stored. In response to the rising water levels, the Irrigation department has opened three gates of the Sunkesula Reservoir, releasing 500 cusecs of water into the KC canal and another 500 cusecs into the Srisailem reservoir.

Continued on Page 2



SW monsoon weakens in coastal AP, R'Seema

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Meteorological Centre has forecast strong surface winds with speeds of 30-40 km/h at isolated locations across North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema in the coming five days.

The daily weather update also indicates that light to moderate rain is expected at a few places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days. Currently, the southwest monsoon is weak over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema.

In the last 24 hours, rainfall was recorded at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, at one or two places in Rayalaseema, while dry weather prevailed elsewhere.

Sincere party workers will be rewarded: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the final day of the 16th AP Legislative Assembly sessions on Friday, Minister Nara Lokesh met with many people seeking nominations for various posts. These aspirants presented their bio-data to Lokesh, who assured them that he would recognise the contributions of those who have diligently served the party and ensure fair treatment for all. In a subsequent conversation with the media in the assembly lobby,



Lokesh highlighted his commitment to transparency and accountability. He reiterated his earlier promise, stating that the 'Red Book' — which he has mentioned in approximately 90 public meetings — will be used to document and address wrongdoing. He emphasised that all wrongdoers listed in the Red Book would be dealt with according to the law.

Lokesh also addressed recent controversies, noting that before the Red Book's unveiling, YS Jagan had made headlines in Delhi. He pointed out

that the Red Book has garnered significant attention in national media. Lokesh observed that while YSRCP won 11 seats over the last five years, Jagan has held five media conferences in the past month alone. He assured that if Jagan attends the assembly, he will be treated with respect, and the issues will be addressed constructively. Minister Lokesh reaffirmed that alliance leaders will maintain decorum and will not resort to disparaging remarks or disrespect Jagan's family members.

Jagan refutes TDP's claims on govt's debts

PAGE: 2

Student dies in school wall collapse

PNS ■ NELLORE

In a tragic incident at KNR High School in BV Nagar here on Friday, a 9th Class student died when a parapet wall collapsed on him.

According to police, students were gathered in one area when a portion of the parapet wall gave way, falling on Mahendra (14), a 9th Class student. Despite being rushed to a government hospital, Mahendra succumbed to his injuries.

In response to the tragedy, the government has announced a Rs 5 lakh ex gratia payment to the grieving family, as confirmed by District Collector O. Anand.

IT and Human Resources Development Minister Nara Lokesh has ordered an inquiry into the incident.



Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana expressed his condolences and directed the District Education Officer to investigate and report on the

incident. The local MLA is expected to present the Rs 5 lakh ex gratia cheque to the family on Saturday, according to officials.

From AP to Paris: Jyothika's race to Olympics

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jyothika Sri Dandi, an athlete from AP, has earned a place in the Indian Women's 4x400m Relay Team for the Paris Olympics 2024. She is a first-year BA student at the Easwari School of Liberal Arts, SRM University-AP.

Hailing from Tanuku in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, Jyothika's journey to the elite sports championship is a testament to her hard work, determination, and resilience. The two-time national champion had her breakthrough in 2021, securing gold in the 400-meter race at the Indian U23 Championships. She continued her winning streak in 2023, claiming victory at the

Indian National Open Championships in Thiruvananthapuram and earning a bronze medal in the women's 4x400m relay at the 2023 Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok.

Jyothika's exceptional performance at the 2024 World Relays Championships in Nassau, Bahamas, secured the Indian women's relay team's ticket to the Paris Olympics. Her blistering pace and consistency have established her as a formidable athlete on the global stage.

Vice Chancellor of SRM University- AP, Prof. Manoj K Arora, expressed his pride, saying, "Jyothika is a national treasure who inspires every young girl with dreams of becoming an Olympian."

Hailing from Tanuku in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, Jyothika's journey to the elite sports championship is a testament to her hard work, determination, and resilience. The two-time national champion had her breakthrough in 2021, securing gold in the 400-meter race at the Indian U23 Championships





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Honouring the heroes

Kargil Vijay Diwas marks India's triumph over adversity and the enduring spirit of its armed forces

Twenty-five years ago, India won a war that was thrust upon it. The war with Pakistan was won by some exemplary soldiers who fought valiantly and many laid their lives for the honour of the country. Kargil Vijay Diwas, commemorating the victory in the Kargil War against Pakistan in 1999 is celebrated on July 26. Prime Minister Modi paid rich tributes to the martyrs on the Vijay Diwas at Kargil Memorial. This year is special as the nation celebrates the silver jubilee of the victory. Prime Minister Modi visited the Kargil War Memorial in Drass, Jammu and Kashmir, to pay homage to the brave soldiers. However, the Indian borders are still far from secure. Terrorist activities are on the rise. So the big question is where do we stand today? Have we learnt our lessons? The Kargil War took place in the months of May and July 1999 and was a result of Pakistan's infiltration into the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistani soldiers, disguised as militants, occupied strategic heights in the Kargil sector of Jammu and Kashmir. This unexpected intrusion led to Operation Vijay; a historic military campaign launched by India to reclaim the occupied territories. Despite the adverse circumstances, the Indian Armed Forces displayed unparalleled bravery and strategic acumen. The conflict culminated on July 26, 1999, with India successfully regaining control over the occupied regions. The Kargil expedition of Pakistan was indeed an eye-opener. India came to know of it rather late and that too from the locals who reported suspicious activity in the hills.



This was indeed a glaring intelligence failure that cost more than five hundred lives of soldiers. The war underscored the need for better intelligence and surveillance. India has since fortified its intelligence network and improved border security to prevent such infiltrations. The Kargil War also highlighted the importance of modern weaponry and equipment. In response, India has made significant investments in modernising its military capabilities. But the biggest lesson learnt by the Indian army was to prepare itself for high-altitude warfare. The conflict emphasised the need for specialised training for high-altitude warfare. The Indian Army has since established dedicated training programs and infrastructure to prepare soldiers for such challenging environments. The war also showcased the significance of international diplomacy. India effectively garnered global support against Pakistan's actions, leading to increased diplomatic pressure on Islamabad. The lessons learnt from the conflict have led to significant advancements in military strategy, technology, and international relations. However, we have a long way to go as the strained relations with two neighbours — Pakistan and China — can anytime erupt into a war. Indeed, Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Kargil War Memorial serves as a reminder of the nation's gratitude and respect for its armed forces. It also reinforces the commitment to safeguarding the nation's integrity and sovereignty. Jai Hind!

The change has taken place in the course of the past few thousand years, which, says Morris, is "almost instantaneous" in evolutionary terms. Human beings have adapted themselves so brilliantly to their new environment that they have come to believe this to have been a gradual process, and they are biologically fully equipped to deal with it. This is not the case. Biologically, humans remain the simple, rural animals described in scene one above. According to Morris, they "lived like that, not for a few centuries," but "for a million hard years." They "changed biologically" and

PICTALK



A soldier pays homage at the Kargil War Memorial on the 'Kargil Vijay Diwas', in Drass

Urban violence: Human nature vs city life



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Urban violence and crime persist globally, often blamed on policing and socio-economic factors. However, the deeper cause is the conflict between urban life and human nature

Urban violence and crime have been matters of continuing global concern. While the quality and adequacy of policing, and some social and economic factors, have been discussed in this context, the basic, underlying cause has escaped sufficient attention. It is the conflict between the very character of urban life and the orientation of the human ethos as it has evolved. The matter has been dwelt upon comprehensively by Desmond Morris in *The Human Zoo*. His focus has not been on crime but on the wider consequences of the conflict in terms of the future of human beings. His observations, however, have implications which no serious researcher in urban violence and crime can ignore.



The primary cause of conflict between urban life and human ethos, according to Morris, is overcrowding caused by population growth. He describes two vastly different scenarios at the very beginning of the book. In the first, people are members of a tribe, comprising a "compact group" of 60, living in a piece of land 20 miles long and 20 miles wide, which is forested and inhabited by "animals, small and large." In the second, they live in an area of the same dimensions but which is "civilized, inhabited by machines and buildings," and where there are a "compact group of six million human beings," a "hundred thousand individuals for every one in the first scene." The change has taken place in the course of the past few thousand years, which, says Morris, is "almost instantaneous" in evolutionary terms. Human beings have adapted themselves so brilliantly to their new environment that they have come to believe this to have been a gradual process, and they are biologically fully equipped to deal with it. This is not the case. Biologically, humans remain the simple, rural animals described in scene one above. According to Morris, they "lived like that, not for a few centuries," but "for a million hard years." They "changed biologically" and

"evolved spectacularly" during this period when the pressures of survival, which were great, moulded them. The problem, according to Morris, is that humans had evolved as tribal animals and "the basic characteristic of the tribe is that it operates on a localized, inter-personal basis. To abandon this fundamental social pattern, so typical of the ancient human condition, was going to be against his grain." This, however, is precisely what humans had to do with the emergence of towns. Inter-city coordination developed with the growth of agriculture and trade. The human being "became a citizen, a super tribe man, and the key difference was that as a super tribes man he no longer knew personally each member of his community." It was this change from the personal to the impersonal society, "that was going to cause the human animal the greatest agonies in the millennia ahead. As a species we were not biologically equipped to cope with a mass of strangers masquerading as members of our tribe. It was something we had to learn to do, but it was not easy we are still fighting against it in all kinds of hidden and ways—and some that are not so hidden." People have tried to satisfy



EVEN WITHOUT MOBS AND GANGS, TRIVIAL CAUSES SPARK VIOLENCE WHEN OVERCROWDING GRATES ON ONE'S NERVES. INSTANCES OF 'ROAD RAGE' ARE EXAMPLES OF THIS

their desire for cooperative personal relationships by forming tribe-sized "sub-groups or pseudo-tribes" with social or professional companions. This, however, has also meant viewing other sub-groups as being beyond the pale and enabling their members—even those personally known to one—to be treated as badly as members of an impersonal mob. This writer feels that criminal gangs constitute a form of such sub-groups or pseudo-tribes. These are small groups whose members can be compared to tribal hunters searching for prey, which, instead of animals, are the human victims of their crime. This is particularly so in instances of armed robberies or targeted mob violence. Gang leaders, like leaders of the earlier hunters, guide and protect gang members but also demand unquestioning obedience and treat mercilessly anyone who, they feel, have deserted or betrayed them. Mobs have been a part of urban life since the very beginning, and a proneness to violence and criminal activity is inherent in their dynamics. The anonymity it lends to members, hinders detection in cases of collec-

tive violence. Also, tussles for leadership lead to attempts to garner support by resorting to competitive encouragement of violence. Equally, individual members of mobs can try to stand out in a crowd by perpetrating or calling for singularly violent acts. Even without mobs and gangs, trivial causes spark violence when overcrowding grates on one's nerves. Instances of "road rage" are examples of this. Things are going to get worse as rising temperatures, cloudbursts, flash floods, cyclones, tornados and massive tidal waves, become increasingly frequent as a result of climate change—thereby severely affecting cities and towns. There has to be a serious global discourse on all aspects of urban life including law and order. There can doubtless be no question of reversing the course of history and returning to tribal life. One can, however, think of devising patterns of community existence which consciously addresses this problem, encouraging inter-personal contacts and diminishing the scope for sub-group conflicts. Unfortunately, no such effort is under way. (The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SC MUST INTERVENE

Madam — At last, the Supreme Court of India has stepped in to play a crucial role in involving the state governments of Punjab and Haryana to find a positive solution to the ongoing farmer protests at the Sambhu border. The Court has suggested forming a committee of independent individuals to negotiate with the farmers. It is indeed frustrating that the farmers, the "annadata" (food providers) of our country, are back on the streets fighting for a legal guarantee of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops and other demands to reach the NDA government. Currently, the Centre, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seems to have turned a blind eye to the plight of farmers, particularly in Punjab and Haryana. The prolonged standoff between the Haryana government and protesting farmers, which began on February 13, has led to road blockades, disrupted public life, and traffic movement, compelling the Supreme Court to act. The Centre has yet to address or resolve the farmers' issues, leading to renewed protests with uncertainty. The Congress has only offered hollow assurances and remained a passive observer. It is hoped that the recent meeting between farmer leaders and Rahul Gandhi in Parliament, along with the Apex Court's efforts, will lead to a resolution of the issue without further delay.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jaipur

BUDGET: THE GOOD BAD AND THE UGLY

Madam — The Union Budget for 2024-25 can be viewed in three layers. The positive aspect is its focus on boosting economic activity and generating employment opportunities across various sectors, with significant support for MSMEs. However, the budget fails to address the needs of the salaried class, leaving them with unmet expectations. The most concerning aspect is the complete disregard for senior citizens,

SC stays nameplate diktat



This refers to the news article, "SC Stays Nameplate Diktat on Kanwar Yatra Path" (July 23).

The Honorable Supreme Court has taken a constitutional, legal, and practical stance by issuing an interim stay on the Yogi government's order regarding name plates along the Kanwar route. The order from the Yogi government appears to have been issued to protect the sentiments of Kanwar Yatrias. However, there are differing opinions on this issue within society. Creating a false identity or concealing one's caste, religion, or creed can be considered condemnable, anti-social, and illegal. Currently, the matter is under review by the Honorable Supreme Court, and all related aspects will be examined, taking into account social, religious, and legal provisions. Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

as the Finance Minister has not increased savings interest rates or provided health support through government schemes. Despite Modi 3.0 winning with the support of young and senior citizens, the government seems to have prioritized coalition partners from Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, neglecting these crucial demographics. This budget highlights a troubling trend of prioritising political alliances over national interests. The government could have showed more concern to the marginalised groups and given them more concessions in the budget rather than pleasing its allies. The budget is supposed to be for the entire nation not for the political allies, so it should take care of all.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

CONCERNS OVER PM POSHAN SCHEME

Madam — Lakhs of underprivileged schoolchildren struggling with anemia and malnutrition have benefited from the "PM POSHAN scheme," which addresses both hunger and education

challenges. India is among the few countries that provide schoolchildren with one nutritious meal a day. However, a scheme as extensive as POSHAN (formerly the midday meal scheme) is vulnerable to issues such as lethargy, corruption, and poor implementation. Reports of food adulteration and poisoning have surfaced, including a 2019 incident in Uttar Pradesh where a roti was served with just salt. Recently, a dead snake was found in a "dal-khichdi" packet served at an anganwadi government school in Maharashtra's Sangli district. The godown storing the food packets has been sealed, but more actions are needed, including holding contractors accountable for these lapses. It is crucial to ensure such incidents are prevented to restore trust in the midday meal program and ensure children feel safe consuming these meals. Ganpat Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Exploring our bonds: From castes to communities



SANJAY CHANDRA

Our innate desire for connection spans from school rivalries to the unique structures within organisations revealing the deep-seated need for identity and bonding

Humans, as we are now, evolved around 700,000 years back. It took us millennia to be domesticated, seeking warmth and the safe environs of a family, community, caste, religion, faith, ideology, locality, city, and the country. One only has to travel in a train to understand these bonds. No sooner are you settled, when the friendly co-traveller wants to know the place that you belong to. The ice breaker is enough for complete strangers to explore more intimate details and search for relatives in case of a shared caste, or neighbours or even mutual friends otherwise. I remember a few interesting incidents. I was around 8, when our teacher asked us our castes. I was not aware and was tasked to inquire from my parents. The next day I excitedly raised my hand to blurt out the response, the teacher stumped me with yet another googly - my sub caste. Almost three and a half decades later, my daughter was also asked the same question in her class. She was also unprepared. This time I



armed her not only with the caste, but the sub caste as well. Though, I am not sure if my ignorance was a reflection on inadequate feelings of belonging, or it was the grand sentiment of patriotism. I lived in a hostel in Japan for three months for a training. There were hundreds of men and women of different nationalities interacting with each other in the mess or during the entertainment programs over weekends. It was interesting to note people bonding with each other in a foreign land based on common language. We from the Indian subcontinent gravitated towards Hindi or Urdu speaking persons, irrespective of the nationalities.

Spanish speaking people from Europe to South America formed their own group. I also remember a train ride in Switzerland in 2005, when an advertisement caught my eye. An Indian movie star stared back at me, exhorting me to buy an expensive item. I did not have the money, but the pride of an Indian face on a Swiss train compensated for the lack of resources. During my professional life in the railways, there was a perennial debate about the utility of having different departments and officer level recruitment based on the same, which many thought led to a departmental bias. The Indian organization has now done away with the practice - it is now a unified management service. Efficacy of the change will be known only in future. I believe railway organisations across the world have department based cadres. It instils a sense of pride in belonging to the department, leading to more efficient working. I also remember our school days. Each of us were divided into Houses, which were usually named after different

colours or celebrity Indians. There was a healthy system of each House scoring points during the academic year, culminating into the grand finale - the annual sports. We would be cheering our House performers till our sore throats would permit. I never witnessed animosity or professional envy on the better performance of rivals. We tend to overlook a reality, probably because it is deeply ingrained in our psyche. Indian army has regiments based on communities. I have yet to come across any community biased incidents in the services. It might have something to do with the organization's resilience and strength of its leaders. Louie Schwartzberg, American director, producer, and cinematographer, aptly remarked, "I think we need to do some deep soul searching about what's important in our lives and renew our spirit and our spiritual thinking, whether it's through faith-based religion or just through loving nature or helping your fellow man." (The writer is an author; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN THE GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

The intimate relation with God reflects in true peace; joy stem from a deep connection with the divine



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

God is omnipresent. Therefore, His company is available everywhere all the time. However, if someone is very keen on the company of God, He manifests in a 'murti' (idol). This is mostly true for temples, where God is worshipped routinely in a prescribed manner. But God even manifests in murtis kept in home or a photo of God, if He decides that someone deserves this favour. Many sadhus, genuine ones, carry their worshipable God in some form with them. I had the privilege of seeing a sadhu in a park take out His Lord's photo and he worshipped Him before eating his meal. Lord Krishna has stated, "For the conqueror of self, who is blissfully peaceful in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain as well as in honor and dishonor also, he is accompanied by God." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 6.7)

Before I go any further, let us understand our relationship with God. Lord Krishna states, "An eternal soul is my part only." (15.7) God is our Swami (Master) and we are His 'sevaks' (servants). God is prepared to give a lot to those who serve Him because He has so much to offer. But God is never attached to anyone. Lord Krishna says, "I am similarly inclined towards all beings, no one is hateful for Me; and no one is dear. However, those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me, and I am also in them." (9.29)

God is not like a parent; we can only make a place in God's heart. Do you realize what this means? This is the only place where there is unmixed joy. What does a company of God feel like? God is watching us all the time. Obviously, His presence can be experienced subtly only, even though He may have manifested in a murti or a photo. Similarly, God communicates mainly in a subtle way except in a rarest or rare case like for a highly advanced devotee such as Sant Tulsidas. We get intuitions. How do we know that these are not our thoughts; the communication could only have come from God? For example, I pray for guidance and help in a medical matter. The answer comes, which could not have been known to me. My Lord has shown His 'kripa' (grace). Then, God uses mediums to communicate. These are people close to His devotees. They come forward and provide the needed information. In rare cases, God speaks



in dreams or when we are not in deep sleep, generally around 4 AM. The timing is a big indicator that it is God, who has spoken, not what we have imagined. Whatever God states will also be corroborated in a scripture like the Bhagavad-Geeta. All this happens because a devotee of God has taken the 'chintan' (meditation) option. What does God communicate or what benefits do we derive from such communications? First of all, we begin to become peaceful. Because without peace no enjoyment is possible. If our minds are disturbed, we cannot enjoy even in the most comfortable circumstances. As God is the only source of real peace, not freedom from noise, we become entitled to it. 'Sukha' or genuine happiness follows even in not-so-opulent surroundings. This feeling leads to unmixed joy as our connection with God is strengthened by sustained practice. Our prayers for guidance and help will be answered.

Progressively, God becomes the guiding light of our lives. Help, as needed, will become available, God finds mediums, who can provide such assistance. For example, a competent doctor will become available to treat us. It all sounds so easy; it is. Not only will we be healthy but the necessary energies of all kinds will be ours too. One will feel secure, comfortable, relaxed, good, etc. The best emotions like hope, satisfaction, patience and tolerance will become parts of our psyche. Our consciousness will become better, i.e. spiritual over some time. In short, life will become highly enjoyable. Worrying, sadness, depression and anxiety will be gradually replaced by superior emotions. It is up to us to choose between chintan about God or 'chinta' (worry) about material objects, goals, etc. God is the owner of whatever there is.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher and guide; views are personal)

Israel and Palestine seek solutions amid global strife



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

China's growing role as a mediator in international conflicts hints at a shifting power dynamic, challenging the traditional Western dominance in international diplomacy

He flew to Washington; they went to Beijing. While leaders soar through the skies, ordinary civilians are engulfed in the flames of war. Their children scream not for the luxury of education, but for the sheer will to survive amid the relentless rains of bombs. Famine devastates their lives, and in Gaza and beyond, people are not just yearning for food but for the basic necessity of drinking water. This grim reality highlights the stark polarization in the global order, as non-Western nations struggle with age-old problems made worse by those wielding power. Harvard-educated former combat soldier of Sayeret Matkal in the IDF, Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, commonly known by his nom-de-guerre Bibi, flew to the United States to address Congress, followed by a meeting with President Joe Biden, who, battling COVID-19 for the third time, was expected to announce his inability to run for a second term officially. Amidst thousands of protesters and a boycott by dozens of Congress members, Netanyahu addressed Congress. Meanwhile, representatives from fourteen Palestinian organisations flew to Beijing to sign a peace agreement. The presence of fourteen organisations for a population of just over 5 million highlights the profound divisions within this land, once a nation-state ravaged by intricate schemes. Following the horrific October 7 attack, where thousands of Israelis were brutally killed and many more kidnapped by Hamas, the region's conflict landscape has been irrevocably altered.

This incident has significantly hampered Israel's efforts to normalise relationships with neighbouring countries. In response, China swiftly intervened, brokering an unprecedented rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This diplomatic achievement was monumental during Ebrahim Raisi's presidency, although tragically overshadowed by the helicopter crash that claimed the lives of Raisi and his dynamic Foreign Minister while returning from a joint irrigation project inauguration in Azerbaijan province. In his record-breaking address to Congress, Prime Minister Netanyahu outlined his vision for peace, affirming that he would not cease fire until victory was achieved—a notion that seems illusory given the ground realities.

Ironically, before the speech, his entourage hinted that he would present "a vision" for the future of Gaza and the region. Ultimately, that vision consisted of "a demilitarized and deradicalized" Gaza. Netanyahu, who struggles to convince his ultra-Orthodox partners to teach their children basic math, now claims to plan on educating "a new generation that must be taught not to hate Jews." This plan remains unclear, but he quickly shifted to slogans about an "Abraham Alliance" between Israel and "moderate" Arab nations, conveniently ignoring his coalition's refusal to even utter the words "two-state solution," the very foundation for this alliance. "Following our victory, with the help of regional partners, the demilitarisation and deradicalisation of Gaza can lead to a future of security, prosperity, and peace. That's my vision for Gaza," he proclaimed to Congress.

He continued, "A new generation of Palestinians must no longer be taught to hate Jews but to live in peace with us. Those



PALESTINE'S WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE WITH CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES OFFERS A HOPEFUL PATHWAY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION AND PEACE, REMINISCENT OF SUN TZU'S ASSERTION THAT 'THE SUPREME ART OF WAR IS TO SUBDUCE THE ENEMY WITHOUT FIGHTING'

twin concepts, demilitarisation and deradicalisation, were applied to Germany and Japan after World War II, leading to decades of peace, prosperity, and security." Despite his lofty words, Netanyahu's visit was not about peace but about expanding the war towards Iran, a country he mentioned twenty-seven times in his 52-minute, record-breaking fourth address. Tragically, there was not even the slightest hint of how he plans to extricate Israel from the tragic impasse it is trapped in under his watch. Israeli analysts expose these hyperboles, stating, "The goal of Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to Washington, including his appearance before the U.S. Congress, is not and never was to advance a diplomatic agreement to bring home the Israeli hostages safely and to end the fighting and suffering. Rather, it is designed to enlist domestic American support to keep waging the war." Another analyst remarked, "Netanyahu may have won 52 standing ovations from the rapturous, majority-Republican audience, but his rhetoric, which so impressed Washington, offered nothing for Israelis watching back home." Meanwhile, in Beijing, 14 Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Fatah, signed the Beijing Declaration. This rare display of unity, facilitated by China, marks a significant shift towards reconciliation among Palestinian factions—a unity long deemed unattainable due to numerous internal and external challenges. The persistent disunity has exacerbated the Palestinians' suffering beyond Israeli oppression. Therefore, the recent declaration offers a glimmer of hope for a more cohesive and effective Palestinian political movement, provided the commitments are genuine and actionable. The Beijing Declaration signifies a remarkable step towards Palestinian unity and sovereignty. The declaration's commitment to post-war governance in Gaza and the establishment of a temporary national reconciliation government underscores a unified vision for Palestinian self-governance

and independence. The significance of the Beijing Declaration is profound, echoing ancient and contemporary sentiments on diplomacy and conflict resolution. Chinese scholar Zhu Weilie aptly noted, "The Beijing Declaration represents the mainstream opinions of various Palestinian factions," marking a critical step toward Palestinian statehood. Historical divisions between factions like Fatah and Hamas, ongoing since the late Yasser Arafat's era, have long impeded progress. The success of this meeting, which saw all factions in attendance for the first time, symbolizes a breakthrough in Palestinian unity and reflects the global south's emerging solidarity and cooperation. The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home. The impact of the Beijing Declaration extends beyond Palestinian internal politics. It poses significant implications for the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While Palestine moves towards internal unity, Israel's political trajectory appears increasingly extreme and radical. The continuous violence and rising death toll highlight the urgent need for a ceasefire and renewed peace efforts. Yet, Israel's alignment with U.S. interests and electoral politics hinders progress. In contrast, Palestine's willingness to engage with China's diplomatic initiatives offers a hopeful pathway towards reconciliation and peace, reminiscent of Sun Tzu's assertion that "the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." China's role as a mediator and leader in global conflicts is likely to expand. The successful reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran under China's mediation last year, followed by the current Palestinian unity efforts, signals a shift in West Asian diplomacy. China's "active actions," characterized by leadership and initiative, have garnered widespread acceptance and support from various countries in the region. Concurrently, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, during his visit to Beijing this week, informed China's Foreign Minister

that "Ukraine is ready and willing to engage in dialogue and negotiations with Russia" aimed at a permanent settlement. Kuleba is in China to secure their assistance in future negotiations with Russia. He emphasised that the negotiations should be rational and lead to lasting peace. There is no mention of NATO, the US, or the UK being involved, but they cannot be pleased with the prospect of peace in Europe being facilitated by China.

This could drive President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to rethink his approach to destructive promises he was given by his "masters" behind the screen. These developments indicate that Beijing is emerging as a new pivotal key player in global conflicts, advocating its strategic ambitions. As regional powerhouses in Asia, both India and China have the potential to elevate the Global South to new heights. Not only Beijing but also Delhi, with Prime Minister Modi's first foreign visit to Russia after his third election, shares this strategic vision. In this context, it is important to consider the words of Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs: "It is also obvious that the United States is trying to drag India into its anti-China project. Both China and India are much more deeply involved in the Western system of globalisation in terms of the volume of financial, investment, and trade agreements and many other things. But the fact is that just like us (Russia), China and India are fully aware of the discriminatory nature of what the West is doing." Transcending political affiliations and beliefs, the most noble and imperative pursuit, as Albert Camus profoundly stated, is the fight for peace. Humanity prevails when, at such critical moments, we forge a united front against the relentless forces of conflict and injustice. Humanity triumphs when, at pivotal moments, we unite resolutely against manufactured conflicts and unyielding forces of injustice, setting aside political differences to stand together.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)

Empowering India's youth: Skills as a compass for their future

Bridging the skills gap through targeted initiatives can not only enhance employability but also drive economic growth and social stability

Few would believe that 26-year-old Kevin Dahima - a young, successful entrepreneur from coastal Gujarat - was once unemployed. Today he himself employs his thriving niche. Kickstarting his business in 2021 and providing a 24-hour service, Kelvin brings home over Rs. 55,000 per month. Having trained as a Hospital Assistant.



PEARL TIWARI

he is helping people in their hour of need, whilst building something for the future. And his journey to success all began when he signed up for skill training. One doesn't have to look too far to see the social impact of high levels of youth unemployment. In South Africa, where youth unemployment has hit a high of 59.7%, unemployment is considered to be the root cause of many problems the country faces today -

including crime, poverty and suicide. Closer to home, the epidemic of drug use in Punjab has been fuelled by social and economic factors including high unemployment, and underemployment and pressing national issues like youth suicide are compounded by youth unemployment. Never has it been more important for our young people to have opportunities for bright and productive futures.

Around the world, youth unemployment and underemployment are significant problems in many societies, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and frustration - which can often fuel social unrest. Over the next decade, the World Bank estimates one billion young people will try to

enter the job market, but less than half of them will find formal jobs. This will leave the majority of young people, many in minority and marginalized groups, unemployed or experiencing working poverty.

With the largest youth population in the world (with 66% of the total population under the age of 35), and the latest data from CMIE (a think tank) claiming youth unemployment could be as high as 45.5% - among the highest in the world - it is important that India takes note here. There is a lot we can do to ensure we take a preventive approach to these issues to secure productive futures for our many young people. In a country with a gaping skills gap, this presents a major



opportunity - to invest in skills collaboratively to meet the needs of both youth and industry. According to recent studies, India's employable population is far too low to meet the demands of the skilled labour market.

Two-thirds of the country's workforce aren't qualified for current job openings. With such a shortage of qualified workers, businesses are struggling to fill positions creating a significant challenge. It's not just the quantity of skilled

labour that's lacking. The quality of available talent is also wanting. Recent research shows that only 33% of workers in India possess the skills employers seek most. The need of the hour to tackle issues at both ends of the spectrum lies in skill training. Whilst the India Skills Mission abandoned its goal of training 500 million youth by 2022, there is still a clear need for corporates, skill training providers and civil society to step into the breach.

Rural youth, in particular, need greater access to quality skill training providers who also support placement, whilst also requiring help to convince families that skills are indeed the way to go - a route often in conflict with the white-collar aspirations of both youth

and their families. Sadly, half of all graduates in India are unemployable due to a lack of industry-relevant skills. The world faces a multitude of challenges today, many of which affect our youth. Conflicts that disrupt education and stability, a polarized online environment that fosters negativity, and economic inequality that limits opportunities. These issues threaten not only individual futures but the overall stability of communities. It is therefore crucial to equip youth with the necessary skills to become productive citizens and create a more sustainable future for all.

(The writer is CEO, of Ambuja Foundation; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Digital payments rise 12.6% at March-end 2024: RBI data

Digital payments across the country registered a 12.6 per cent on-year rise as on March 31, 2024, according to RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions. RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) stood at 445.5 at the end of March 2024 compared to 418.77 in September 2023 and 395.57 in March 2023.



Cipla net profit rises 17.77% at Rs 1,175.46 cr in Q1

Pharma major Cipla Ltd on Friday reported a 17.77 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,175.46 crore in the first quarter ended June 30, 2024. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 998.07 crore in the first quarter of the last fiscal.



KFin Technologies Q1 profit jumps 57% to Rs 68 cr

Financial services firm KFin Technologies on Friday reported 57 per cent jump in profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 68.07 crore for June quarter 2024-25 driven by strong performance across business segments.



DPIIT recognises 1.40 lakh entities as startups as on June 30

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has recognised 1.40 lakh entities as startups as on June 30 this year, the parliament was informed on Friday.



"DPIIT has recognised 1,40,803 entities as startups as on 30th June 2024," Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasadada said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha

a different question that under the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, Rs 90.52 crore was approved to startups by incubators as on June 30 as against Rs 186.19 crore in 2023. The total number of startups selected by the incubators under this scheme was 592 as against 1025 in 2023.



IndiGo profit drops 12% to Rs 2,728 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

InterGlobe Aviation on Friday reported a nearly 12 per cent fall in profit after tax at Rs 2,728.8 crore for the three months ended June. The parent of the country's largest airline had a profit after tax of Rs 3,090.6 crore in the year-ago period.

I-T dept clarifies acquisition cost of real estate bought before 2001

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The cost of acquisition of real estate properties purchased before 2001 will be the fair market value (FMV, not exceeding the stamp duty value) as of April 1, 2001, or the actual cost of the land or building for the purpose of calculation of long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax, the I-T department has said.



allowed taxpayers to compute gains arising out of sale of capital assets after adjusting inflation. For properties purchased before 2001, fair market valuation (not exceeding the stamp duty value) can be used as a base to determine the indexed price. The indexed price will then be reduced from the sale price for calculating LTCG that will be taxed at 20 per cent.

Sensex rebounds 1,293 pts, Nifty ends at record high on value buying

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rebounded by 1,293 points while broader Nifty shot up nearly 2 per cent to a record high on Friday, cutting short the five-day losing streak on heavy value-buying at lower levels and a rally in blue-chips like Reliance Industries.

428.75 points or 1.76 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,834.85.



for Nestle closed in green. Bharti Airtel was the biggest gainer, rising by over 4.51 per

cent. Adani Ports, Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, HCL Technologies, Infosys, JSW Steel and Mahindra & Mahindra were the other big gainers. Nestle was the only loser, closing lower by 0.07 per cent. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher while Tokyo ended lower. European markets were also trading in positive territory.

Rupee recovers from all-time low, closes at 83.72 against US \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered from its all-time low level and appreciated 6 paise to 83.72 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, on strength in the domestic markets and expectations of fresh foreign inflows.

low of 83.73 against the dollar during the session. It finally settled at 83.72 (provisional) against the American currency, up 6 paise from its previous close.



On Thursday, the rupee dropped 7 paise to close at an all-time low of 83.78 against the US dollar. "Market participants are focused on the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Price Index, with significant attention on the upcoming US FED policy meeting on July 31," said Jateen Trivedi, VP LKP Securities.

Crisis-hit Paytm's proposal to invest in payments arm under gov't consideration

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The inter-ministerial panel that oversees investments linked to China is yet to give its approval to Paytm's proposal to invest in its payment aggregator arm, a top government official said on Friday.

cially from foreign, home, finance and industries ministries, is looking into whether the investment proposal of One 97 Communications Ltd (OCL) into PPSL is according to FDI guidelines or not.

panel approves it, Joshi said, Paytm can approach the RBI for a grant of payment aggregator licence. Thereafter, The Reserve Bank of India will examine their proposal and take a call on providing a licence or not, he added.

Paytm shares surge 10%; hit upper circuit limit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of One 97 Communications Ltd, Paytm's parent entity, on Friday soared 10 per cent on hopes of receiving approval for its proposal of making a Rs 50 crore investment in its

subsidiary Paytm Payment Services Ltd (PPSL). The stock jumped 10 per cent to settle at Rs 508.85 -- its upper circuit limit -- on the BSE. On the NSE, it surged 9.99 per cent to Rs 509.05 -- its upper circuit.

SAEL Group issues bonds worth US\$ 305 mn in international markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic renewable player SAEL Group on Friday said it has issued green bonds worth US\$ 305 million in the international markets. The bonds have been issued for investors from the US, Europe and several Asian countries, the company said in a statement.

gy portfolio, which currently stands around 4 GW, it added. SAEL Group aims to increase the portfolio of solar and waste-to-energy assets to 5 GW by the next two years, its Chief Investment Officer Varun Gupta said. In response to the bonds issues, he said, "The record order book oversubscription for SAEL's debut issuance by more than 6x reaffirms the faith of investors in SAEL's business model and the opportunities presented by renewable industry". SAEL Group is an independent green power-producing entity. The company is also into solar module manufacturing.

ServiceNow to make strategic growth investments

PNS ■ CHENNAI

US-based software company ServiceNow has announced plans to make strategic growth investments in information technology service provider Prodat Solutions to help clients adopt AI-enabled solutions. Following the investment by ServiceNow, Prodat will promote the 'Now Platform' offered by ServiceNow to expand business transformation services through enhanced industry and domain specific go-to-market capabilities and increased skilling of ServiceNow professionals. According to global market

intelligence firm IDC Prodat's deep industry and functional domain expertise



Corporation), 73 per cent of global telecom service providers identified AI investments as their top transformation priority as they move away from legacy systems to automated platforms. As per the agreement,

along with ServiceNow's single architecture, single data model would help accelerate the development and adoption of AI solutions for clients, beginning with the United States and European markets. "Prodat's stellar reputation

in the telco space and their proficiency with ServiceNow are a winning combination for customers seeking to accelerate their business transformation journeys," ServiceNow Senior Vice President of Ecosystem Ventures David Parsons said in a company statement on Friday. "Our partnership with Prodat...brings the transformative power of AI to companies seeking competitive differentiation and advantage in today's evolving market," Parsons said. Prodat aims to increase its number of certified ServiceNow professionals by 400 per cent in the next four years, to more than 1,500 full-time employees, globally.

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance reports Q1 PAT up 29.7%

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company has reported a 29.7 per cent growth in its profit after tax for the April-June 2024 quarter at Rs 942 crore. The company, which is the financial services arm of diversified conglomerate Murugappa Group, had registered a profit after tax of Rs 726 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year. Total income during the quarter under review grew by 40.9 per cent to Rs 5,828 crore, from Rs 4,134 crore registered in the corresponding quarter of last year. Disbursements made during

the quarter ending June 30, 2024, grew by 22 per cent to Rs 24,332 crore, as compared to Rs 20,015 crore registered in the same period of last year. Assets under management during the quarter under review rose to Rs 1,68,832 crore, from Rs 1,22,755 crore registered in the same period of last year. In a statement issued on Friday, the company said it continues to hold a strong liquidity position of Rs 14,767 crore as a cash balance as of the end of June 2024. The Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of the company as of June 30, 2024, was at 18.03 per cent as against the regulatory requirement of 15 per cent.

SEBI STUDY ON PROFIT-MAKERS

Married traders have edge over single traders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has delved into the patterns of intraday trading, revealing a surprising new factor influencing trading performance: relationship status. The regulator's analysis suggests stark differences between the trading behaviours and outcomes of married and single traders, as well as between male and female traders. The Sebi's study, on intraday trading in equity cash segment, found that married traders tend to outperform their single counterparts in several key areas. During the years -- FY19, FY22 and FY23-- examined by



The regulator's analysis suggests stark differences between the trading behaviours and outcomes of married and single traders, as well as between male and female traders

the regulator, the proportion of loss-makers was lower among married traders compared to single traders. "On comparing single vs married traders group, married traders group had a higher pro-

portion of profit-makers than single traders group across all the three years," the study revealed. Besides, group of married traders had lower proportion of loss-makers than single

traders across years. During FY23, 75 per cent of single traders were loss-makers, while the number of married loss-making traders was 67 per cent. Additionally, married traders executed a significant-

ly higher number of trades on average than single traders, indicating a higher level of engagement and activity in the market. Another important aspect of Sebi's analysis is the comparison between male and female traders. The study revealed that female traders consistently had a higher proportion of profit-makers compared to their male counterparts across all the years examined. This finding highlights the trading skill of female investors. "Proportion of profit-makers among the group of female traders was higher as compared to the group of male traders, across all the three years," it added.

Govt committed to promoting coal gasification projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said it is committed to promoting coal gasification projects which hold huge potential for converting coal into various valuable products. Coal gasification is a thermo-chemical process that converts coal into synthesis gas or 'syngas', primarily consisting of carbon monoxide and hydrogen. With India importing approximately 83 per cent of its oil, over 90 per cent of methanol, and 13-15 per

cent of ammonia, coal gasification offers an opportunity to

especially in the oil, gas, fertiliser, and petrochemical sectors. The gasification projects will lead to partial import substitution for oil and gas and cleaner utilisation of the country's abundant coal reserves, the coal ministry said in a statement. To promote coal gasification, the government offers 50 per cent rebate in revenue share in commercial auction policies for gasification coal, established a new sub-sector for syngas production, and provides long-term coal allotments to gasification plants.



Harvey Weinstein hospitalised with COVID-19

Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, was taken to a New York hospital due to various health issues, including COVID. According to records from the New York City Correction Department, Weinstein, aged 72, was located at the Bellevue Hospital Prison Ward. According to publicist Juda Engelmayer, Craig Rothfeld, Weinstein's authorised representative and prison consultant, stated that Weinstein, who was found guilty of rape in both New York and California, is dealing with diabetes, high blood pressure, spinal stenosis, fluid on his heart and lungs, and has recently been diagnosed with COVID and double pneumonia.



Weinstein, who has been admitted to Bellevue Hospital several times, has refuted allegations of misconduct and denied engaging in non-consensual sexual encounters with anyone. There is a possibility that he might face a new trial for rape charges in

Manhattan in September. Weinstein's legal team expressed their desire to move forward at the earliest opportunity. Manhattan District Attorney's Office prosecutors plan to charge Weinstein with more violent sexual assaults, following more women agreeing to testify. The milestone for the #MeToo movement was Weinstein's verdict, as women alleged sexual misconduct against numerous men in various industries like entertainment, media and politics. A jury determined that in 2006, Miriam Haley, a former production assistant, was sexually assaulted by the co-founder of the Miramax film studio. In 2013, the same jury found that the co-founder raped Jessica Mann, an aspiring actress. He received a 23-year prison sentence. Weinstein also received a 16-year sentence in a different rape case in California.



ALIA BHATT SHOTS 'FEROCIOUS ACTION' WITH BOBBY DEOL

Alia Bhatt is currently filming one of her highly anticipated movies, *Alpha*. As everyone eagerly anticipates the Spy Universe movie, it has been disclosed that the actress is currently filming an action scene with Bobby Deol. According to reports, Alia and the villain of the movie, Bobby Deol, are currently

filming in Mumbai on a highly secured set in Film City. "It is a ferocious action sequence. You can call it brutal. It is a no-holds-barred face-to-face action sequence between Alia Bhatt and Bobby Deol. There will be blood," a source cited by the news agency claimed. "The shoot location is impregnable. This is one of the most

important scenes of the film and even a fly cannot enter this set. I think they have at least 100 guards manning the location and covering all vantage points," the insider added. Alia Bhatt had earlier revealed the title of her Spy Universe film, *Alpha*, on her Instagram this month, stating that filming for the highly anticipated movie has officially started.

UNCOVERING KEY ART FOR ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING

Disney+ Hotstar released the key art for *Only Murders in the Building* season four. The Emmy-winning, Original comedy series starring Steve Martin, Martin Short and Selena Gomez returns August 27, exclusively on Disney+ Hotstar. In season four, our amateur podcasting trio wrestles with the shocking events at the end of season three surrounding Charles' stunt double & friend Sazz Pataki. Starring Steve Martin, Martin Short, Selena Gomez, Michael Cyril Creighton, with special



guest stars including Meryl Streep, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Eugene Levy, Eva Longoria, Zach Galifianakis, Molly Shannon, Kumail Nanjiani, Melissa McCarthy, Richard Kind and more. *Only Murders in the Building* hails from co-creators and writers Steve Martin and John Hoffman. Martin and Hoffman executive produce along with Martin Short, Selena Gomez, *This Is Us* creator Dan Fogelman and Jess Rosenthal. The series is produced by 20th Television, a part of Disney Television Studios.

Yoo Ah-in denies charges of sexual assault

Yoo Ah-in, famous for his successful movie *Burning*, has been accused of sexual assault by a male individual. According to a report published by Soompi, an investigation into the matter has been initiated by the police. The lawyer representing the actor rejected the accusations, urging individuals to refrain from engaging in "unnecessary speculation."



The man alleged that the actor sexually assaulted him on July 14 while he was asleep at an apartment. It wasn't owned by either the man or Yoo Ah-in. Allegedly, there were additional males at the scene. The reported incident occurred in the Yongsan District of Seoul. The Seoul Yongsan Police Station confirmed that a 30-year-old man had filed a criminal complaint. The man was already interrogated by the police regarding the case. According to the report, he has tested positive for not using drugs.

STANDALONE



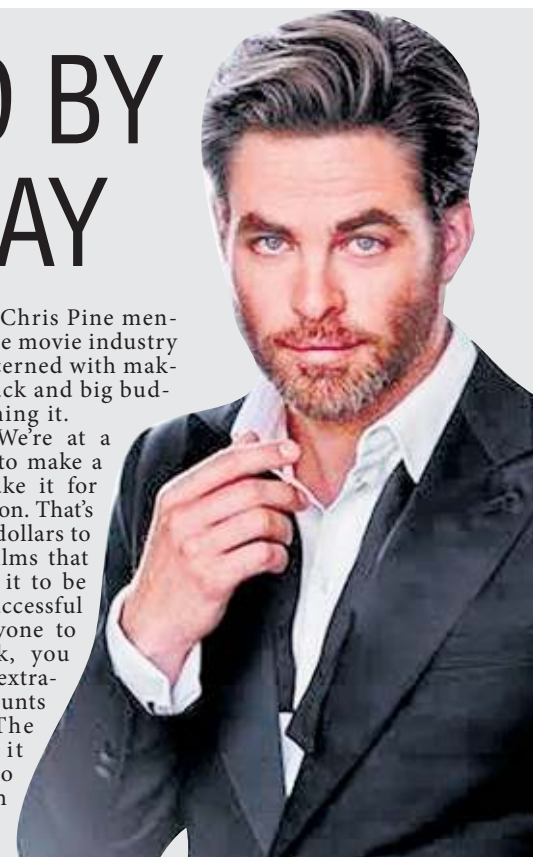
Jacqueline Fernandez turns heads in stunning black gown at India Couture Week 2024!

CHRIS PINE VEXED BY STAR TREK'S DELAY

Chris Pine, the actor from *Star Trek*, didn't hold back in voicing his frustrations about the delays in the possible fourth installment of the reimagined series. Chris Pine has played Captain Kirk in *Star Trek* for almost ten years since appearing in the third film in 2016. Even though fans have been patiently anticipating the fourth installment, Pine revealed that they have encountered some obstacles in getting *Star Trek 4* started. At a recent ACE Superhero Comic Con event, Chris Pine explained the causes of the fourth installment's delays. Critics gave negative reviews to *Star Trek Beyond*, the third film in the revamped series. Additionally, the movie did

not succeed in making a significant impact on the box office, bringing in \$343 million while having a production budget of \$185 million. The franchise was put on hold due to negative reviews and disappointing box office sales. There have been some whispers of a sequel over the years, but nothing has materialised. Chris Pine suggested that studios should focus on satisfying die-hard fans rather than giving in to industry pressure for expensive productions to cater to a wider audience. He said, "I think we should make films that appeal to people who want to see the film. I'm sick of trying to please people who don't want to see

what we do." Chris Pine mentioned that the movie industry is overly concerned with making money back and big budgets are harming it. He said, "We're at a place where, to make a film, you make it for like \$500 million. That's half a billion dollars to make these films that you like. For it to be considered successful and for everyone to be paid back, you have to make extraordinary amounts of money. The metrics of it don't seem to make much sense to me."



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



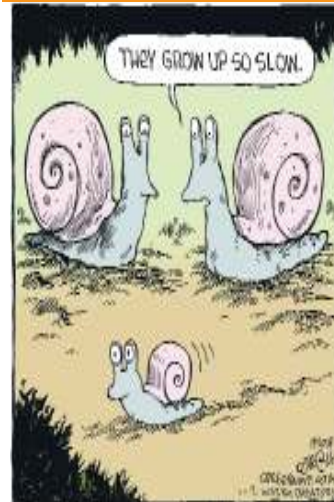
GARFIELD



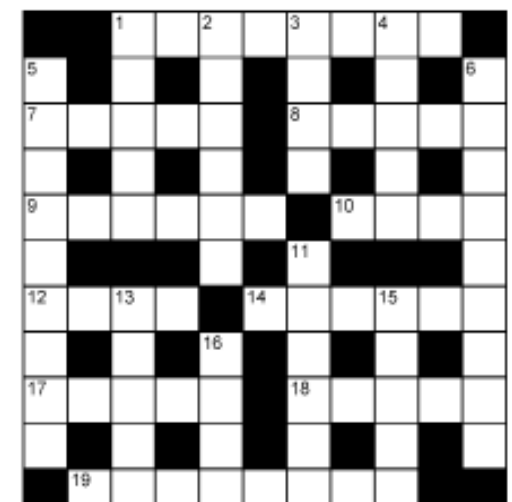
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

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.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

ACROSS

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

4 Worshipped statues

5 Yelling loudly and shrilly

6 A moving staircase

11 A rider's seat on a horse

13 Part of a stage play

15 Opposite of uncles

16 A pointed top of a mountain

DOWN

- Journeys
- A roof beam
- An ancient South American

SOLUTION

D	I	S	E	A	S	E	S	
I	O	C	L	K				
F	O	R	K	A	T	O	M	I
F	E	R	I	C	P	E	R	
R	O	S	E	P				
E	A	R	L	Y	S	T	A	L
N	E	S	S	A	N			
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'WAKING UP SEEING WOMEN MAKING RANGOLIS FEELS SO BEAUTIFUL IN HYD'

AARTI SREENATH

For 24 years, Monita has inspired students as a fine art teacher at a government school in Bihar, specialising in Tikuli, Madhubani and Manjusha painting. Despite marrying at a young age, her supportive in-laws encouraged her artistic talents, connecting her with a pivotal painting teacher.

Her work has taken her to numerous art exhibitions, the most recent being in Dubai, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Bihar on an international platform. Despite her roots in Bihar, her journey took a significant turn when she moved to Hyderabad, a city that has warmly embraced her and her art.

"Hyderabad is a good place; everybody is so friendly. The city has been very welcoming for me," shares the artist.

Initially, the thought of leaving everything behind in Bihar to move to a new city was daunting. "I was nervous in the beginning because it wasn't easy to leave everything behind in Bihar and move here to Hyderabad, an absolutely new city. The circumstances were very different," she admits. "I always wished to live in a city where I could explore more of my artwork. I didn't have any expectations, but it's all so nice here."

Comparing Hyderabad to her hometown, Monita observes, "It's very different! We belong to a place where people are not so open-minded about almost everything. However, they are supportive and helpful. There's a huge cultural difference between both places, as I belong from the North, Bihar to be precise."

One of the aspects of Hyderabad that she cherishes the most is its vibrant culture and traditions and how people wake up early in the morning and make rangoli in front of their houses. "The one thing that amazes me is how they are connected with their roots and follow their culture."

She further goes on to recall her fondest memories in Hyderabad and beyond a doubt, she says, "It would be my first workshop that I conducted here. It was so perfectly done. I wasn't expecting it to be a success. It felt really warm to see all the women coming forward in support. It felt proud."

Although the Madhubani artist does not see herself as forging a career, she is deeply committed to educating people about the traditional artwork of Bihar and giving them the experience of peace that art gives.

Hyderabad, with its clean streets, greenery and public art, has been a pleasant surprise for her. "I haven't really

been to many places here, but as far as I saw, it's a clean city with so much greenery. I like the paintings that have been done on the pillars or walls. It looks decent."

Her recent discovery of the city's culinary delights left a lasting impression and it was none other than the concept of *Mandi*.

When asked about her likes and dislikes about the city, she gleefully mentions, "I like the weather here and the greenery, and of course, the traditional dresses (half sarees). There's nothing in particular that I don't like about Hyderabad. The city has been extremely welcoming to me."

Having never visited Hyderabad before moving, the artist's initial apprehensions quickly gave way to admiration for the city's charm and opportunities. "This is my first time here. We read in the books about Charminar, so that was the first place my friends and relatives visited. They might wish to take back some chicken pickles that they ate here for the first time." For Monita, Hyderabad is more than just a city; it is a canvas of dreams and new opportunities. "Hyderabad is a city that might fulfill my dreams, so for me, it's a city of dreams and new opportunities that may." Through her art and her journey, she continues to inspire and educate, bridging cultures and enriching lives, one painting at a time.

Hailing from the land of monasteries, Bihar, artist Monita has found a new home in the 'City of Nizams'. For our Hyderabad segment, she discusses the warmth she has received from the city



Rise of liposuction amongst men

Liposuction, a cosmetic surgical procedure aimed at removing excess fat from the body, has been popular among women for decades. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable surge in the number of men seeking liposuction. Plastic surgeon specialising in body contouring and liposuction, have witnessed this trend first hand.

Traditionally, liposuction has been associated with women, particularly those seeking to achieve the "perfect" hourglass figure. However, societal norms and perceptions of masculinity have evolved and men are no longer afraid to openly express their desire for a leaner, more sculpted physique. With the rise of social media and the pressure to maintain a fit and attractive appearance, more and more men are turning to cosmetic procedures to enhance their appearance.

One of the main reasons driving the rise of liposuction among men is the advancement of technology and techniques in the field of plastic surgery. In the past, liposuction was a risky and invasive procedure that came with a long and painful recovery process. Today, thanks to innovations such as laser-assisted liposuction and ultrasound-assisted liposuction, the procedure has become less invasive and offers minimal downtime and scarring. Men, who are often busy with careers and families, now see liposuction as a viable option to achieve their desired results without disrupting their daily lives.

Another factor contributing to the increase in male liposuction is the growing awareness and acceptance of cosmetic procedures in society. Gone are the days when only women were expected to care about their appearance. Men

are now also seeking to look their best and are willing to invest time and money to achieve their desired look. The idea of "self-care" has become mainstream, and more men are viewing cosmetic procedures as a means of improving their self-confidence and self-image.

Furthermore, men have a different fat distribution pattern compared to women, and they tend to store excess fat in specific areas such as the abdomen, flanks and chest. These areas are also more resistant to diet and exercise, making them ideal for liposuction. Additionally, men tend to have thicker skin, which makes them better candidates for liposuction as it can result in smoother and more defined body contours.

While it is true that liposuction is generally seen as a way to remove excess fat for aesthetic purposes, for men, it can also have functional benefits. As men age, they may experience an increase in fat deposits in their abdomen and chest, often leading to health issues such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Liposuction can help reduce these risk factors by removing stubborn fat deposits and promoting a healthier lifestyle.

The rise of liposuction among men is a reflection of the changing societal perceptions of masculinity and the increasing acceptance and accessibility of cosmetic procedures.

With the advancements in technology and techniques, liposuction will continue to be a popular choice among men seeking to enhance their physique and improve their overall well-being.

(Dr. Anmol Chugh, is the lead Consultant, Plastics and Aesthetics Centre, at CK Birla Hospital.)

'TUNE'ING INTO MUSICAL RHYTHM

TEJAL SINHA

Let the good vibes flow' has been the main motto behind Hyderabad's very own Rudhra band. The name 'Rudhra' can be traced back to the Indian god of destruction, evoking images of death and devastation. Similar to Rudhra, the band's name was chosen to represent the intense nature of its music.

Band Rudhra is the brainchild of Raghavendra and Jayanth. The band that began with these two musicians has now grown to a band of five members: vocalist Raghavendra Saraswathula, drummer Jayanth Sri Sai Krishna Challa, violinist Chiranjeevi Bankupalli, keyboardist Saimanoj Mutchupalli and guitarist Venkata Karthikeya Challa.

"The origin of the name Rudhra is based on the belief that music, which includes both melody and beat, is derived from Lord Shiva's *Rudhra Thandavam*," shares the lead singer Raghavendra on an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*. "Both Jayanth and I happen to symbolise different aspects: I embody 'Tune' while drummer Jayanth embodies 'Rhythm'. Therefore, the band is appropriately named Rudhra."

The troupe of these talented men finds their biggest influences in the musical maestros Ilaiyaraaja, AR Rahman, Shankar Mahadevan and Mani Sharma. Meanwhile, they also derive influences from Indian-based popular bands like *Indian Ocean* and *Thaikkudam Bridge*, which have gone global with Indian fusion. He further shares, "Our ideas are starting to form and with the influence of the aforementioned inspirations, we are already creating our independent music, the

The Hyderabad-based Rudhra band has been on the path of creating their own niche in the musical market. *The Pioneer* connects with the band's in-charge as he shares more in detail about the uniqueness of this band.



future for Indian music bands."

As a team, the team participates in their creative process by sitting together and jotting down various ideas, including social stigmas and issues faced by young people, current social patterns and pressures, and suggestions for coping and playful alternatives. Jayanth further shares,

"We will showcase this in a combination of Western and Carnatic aesthetics. We could refer to it as a work-in-progress. We are now writing our own lyrics using our band's collective thoughts instead of having an external person do it for us. Currently, the band exclusively performs covers from the worlds of Tollywood and Bollywood."

Staying true to the core of the song, the band adds their own twists to the instrumentation while allowing each musician to showcase their solo talents.

Asked what's something that the team enjoys the most about performing live, he further goes on to share, "Live performances are thrilling for us, and occasionally we try and improvise spontaneously. Secondly, as we take song requests from

our audience, we also include those songs in our playlist. The main source of great satisfaction is when our fans tell us that our songs are refreshing and that our band presents them in a unique way compared to other bands in the city. Additionally, it is rewarding when the audience continues to attend our shows. When our audience mentions they will never forget this evening performance and that it relieved their stress, it brings us great joy and satisfaction."

However, things do not come out effortlessly. They confront their challenges, and, speaking of them, he mentions that their biggest challenge is to demonstrate their worth as a band in the music industry. "Later, the struggle was to build a fan base, so we performed many shows for a smaller payment at first. To achieve the correct sound output, we hired a sound engineer named Sunny John. We talked and played music together, finding the perfect balance for each instrument and determining the optimal mixing technique for the best sound quality. Currently, we are entertaining prominent event organisers and high-end music venues and clubs in Hyderabad," explains Raghavendra.

Since starting out, the band has entertained various Tollywood celebrities, such as music directors, actors, and directors. In *Satyabama* starring Kajal Aggarwal, Raghavendra sang a song, with drummer Jayanth providing extra beats. Both artists recently collaborated on this project.

Besides their music, the group has also been actively participating in sports. During the time that Raghavendra is engaged in playing cricket, Jayanth participates in both chess and badminton, while Manoj prefers volleyball, and Chiranjeevi excels at long-distance driving.

World champions India look to maintain dominance in new era of SKY, Gambhir

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

India's newly-forged coach-captain combination of Gautam Gambhir and Suryakumar Yadav will look to make instant impact against a Sri Lankan team in disarray when the familiar South Asian rivals face off in a limited-overs series, starting with three T20Is, here on Saturday. Two-time World Cup winner Gambhir is now at the helm of the ship as India's head coach while the T20I reigns have been handed over to one of the best batters in the format, Suryakumar. Gambhir, who has built his coaching reputation in the corridors of IPL with three title wins for Kolkata Knight Riders - twice as captain and once as mentor - succeeds the immensely popular Rahul Dravid. The new coach has his task cut out given that the team under his predecessor reached the final in each of the ICC events in their respective last editions. Gambhir's tenacity as well as his intense approach will make him a different coach to work along for the players, who will also have to learn the ways of the new T20I skipper Suryakumar. Suryakumar's elevation came as a slight surprise given he leapfrogged Hardik Pandya

for the job. The selectors also ignored his comparative lack of experience as captain. Ajit Agarkar and Co. Made it clear that they wanted a captain who was on the park "more often than not" and went by "dressing room feedback" while hitting the reset button on the T20I side. The next T20 World Cup, to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka in 2026, gives the selectors plenty of time to rebuild the side which has also suffered a severe talent drain. The overhaul follows the World Cup triumph last month and T20I retirements of seasoned campaigners Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja. With the side in transition, young batting gun and vice-captain in the white-ball formats, Shubman Gill sees this as an opportunity to cement his place and others like Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh and even Riyan Parag will look to do the same. While the like-for-like replacement Axar Patel fits in perfectly for Jadeja in the eleven, India also has riches in the all-round department given Pandya, Shivam Dube and an in-form Washington Sundar are also available. Jasprit Bumrah has been deservingly rested from this tour which gives the pair of Arshdeep Singh and



Mohammed Siraj to make the most of favourable conditions at the Pallekele International Stadium, where the surface tends to assist pace and bounce. On the same metric, Sri Lanka will feel depleted since two of their experienced bowlers

Dushmantha Chameera (bronchitis and respiratory infection) and slinky Nuwan Thushara (broken finger) have been ruled out. The hosts have added Asitha Fernando and Dilshan Madushanka, who took a five-for the last time India and Sri

Lanka played in the ODI World Cup, as replacements. The 2014 T20 World Cup winners, Sri Lanka are wading through turbulent times following their first-round exit from the last edition. Skipper Wanindu Hasaranga, coach Chris Silverwood and

consultant coach Mahela Jayawardene tendered their resignations after the debacle in the Americas. Sri Lanka have appointed 'Matara Marauder' Sanath Jayasuriya as interim coach and he has urged his side to make the most of India's lack

of experienced stars, but knows well that his team is desperately short on solid performances. The Sri Lankan team of the current does not inspire confidence given their frailties across departments despite Jayasuriya's assessment that

this group will turn around the fortunes in the next two years. Enterprising batter Charith Asalanka has been handed over the captaincy as Sri Lanka, like India, foray in uncharted waters looking to brighten their fortunes. Playing at home, Sri Lanka should feel confident about turning the tide given the richness of talent in the ranks, which includes a combative former skipper Dasun Shanaka, Kusal Perera, Kusal Mendis and the experienced Dinesh Chandimal.

TEAMS (FROM):

India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Riyan Parag, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj.
Sri Lanka: Dinesh Chandimal, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis (wk), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Perera, Charith Asalanka (c), Wanindu Hasaranga, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Binura Fernando, Asitha Fernando, Dilshan Madushanka, Maheesh Pathirana, Matheesh Theekshana, Dunith Welalage.



Gambhir's key task will be man-management with Indian team, reckons Patil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gautam Gambhir's key task as India head coach will be man-management and not coaching a bunch of talented players in their respective skills, said former player and ex-chief selector Sandeep Patil on Friday. Gambhir is set to start his tenure with a limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka comprising three T20Is and as many ODIs, with the first game in the shortest format set to be played on Saturday. "I don't think his job is to coach the Indian team. His job is to help the Indian team," Patil told PTI Videos in an exclusive interview here. "That's how it works at the top level. You need player management. That will be the challenge for Gambhir." "He has done it and I am sure he will continue to do the same with the Indian cricket team," said Patil on the sidelines of an event organised by Shrachi Rajasthan Tigers. Patil, a member of India's World Cup winning team in 1983, hoped Gambhir will continue to have success at international level after excelling in the IPL. "Gambhir had done an exceptional job as a coach for Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL. I hope that he continues to help the Indian team in the same way," he added.

Patil backed senior India players Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, who retired from the T20 internationals after winning the World Cup last month, to continue featuring in the other formats for a long run. "Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are still doing extremely well and there is no question of an Indian team without them. I wish the Indian team all the best wherever they are playing and whatever tournament they are playing, they are bound to do exceedingly well," he said. "Surya comes from Mumbai and is a very dear friend of mine. He has been given the captaincy and he deserved it. I wish him all the best," he said about India's newest T20I captain. Patil said cricket has made significant progress in India since the country's maiden title triumph in 1983. "Like every Indian, I wish the Indian cricket team good luck. I am happy that I am part of 1983 and the progress the Indian team has made over the years has been commendable," he said. Patil said it is important for India to be a contender in all sports. "Cricket has changed over time, so has coaching and the approach to sports. We need to ensure India can become a contender in all sports and all avenues of sports," he added.

Chinese-Chilean table tennis player makes Olympics debut at age 58 in Paris Games

AP ■ SANTIAGO (CHILE)

Table tennis player Zeng Zhiying left China in 1989, the same year of the Tiananmen Square massacre, to teach the sport in northern Chile. Fast-forward 35 years, she will debut in the Olympic Games at age 58 under the name she adopted in the South American nation: Tania. Tania Zeng, who became famous in Chile after winning a bronze medal at the Pan American Games in Santiago last year, retired from table tennis long ago. Though the sport brought her to Chile, she stopped playing to have more time to dedicate to a business she opened and eventually start a family. Her dream of becoming a professional athlete returned during the pandemic. Her pinnacle will be reached in Paris. "I never imagined (making it to the Olympic Games) because I took it up for entertainment, to do some sport," Zeng said in an interview with The Associated Press at the country's Olympic training centre. "I gained confidence by playing a lot. Since I always won, I liked playing more and more.



"Qualifying for an Olympics is a big, gigantic dream, and being able to fulfill it at that age is a huge happiness," said Zeng, the oldest athlete in her country's delegation. Born in Foshan, in southern China, Zeng is the daughter of a local table tennis coach. As a child, she used to follow her mother to professional table tennis training sessions. For a decade, the Chinese-Chilean athlete was a high-performance player. But her life took a turn in 1989, when she

accepted an invitation to teach the sport to young athletes in Arica, in the far north of Chile. She married soon afterward and moved to Iquique, also in northern Chile, another city where Chinese presence was unlikely at the time. Zeng is currently the 151st-ranked table tennis player. She is part of Chile's national team, beating Dominican Eva Peña Brito in her debut in the women's singles table tennis tournament at the Pan American Games. She lost to American Lily Ann Zhang in the following round but still managed to win the bronze in the team competition. Zeng's life is now split between Iquique and Santiago, fuelled by the appetite for the game and the affection of the fans. "Everyone knows me, greets me, wants a photo and for me it's just joy," she said. "I am already Chilean in heart and soul, everything. They are going to bury me here." Zeng will play in Paris with more experience and the same determination to fulfill a lifelong dream. She hopes no injuries affect her performance at the Olympics, which is a concern for any older athlete.



Olympic tennis schedule has Djokovic, Nadal and Alcaraz in action today

AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz all are on the Paris Olympics' tennis schedule on Saturday, the first day of action at Roland Garros. Serbia's Djokovic will compete in singles only, Nadal in doubles only and Alcaraz in both. Nadal and Alcaraz are teammates in doubles for Spain and will face Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni of Argentina at Court Philippe Chatrier during the night session. Nadal's singles debut will come on Sunday against Marton Fucsovics of Hungary. If he wins, and Djokovic wins his first-round match against Matthew Ebden on Saturday, the two rivals will face each other in the second round of what could be the final event of the 38-year-old Nadal's career. Djokovic owns 24 Grand Slam titles. Nadal has 22, plus two Olympic golds - one in singles in 2008 and in doubles in 2016. When Djokovic played in the French Open, he tore the meniscus in his right knee and needed surgery in Paris on June 5. He recovered in time to compete at Wimbledon, where he made it to the final before

losing to Alcaraz. "Expectations for the Olympics are high, and I can't and don't want to change that. It creates a personal motivation for me to approach it in the best possible way for the best possible result," said Djokovic, who took home a bronze in 2008. The first match in Chatrrier will involve top-ranked Iga Swiatek of Poland, who has won four of the past five championships in that stadium at the French Open, against Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania. That will be followed by Djokovic vs Ebden. After Nadal and Alcaraz start the night session, the day's program concludes with a pair of former No. 1 players who own multiple major titles: Naomi Osaka of Japan vs Angelique Kerber of Germany, Jasmine Paolini of Italy, the runner-up to Swiatek at the French Open in June and to Barbara Krejickova at Wimbledon this month, opens play at Court Suzanne Lenglen against Ana Bogdan on Romania. That will be followed by Alcaraz, who is coming off trophies at the French Open and Wimbledon, against Hady Habib of Lebanon.

Canada women's soccer coach removed by Canadian Olympic Committee over drone controversy

AP ■ PARIS

The Canadian Olympic Committee removed women's national soccer head coach Bev Priestman for the remainder of the Paris Games following an alleged drone spying scandal. The COC said in a statement released early on Friday that assistant coach Andy Spence would lead the defending gold medalists for the remainder of the tournament. Canada's camp was thrown into disarray this week after two team staffers were sent home for allegedly using a drone to spy on a New Zealand practice. Priestman denied any involvement, but did not



attend Thursday's 2-1 victory over New Zealand as FIFA - soccer's world governing body - and the International Olympic Committee investigate. Canada Soccer CEO and

general secretary Kevin Blue said in the COC release "additional information has come to our attention regarding previous drone use against opponents, predating the Paris 2024 Olympic Games." He added Priestman was suspended from her duties until the end of the tournament and the completion of the organization's independent external review. The COC said on Wednesday that assistant coach Jasmine Mander and analyst Joseph Lombardi were "sent home immediately," and that it had accepted Priestman's decision to remove herself from coaching the opening match. Priestman held a brief media availability on Wednesday after guiding her team through a one-hour practice. "My reaction was you feel like this program has let the country down," the 38-year-old Priestman said.

Unbeaten Fiji on track for third successive Olympic rugby sevens gold by reaching semis

AP ■ PARIS

Fiji stayed on track for a third successive Olympic gold medal in rugby sevens by reaching the semifinals at the Stade de France. The Tokyo Games silver and bronze medalists - New Zealand and Argentina - were knocked out, however. Host side France and Australia reached the semifinals for the first time, while South Africa, the 12th and last team to qualify only a month ago, was back in the semis for the first time since the inaugural Olympic sevens in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. In the quarterfinals on Thursday, Fiji came from behind against Ireland to win 19-15. New Zealand was stunned by South Africa 14-7, Argentina lost to France 26-14, and Australia shut out the United States 18-0. In the semifinals on Saturday, Fiji

plays Australia, and France meets South Africa. South Africa lost to New Zealand 17-5 in pool play on Wednesday, but shot to a 14-0 lead in their quarterfinal. Captain Selwyn Davids scored the opening try and, late in the half, countered from a dropped New Zealand pass in front of the South Africa tryline. Davids hacked and dribbled and popped up for Tristan Leyds to score. Leyds converted both. But deep in added time, New Zealand kept the ball alive and Moses Leo slipped Rosko Specman to cross for a converted try. New Zealand continued to attack in waves in the second half but the South Africa defense was incredible. Davids and Ryan Oosthuizen stood firm on their tryline, Shilton van Wyk made another try-saving tackle on a tearaway Akiula Rokolisoa, and

Ronald Brown's last-ditch tackle ended a gripping match. France enjoyed an almost perfect first half, much to the delight of the 69,000-strong crowd. Andy Timo cut inside his marker and scored, then Aaron Grandidier Nkanang scored twice in three minutes; the first from a ruck turnover, and the second from Jefferson-Lee Joseph's offload. Rayan Rebbadj converted all three for 21-0. Unlike the world series grand final, which France controlled in Madrid, Argentina made a comeback through its two best players, Rodrigo Isgro and Marcos Moneta, to close to 21-14. But with more than two minutes to go, and one of them with a man advantage while Jordan Sepho was in the sin-bin, Argentina couldn't get the ball back. Instead, France ground out the meters, and in the last seconds



replacement Antoine Dupont quick-tapped to himself and scooted 25 meters untouched to put the result to bed. Fiji crushed its pool and looked to be doing the same in the quarters when Iosefo Baleiwairiki bullrushed from inside his half and scored after just 30 seconds. But Ireland played a patient game, and Chay Mullins barged over for two tries to give them a 10-7 halftime lead. In the new half, Zac Ward reached out to the left corner flag for Ireland's third try and 15-7 but, crucially, they could not add any extras. Fiji's rally started from its own tryline. Selesitino Ravutaumada broke out from his 22, and was at the other end to offload for Joji Nasova to score and for Fiji to trail by three. At the restart, Ireland missed the catch, Baleiwairiki slapped the Fiji back and Waisea Nacuqu put Fiji back in front with a try converted by

Terio Tamani Veilawa. Ireland had two minutes of regulation time, and more than three minutes of added time, but its last attack died on a grounded pass on halfway that Fiji claimed. Nathan Lawson's break and offload gave James Turner the opening try in the fifth minute as Australia comfortably handled the misfiring Americans. From a ruck turnover on its 22, Australia countered and Henry Hutchinson's break led to a walk-in try by Corey Toole and a 10-0 lead at halftime. In the second half, Toole was denied a second try when Malacchi Esdale tackled him into touch but the US couldn't get into synch to sustain an attack. In the last minute of regulation, Australia replacement Maurice Longbottom kicked a penalty. The Americans tried to finish on a high, but Australia's defense pinned them and Longbottom stole a try.



Kantara 2 nears completion, set for summer 2025 release

In 2022, Hombale Films' *Kantara* emerged as a massive hit in Karnataka, quickly capturing the interest of audiences across India. The film's success led to its dubbing in Hindi, where it achieved blockbuster status with lifetime collections of Rs 80 crore. Following this triumph, the makers announced *Kantara 2* and production commenced in 2023. It has been learned that the shoot for *Kantara 2* is nearing its end. Sources close to the project reveal that the team has completed filming the outdoor sequences and is now focusing on the indoor portions, which are expected to take an additional 15 to 20 days. The post-production phase has already begun, with significant emphasis on creating a larger-than-life cinematic experience.

"*Kantara 2* is set to be a grand spectacle, incorporating prequel and mythological elements into the storyline," the source shared. "The film aims to surpass the original in scale and impact. The post-production and visual effects are being handled with the utmost care to ensure the film is a major step up from its predecessor. The initial promo provided just a glimpse of what's to come." Hombale Films and Rishab Shetty, who also directs the sequel, are targeting a summer 2025 release for *Kantara 2*. The film is envisioned as a high-budget visual extravaganza, with significant investment in VFX to deliver an elevated viewing experience. The promotional campaign is expected to begin in October 2024, with further details to be revealed in the coming months.

OUR BUSINESS WAS UNAFFECTED BY RAID: SUNDEEP KISHAN ON VIVAHA BHOJANAMBU

Sundeep Kishan responds to food safety raid claims on his restaurant Vivaha Bhojanambu. In the wake of a recent raid by the Food Safety Department of Telangana, actor Sundeep Kishan has defended his restaurant, Vivaha Bhojanambu, against allegations of rule violations during a promotional event for his Tamil film *Raayan* in Hyderabad.

Bhojanambu was established with the intent of giving back to the community, not just for financial gain. Each of our seven outlets donates around 50 food packets daily, totaling about 350 packets or over Rs 4 lakh in monthly donations. Given this, it's improbable we would skimp on something as minor as an expired rice packet." Sundeep acknowledged that minor issues were identified during the raid but insisted that these did not pertain to food safety or cooking standards. "We are fully committed to maintaining cleanliness. The

issues raised were minor and not related to cooking safety. The so-called 'stagnant water' was actually a drain," he clarified. Further defending his restaurant, Sundeep noted that business was unaffected by the raid, citing increased customer patronage and high sales figures the day following the inspection. The Food Safety Commissioner of Telangana had previously detailed the violations on X (formerly Twitter), which included expired rice, synthetic colours in coconut grates, improperly labeled food items, uncov-

ered dustbins, missing medical certificates for food handlers, and unverified water quality reports. On the professional front, Sundeep Kishan's latest project, *Raayan*, a collaboration with Dhanush, was released recently. Additionally, he is set to star in the Telugu film *Vibe*, directed by Swaroop RSJ, and an untitled project by Trinadha Rao Nakkina.



SPB's final message revealed on Telugu Indian Idol Season 3

The upcoming episode of *Telugu Indian Idol Season 3* is set to be an emotional rollercoaster as legendary drummer Anandan Sivamani reveals the last message from his mentor and godfather, the late S. P. Balasubrahmanyam. The touching tribute will air exclusively on the Aha OTT platform every Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. Anandan Sivamani, affectionately known as 'Drums Sivamani', will be a guest judge on the show and will share poignant memories of SP Balasubrahmanyam, whose influence has been instrumental in his career. Sivamani, who began his musical journey under SPB's guidance, expressed his profound grief over the maestro's passing on September 25, 2020, due to complications related to COVID-19. In this special episode, Sivamani will present and play the last voice note sent by SP Balasubrahmanyam, offering viewers an intimate look into their enduring bond and the final words of wisdom from the celebrated singer. Additionally, Sivamani shared his emotional tribute to SP Balasubrahmanyam on Guru Purnima, observed on July 21, 2024. He will recount how the occasion brought back memories and how deeply SPB's legacy continues to impact him. Judge S. Thaman will also reflect on his personal connection with SP Balasubrahmanyam, sharing a cherished memory of his first flight at age 12 with the legendary singer. Thaman will discuss the support he received from Sivamani during challenging times, including his father's passing, highlighting the profound

friendship and empathy between them. Thaman remarked, "After my father's death, my focus has been on caring for my family, and I rarely expressed my grief. Sivamani garu's gesture of pausing his pilgrimage to support us was deeply moving and brought tears to my eyes." Sivamani was notably impressed by contestant Keshav Ram's performance on *Telugu Indian Idol Season 3*. He announced his intention to recommend Keshav to the renowned A. R. Rahman, saying, "Whenever I encounter exceptional talent, I make it a point to introduce them to AR Rahman. I've already taken pictures of Keshav and will be sending them to him shortly."



Sai Durga Tej donates Rs 5 lakh to film journalists

Sai Durga Tej, often called as the Supreme hero, apart from his projects, has also been admired for his heartwarming gestures towards the audiences and the fraternity. In a commendable gesture yet again, the *Virupaksha* actor has donated an amount of Rs 5 lakhs to film journalists. As a part of this donation, Rs 1 lakh was given to senior character artist Pavala Shyamala. For this act, he has been gaining much love pouring in. The Telugu Film Journalists Association thanked the actor. The moment was deeply emotional for Pavala Shyamala, who expressed her gratitude through tears, overwhelmed by the support she has received. In a video call with Sai Durga Tej, she shared how his gesture has impacted her life and how it symbolises the compassion that exists within the industry. Sai Durga Tej, touched by her words, assured her of continued support, promising that he and the entire industry will be there

for her, always ready to lend a helping hand. Reflecting on her journey, Pavala Shyamala also recalled the financial support she received from Chiranjeevi. This mention highlighted the communal support system that exists within the film community, where stars come together to uplift and assist their colleagues in times of need.



Committee Kurrollu trailer highlights many societal, political aspects

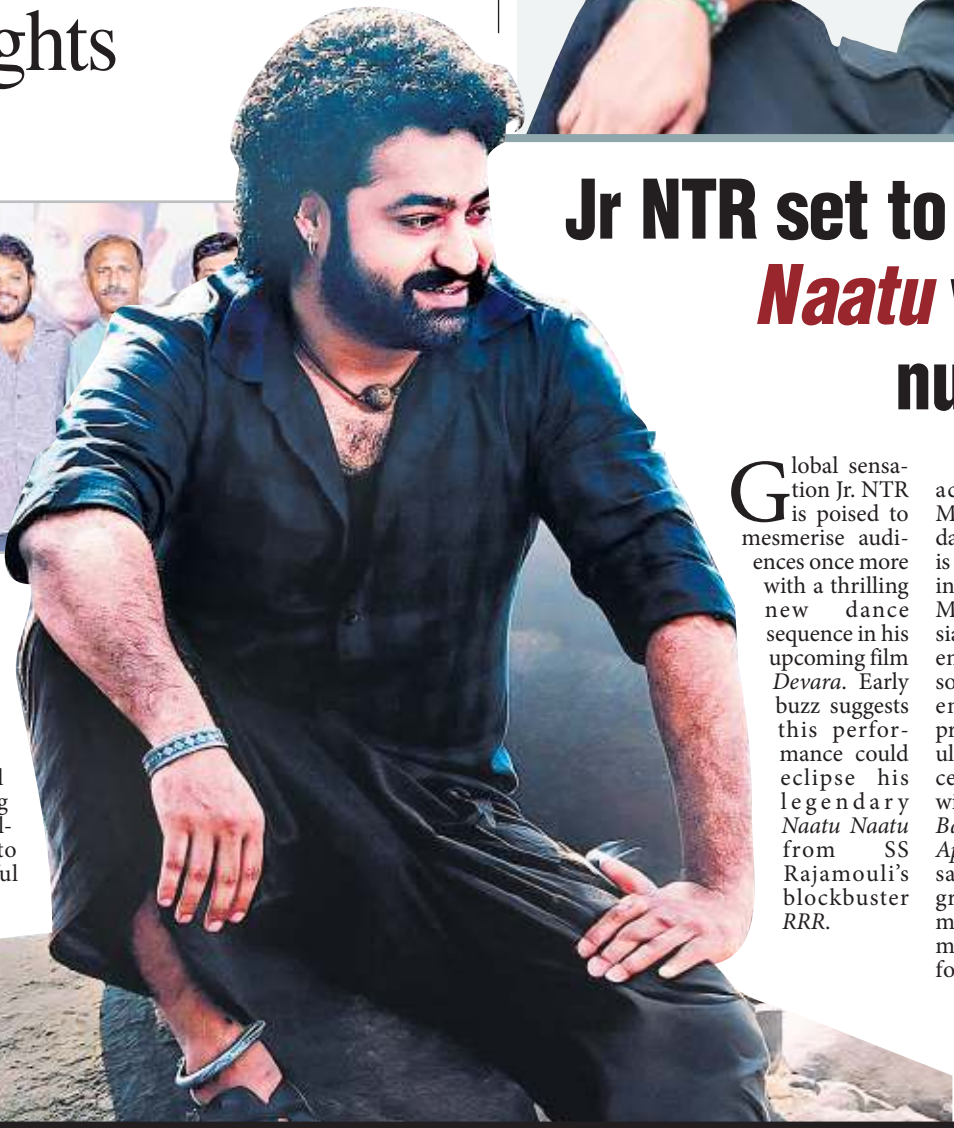
The highly anticipated trailer for *Committee Kurrollu* has officially been released, captivating audiences with its portrayal of rural life, youthful experiences and sociopolitical dynamics. Produced by the talented Niharika Konidela under Pink Elephant Pictures in partnership with Shree Radha Damodar Studios, the film is slated for a grand release on August 9, 2024. *Committee Kurrollu* explores the coming-of-age journey of a group of boys in a rural town, depicting their passage through puberty, love and heartbreak. The trailer effectively highlights how societal and political changes shape their development, focusing on the impact of these external forces on their lives as they navigate adolescence. Siddu Jonnalagadda marked his presence at the trailer launch, cheering Niharika and the team. "Thank you Niharika for calling me and making me a part of this



film's promotions. It is understood that this is not a short film. There is no such thing as a small movie or a big movie. We spend less on a movie. It will cost more. It looks like a big movie made with a huge budget. The visuals are good. It's not a common thing to shoot such a good picture with a newcomer like this. It doesn't feel like a first movie for Yadu Gari," Sidhu expressed hope. Directed by Yadhu Vamsi, renowned for his skillful storytelling, the film boasts a promising ensemble cast.

Newcomers Sandeep Saroj, Yashwanth and Eshwar Trinath Varma bring fresh energy to the screen, supported by veteran actors Sai Kumar, Goparaju Ramana, Balagam Jayaram, Sri Lakshmi, Kancherapalem Kishore, Kittayya, Ramana Bhargav and Jabardasth Sathipandu. Their performances add depth and authenticity to the film's rich narrative. The dialogue for *Committee Kurrollu* is crafted by the dynamic writing duo Venkata Subhash Cheerla and Kondal Rao Addagalla, ensuring a script that authentically reflects the rural setting. Anwar Ali, an experienced editor, is

responsible for the post-production, ensuring a polished and engaging final product. As *Committee Kurrollu* gears up for its release, it stands as a testament to powerful storytelling, blending elements of youth, culture and politics to deliver an impactful film that captures the essence of rural life and the characters shaped by it.



Jr NTR set to outshine Naatu Naatu with new dance number in Devara

Global sensation Jr NTR is poised to mesmerise audiences once more with a thrilling new dance sequence in his upcoming film *Devara*. Early buzz suggests this performance could eclipse his legendary *Naatu Naatu* from SS Rajamouli's blockbuster *RRR*.

Choreographed by the acclaimed Sekhar Master, the energetic dance number in *Devara* is slated to begin filming in just two days. Sekhar Master shared his enthusiasm for the project, emphasising that the song is crafted for high-energy dance and promises to be spectacular. Known for his successful collaborations with NTR on hits like *Bantipula Janaki* and *Apple Beauty*, Sekhar is said to have choreographed some of his most dynamic moves yet for this

upcoming number. *Devara*, directed by Koratala Siva, features Jr. NTR alongside Janhvi Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan, and other prominent stars. The film, which is being produced in two parts, is set for its first installment release on September 27. With anticipation building, all eyes are on whether this new dance number can indeed rival or surpass the impact of *Naatu Naatu*. Only time will tell if *Devara* will set new standards in dance choreography.



ABHIRAMI INTRODUCED AS CHAYA DEVI

Marking the actress' birthday, the makers of Nani's upcoming Telugu action drama *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* on Friday unveiled a new poster of actress Abhirami's character. Introducing her as "Chayadevi", the makers shared her poster and wrote, "Happy birthday to our lovable Chayadevi aka @abhiramiact garu!" His comforting presence will be truly appreciated by you. In the new poster, the

actress can be seen in a red and peach saree, waiting for someone. Although the makers are yet to reveal any details about her character, the actress is expected to play the role of Nani's mother in the film. Previously, the makers had released a glimpse also known as "Not A Teaser" on the occasion of SJ Suryah's birthday. The verse hints at a huge storm happening. In the teaser, Nani shows that he compares the history of the film with Lord Sri Krishna, who united with Satyabhama to defeat the naracasur. Then, the teaser demonstrates Nani and Pri Arul Mohan, preparing for the blows of the antagonist, SJ Suryah. SJ Suryah looks menacing as a cop in the film. The teaser received overwhelming responses, with fans praising composer Jakes Bejoy for his banger of a background score.

NANI TURNS WRITER FOR HIT 3?

Natural Star Nani has wrapped up shooting for his upcoming film *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram*, which is set to hit theaters on August 29. Directed by Sujeeth and produced by DVV Danayya, the film marks the end of a significant chapter in Nani's filmography. With this project completed, Nani is now preparing to dive into his next venture. He is set to begin shooting for *HIT 3*, an action thriller directed by Sailesh Kolanu and produced by Nani's own banner, Wall Poster Cinema. In this film, Nani will portray Arjun Sarkar, a formidable cop, with the storyline penned by Nani himself. He initially shared his concept with Sailesh Kolanu, who then crafted the final script. The production for *HIT 3* is slated to kick

off in September, with the film to be shot across various stunning locations in India, including a major segment in Kashmir. Sanu Varghese, who previously collaborated with Nani on *Jersey*, *Shyam Singha Roy* and *Hi Nanna*, will handle the cinematography for this film. The heroine for *HIT 3* has yet to be finalised. The film is expected to release next year, promising an intense and gripping addition to Nani's impressive repertoire.

