

sunday pioneer

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EAM: Be robust in combating terrorism in all its forms



NDA govt to continue on path LAID DOWN in last 10 yrs: Goyal



Awaiting Palak's JHALAK at Paris



QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

There might be a Congress conspiracy behind the collapse of the Medigadda Barrage's pillars. Why did the barrage which withstood lakhs of cusecs of floodwater collapse just before the elections? If anything happens to the barrage in future it should be considered a result of the Congress government's conspiracy. It is well-known who some Ministers are associated with, he said, and hinted that they might be behind someone tampering with the barrage.

- KT Rama Rao, BRS MLA



DON'T MISS...

Swift police action recovers...

In a swift operation, the police cracked a major heist and recovered Rs 2.02 crore within 24 hours of the crime. East Godavari Superintendent of Police Narasimha Kishore announced on Saturday that Vasumsetti Ashok Kumar (27) was apprehended for stealing Rs 2.20 crore meant for replenishing HDFC Bank ATMs by a private agency, HTC Cash Management. The incident occurred on Friday when HTC Cash Management withdrew Rs 2,20,50,000 from...

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'Please allow me to pass', says...

Standing next to a national highway that connects the southern part of West Bengal to its north, a restaurant resembling a typical village house serves multi-cuisine platter to its patrons. But, it does that in style. The food is brought to tables from the kitchen not by a human being but by a robot that can walk and talk. Negotiating turns on its way, the robot named Ananya gently asks anyone blocking its route, "Please let me go. Please don't stand in the way and allow me to serve." Painted in white, the robot is about 5 feet tall and...

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G20 Sherpa Kant calls for consistent...

G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant on Saturday advocated for a "long-term predictability and consistency policy" for the sugar sector, which he said would be crucial in making India a developed economy by 2047. Kant's comments come as the industry presses for lifting a sugar export ban and increasing the minimum selling price of sugar in line with cane prices, among other demands. "I totally agree that we need a long-term predictability and consistency of the policy. Otherwise, it will be difficult for the sector," Kant said at a conference organized by...

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How travel insurance can...

In an era of climate uncertainty and increasing extreme weather events, the joy of travel must be balanced with foresight and preparedness. Going on a travel vacation is not just about exploration; it also involves anticipating the unexpected. The thrill of discovery comes with the potential for trip cancellations, medical emergencies, lost baggage and travel delays, all exacerbated by today's changing climate. Even seasoned travellers can be caught off guard by cancelled flights, flooded accommodations and impassable roads. With 1.4 million lost luggage incidents annually and the very real threat of natural disasters turning dream vacations into nightmares, the risks of modern travel...

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OBTUSE ANGLE



PM calls for zero poverty targets



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing ninth Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog in Delhi on Saturday

CMs of 10 States skip meet • Mamata stages walkout citing mic cut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for setting zero poverty targets starting at village level at a meeting of NITI Aayog Governing Council that witnessed high drama with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee walking out in a huff alleging her mic was switched off.

In his address to the ninth Governing Council meeting, Modi emphasised the need to tackle poverty on an individual basis rather than just at a programme level. "We must target zero poverty as a priority for a Viksit Bharat starting at village level," Modi said, adding it would bring about a transformational effect in our country. Modi said that states can play an active role to achieve this aim as they are directly connected with the people. As many as 10 states and UTs did not participate in the

Governing Council meeting of the NITI Aayog. The absentees were Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar, Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Puducherry, said CEO B.V.R. Subrahmanyam while briefing the media about the meeting. "It is their loss if they did not participate," he added.

The NITI Aayog meeting held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre witnessed a walkout by the West Bengal chief minister, who claimed that she was unfairly stopped midway in her speech, despite being the sole representative of the opposition. The government, however, rejected her claim and said Banerjee's speaking time was over.

About Bihar, Subrahmanyam said Chief Minister Nitish Kumar could not attend the meeting as he was busy with an assembly session in the state.

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NITI AAYOG MEETING

CM seeks Central nod for new proposals on Polavaram

Presents 'Viksit AP 2047' vision document at NITI Aayog meet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu presented the "Viksit AP 2047" vision document outlining Andhra Pradesh's development plan at the Niti Aayog meeting. The meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was part of the broader agenda "Viksit Bharat-2047." CM Naidu actively participated, in discussing funding and allocations for Andhra Pradesh.

Following the meeting, CM Naidu met with Union Jal Shakti Minister Chandrakant Raghunath Patil (CR Patil) to discuss key issues, particularly the Polavaram project. Recently, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expressed support for the Polavaram project during her budget speech in Parliament. The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet also expressed gratitude for the Centre's commitment to fully cooperate on this project.

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- CM meets Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil to discuss the Polavaram project.
- He emphasised the unfulfilled promises of the AP Reorganisation Act.
- Naidu highlights the worsening per capita income disparity since AP bifurcation.
- Naidu calls upon the NDA government to settle old dues and support the State's reconstruction.
- He condemns the politicisation of Andhra Pradesh's developmental issues.
- Naidu accuses the YSRCP government of mismanaging Central funds.
- He criticises the 'destruction of Polavaram and Amaravati projects' and the exodus of industries.

Yanamala dares YSRCP for debate on debt

Claims previous govt's report to CAG excluded debts raised through corporations

- He accuses Jagan of issuing misleading statements and misusing his organisations.
- Yanamala blames Jagan for the State's substantial debt and alleged misuse of funds.
- He contrasts YSRCP's alleged fund mismanagement with TDP's developmental spending.
- Yanamala asserts YSRCP leaders fear the facts revealed in the white papers.
- He warns YSRCP's future is at risk if their current opposition behaviour continues.
- Yanamala criticises Jagan for seeking Leader of Opposition status despite public rejection.
- He states that privilege notices will be served to Jagan and his organisations for violating norms.



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu has challenged YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders to an open debate regarding the debt burden of Andhra Pradesh, which he claims has reached Rs 14 lakh crore.

He pointed out that debts raised through corporations were not included in the report submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) by the previous government and were omitted from the white paper released on Friday by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu.

Accompanied by MLC Ashok Babu and former minister Peethala Sujatha, Yanamala, now a member of the Legislative Council, addressed the media at the TDP central office on Saturday. He accused former Chief

Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy of issuing misleading statements and using his organizations to project false information. Yanamala indicated that privilege notices would soon be served to Jagan.

Yanamala invited YSRCP leaders to prove their claims in an open debate, either on the Assembly floor or anywhere else in the state. "It is ridiculous that Jagan, who has destroyed the state, is now shamelessly speaking about Dharma (morality)," Yanamala remarked.

He blamed Jagan for the state's substantial debt, alleging that Jagan's frustration stems from being sidelined by the BJP after his electoral defeat. Yanamala added that Jagan had gone to New Delhi seeking new alliances.

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CM's White Paper an excuse to avoid 'Super 6': Buggana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The white paper on the State's financial condition released by CM Chandrababu Naidu in the Legislative Assembly is filled with falsehoods and incorrect figures, said former finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy. During a counter-presentation at the Press Club in Hyderabad on Saturday, Buggana refuted the financial white paper issued by the TDP government.

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AP IPS cadre strength raised

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Central Government issued a gazette notification on Saturday, announcing an increase in the IPS cadre strength for Andhra Pradesh. The cadre strength has been raised from 144 to 174, following the state government's request for an allotment of 95 IPS officers in senior duty posts.

The notification reflects the state's recommendations, with 38 IPS officers designated for Central deputation and an additional 23 officers assigned as deputation reserves for the state.

Zero tolerance to harassment of women: Dy CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister, Pawan Kalyan, has issued a stern warning against harassment and inappropriate behaviour towards women, emphasising that such actions will not be tolerated. Since Saturday morning, the Deputy Chief Minister has been personally reviewing applications and complaints from citizens across the State, along with his office staff.

Among the various petitions related to the Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, Rural Water Supply, Environment, and Forest Departments, a particularly concerning complaint caught Pawan Kalyan's attention. Women and elderly residents from NTR Colony in Venkatagiri, Tirupati district, reported severe harassment by local youths. These individuals allegedly formed gangs, roamed on bikes,



harassed students and women, and threatened the elderly. The complaint detailed incidents of these youths taking and posting inappropriate pictures of young women online, blackmailing them, and causing disturbances by consuming alcohol, making loud noises, singing, and throwing stones at houses. They even mentioned harassment of a female Sub-Inspector.

Moved by these accounts, Pawan Kalyan immediately contacted Tirupati SP Subbarayudu, urging swift action. He stressed the impor-

tance of addressing the issue promptly and taking strict measures against those responsible for harassing women and girls.

SP Subbarayudu responded by instructing the concerned officials to investigate the situation in the NTR Colony. The police team visited the area, spoke to residents, and recorded details of the harassment. As a result, cases have been registered against several youths for rash and dangerous driving, and bind-over cases have been filed to ensure they refrain from further misconduct.

Feedback vital for better pilgrim amenities: TTD's new Addl EO

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

With the blessings of Lord Venkateswara, Ch Venkaiah Chowdhary has officially taken charge as the new Additional Executive Officer (EO) of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

After assuming his duties at the Tirumala temple on Saturday, Chowdhary, along with his family, offered prayers in the sanctum sanctorum of Venkateswara Swamy. He then received Vedaseervachanam from the Veda Parayanamdars at Ranganayakula Mandapam.

TTD Joint Executive Officer (JEO) Veerabrahmam presented Theertho Prasadam, a laminated photo of Swamivari, Agarbattis, and Go prod-



ucts to the new Additional EO.

Expressing his gratitude, Chowdhary thanked the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, for the opportunity to serve as the Additional EO of TTD.

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IIT student jumps to death on campus

PNS ■ KURNOOL

A third-year engineering student at IIT (DM) College in Jagannathagutta, near Kurnool, tragically ended his life on Saturday by jumping from a campus building. The student, identified as Sai Karthik Naidu, 20, was studying Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE) and hailed from the Vizianagaram district. He had been staying in the college hostel and had resumed classes on July 22 following the college's reopening. Authorities reported that the incident occurred early in the day. The police have registered a case and shifted Naidu's body to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for a postmortem examination. The reasons behind this tragic incident remain unclear as investigations continue.

1st T20I: Surya-Gambhir regime starts with 43-run win against Lanka

PNS ■ PALLEKELE

New captain Suryakumar Yadav led from the front with a breathtaking half-century as India comfortably out-batted Sri Lanka by 43 runs in the opening T20 International to start the Gautam Gambhir era with a victory here on Saturday. It was India skipper Suryakumar's 26-ball 58 and a 74-run opening blitzkrieg in just six overs between openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill that took India to 213 for 7.

Despite a fine batting effort from

the Sri Lankans till the 15th over, the Indian bowlers did well enough to bowl out the home team for 170 in 19.2 overs.

The Indian bowlers did remarkably well towards the back-end, utilising the slowness of the track to provide the team 1-0 lead in the three-match series. The spinners -- Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi and rookie Riyan Parag -- snared six of the 10 wickets. From 149 for 2, Sri Lanka lost seven wickets for just 21 runs as the final quarter of the match was dominated by the Indian bowlers



after a listless first 15.

Kusal Mendis (45 off 27 balls) and Pathum Nissanka (79 off 47 balls) were not as brutal as their Indian counterparts but close enough to increase the creases on new coach

Gautam Gambhir's forehead as they didn't spare any bad balls, getting at least one if not two boundaries per over. The 84-run opening stand was finally broken by Arshdeep Singh when Mendis couldn't pick the slower one.

However Nissanka didn't lose tempo as Hardik Pandya (0/41 in 4 overs) was clearly not in his element, as he consistently missed his length, making it difficult for the new skipper to look for options.

Pandya, who was recently bypassed for national captaincy, is

always more comfortable with a good sixth bowling option, which wasn't there. Axar Patel (2/38 in 4 overs) was very flat at the onset but got the breakthroughs when it mattered the most, bringing all his experience into effect.

Ravi Bishnoi (1/37 in 4 overs) is slowly becoming very predictable with hardly any leg-breaks to surprise the batters.

The right handers knew that the deliveries will come into them and they got inside the line to out-manoeuvre the wrist spinner.

BRS is very active, vocal as an opposition party

Reflecting a refreshing change following regime change, the Telangana Assembly now has a very active opposition party. This became all the more evident while Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka was delivering his first full Budget speech. Bharat Rashtra Samithi legislator K T Rama Rao kept on punctuating Bhatti's speech with slogans like "False, Bogus, Shame, Fail". Whenever he raised slogans, Vivekanand Goud, Prashanth Reddy and Padi Koushik Reddy quickly joined him to raise the sloganeering to a crescendo. Initially Harish Rao too was commenting, but chose to leave quickly so as to prepare for the subsequent press meet. In fact, an MLA hurt his voice box by overusing his lung power and had to take rest the next day.

Evidently, the BRS has more experienced MLAs than the Congress. That is because KCR did not give newbies a chance to contest in the elections and the ones who got elected ended up in the Opposition camp. This has come with blessing in disguise for the BRS, whose seasoned leaders decide on flavour of the day while challenging the Congress government. The Congress has the highest number of first-timers among the three major parties. Some of the novices do not even know when to clap and when to yell. The Speaker and ruling party leaders, whenever intimidated, remind BRS leaders, "You are senior legislators". Considering defections, even if only a handful of BRS legislators remain, theirs will be the loudest voices in the Assembly.

sure in the Assembly? KCR's mere presence changes the ambience of the House. He came after Bhatti Vikramarka started his budget speech and left just when the Deputy CM was about to conclude his address. During Bhatti's speech, KCR skimmed through the pages of the budget, gave some inputs to Harish Rao, waved at those who greeted him, and just sat through. Many eyes were on him. He was directed towards the Media point by MLAs. Journalists went over to him as it was his first time at a media point in decades. Before entering the Assembly hall, he was sitting in a small modified room that had been allocated to the BRS

ing in vehicles were not allowed to enter the Assembly from the Ravindra Bharati side. Asked about the curbs on aam admi scribes' entry, a cop informed the scribes that the Police Department had tightened security as BRS supreme and former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao came to the Assembly that day. The overall hungama suggested that the police have high regard for the previous boss.

Revanth tightening his grip

It appears to be the Congress' moment of glory in Telangana right now. When the Bharat Rashtra Samithi was in power, it drove the Congress to the wall by making challenges and delivering dialogues laden with punch. Now the scene has upended so much so that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy appears to be playing the villain for BRS in the Assembly. The leaders of the pink party are left red-faced whenever Revanth takes them on in the House. Should the BRS make an allegation against the Congress government, Revanth counters it by digging up dirt against BRS. The BRS leadership underestimated Revanth's staying power when it concluded that intra-party politics in TPCC would see the Chief Minister's downfall soon. As the days pass, Revanth is consolidating his position. With his decisive actions, he is cementing his position in the party and winning over the public too. Going by the positive responses Revanth has been receiving from the public, people are beginning to draw parallels between him and combined Andhra Pradesh's late chief minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate, K Venkateswarlu and SNCN Acharyulu)

REPORTERS' DIARY

in the lobby. During the first session, there were two rooms. Those were modified as one room ahead of the Budget session. The BRS, as the main opposition party, initially had 39 MLAs. Now its strength has dwindled to 28, with 10 MLAs defecting and BRS losing in one by-election. The room that has been allotted is not capacious enough to accommodate all of them comfortably. However, BRS managed the show with small chairs. MLAs like Harish Rao expressed their anger over a small room being allotted. When Bhatti Vikramarka was asked about cramped BRS room, he said: "They are open to make modifications as it is Praja Palana".

Cops still show great respect to KCR

Regime change has not changed the stripes of the cops engaged to provide security to former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. Scribes got the wind of it on July 25 when the Budget was presented. For, journalists not arriv-

BRS in a cramped room, but KCR still towers

Telangana's former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Bharat Rashtra Samithi president is a tall leader. What if his party is cooped up in a small encl-

Naidu puts BJP in fix over AP liquor scam

SNCN ACHARYULU
HYDERABAD

The BJP which wants to strengthen its base in the south is in the clear in Telangana. But Andhra Pradesh politics has become a big headache for the BJP. The BJP is facing problems in choosing between the TDP and the YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh.

The BJP which is in power in Andhra Pradesh as a partner of the TDP is not ready to dump the YSR Congress as the support of the YSR Congress is very important for the BJP in the Rajya Sabha where the YSRC has 11 Members.

In Telangana, at present the ruling Congress, the main opposition BRS and the BJP are the main players. The BJP will not mind if the BRS joins the NDA.



If the BRS joins the NDA there will be a direct fight between the Congress and the BRS, BJP alliance in TG. Compared to Andhra Pradesh, the BJP is on a strong wicket in Telangana.

The BJP has a chance to strengthen itself in Andhra Pradesh as it is now in power. Earlier, when the YSR Congress was in power it supported the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. At the same time the then main opposition TDP also supported the Centre. The BJP wants to continue the same arrangement now too.

The YSR Congress supported the BJP in the Lok Sabha Speaker election. But now the TDP's decision in the so-called liquor scam that occurred during YSRC rule has become a problem for the BJP.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu said that there was a big scam due to the YSR Congress government's liquor policy and that he wants to hand over the case to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for investigation.

If the Centre accepts the AP request to order an ED investi-

gation into the AP liquor scam it will antagonise former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Then he will dump the BJP and the Congress-led INDIA is ready to admit the YSRC as a partner. Then INDIA will become stronger in the Rajya Sabha as well as in the Lok Sabha.

The BJP does not want this to happen. Moreover, there were speculations that a senior BJP leader is also involved in this liquor scam. But as a partner in the Andhra Pradesh Government if the BJP-led Central Government does not accept the TDP request to order an ED inquiry into the AP liquor scam the Centre will get involved in the problem.

The Congress and other opposition parties will allege that the Centre is protecting Jagan and the BJP leader allegedly involved in the liquor scam. As things stand Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu has put the BJP in a fix in the AP liquor scam.

Panchayat Raj Director visits Pithapuram

PNS ■ KAKINADA

State's Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Director V. R. Krishna Teja visited Pithapuram on Saturday to assess the area's development requirements.

During his visit, Krishna Teja toured several locations including Chitrada, Kumarapuram, SK Palem, and Kandara within the Pithapuram mandal. He closely examined the ongoing development projects, including the overhead tank and roof water harvesting initiatives under NREGA in Chitrada village.

The Sarpanch of Chitrada village highlighted the urgent need for a service road to alleviate traffic congestion and prevent accidents. Krishna Teja also inspected the house construction projects and the Grama Sachivalayam in Kumarapuram village, where villagers requested the construction of a durable road to replace the current marshy one.

In F.K. Palem village, Krishna Teja evaluated the mandal parish school and listened to requests for pucca roads to new colonies and the enhancement of basic facilities.

Feedback vital...

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"Feedback mechanisms play a vital role in enhancing amenities for pilgrims. I prayed to Srivaru to give me the strength to uphold the traditions of this world-renowned temple and to serve the devotees with utmost dedication," he said. The ceremony was attended by CEO SVBC Shanmukh Kumar, CE Nageswara Rao, SE2 Jagadeeshwar Reddy, Temple DyEO Lokanatham, Reception DyEO Harindranath, DyEO Board Cell Prasanthi, CPRO Dr. T Ravi, and other officers.

Ministers visit flood-hit villages Assure all assistance to victims

PNS ■ ELURU

A group of Ministers, including Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu, Home Minister V. Anita, Water Resources Development Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu, and Housing Minister K. Parthasarathy, visited flood-affected villages in Kukkunuru and Velerupadu mandals on Saturday, pledging to extend all necessary assistance to the victims.

During their visit, the Ministers inspected the R&R colony at Dacharam village and interacted with flood victims, listening to their difficulties and assessing the current relief efforts. They also surveyed the flood water levels in the Godavari River and inquired about the assistance being provided by officials.

Minister Parthasarathy assured the flood victims that every affected family would receive support. Emphasising the government's responsibility, he mentioned that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had directed district Collectors and the Superintendent of Police (SP) to take steps to relocate flood victims from low-lying areas to safer locations.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to ensure that all affected families receive provisions and necessary assistance. Minister



Parthasarathy highlighted that 14,000 acres of land are cultivated under the Peddavagu rivulet, and modernization plans estimated at Rs 80 crore were halted due to the YSRC government not releasing its share, leading to several villages being inundated.

"All necessary steps will be taken to modernize the Peddavagu rivulet to prevent future flooding of agricultural lands and villages," Minister Parthasarathy assured the victims. Agriculture Minister Atchannaidu mentioned that the flood situation was discussed in the Assembly on July 26, and the Chief Minister had directed Ministers to visit the affected areas.

He emphasized that the government would continue to provide necessary assistance until the victims could return to their homes.

Minister Ramanaidu announced that 25 kg of rice, 1 kg of red gram, 1 kg of edible oil, and five varieties of vegetables were being distributed to flood victims. Additionally, each family would receive Rs 3,000 upon returning to their homes from relief centers.

Home Minister Anita reiterated the government's commitment to compensating those who gave up their lands for the Polavaram project. She assured that the government prioritizes extending help to flood victims and claimed that due to precautionary measures, no loss of life or property occurred in the affected areas.

Accompanying the Ministers were Collector K. Vetri Selvi, SP K. P. Shiva Kishore, Joint Collector P. Dhatri Reddy, and MLAs Chintamaneni Prabhakar and Balaramu, as well as ZP CEO K. Subba Rao.

Yanamala dares YSRCP...

Continued from Page 1

He contrasted the YSRCP and TDP, claiming that while the YSRCP swindles funds, the TDP knows how to generate and allocate money for development and welfare. Yanamala asserted that the YSRCP leaders are afraid of the truths revealed in the white papers and are concerned about their political survival if the public becomes aware of these facts. He warned that the YSRCP's future is at risk if its leaders continue their current behaviour in opposition. He also criticized Jagan for seeking Leader of Opposition (LoP) status despite being rejected by the people. Yanamala concluded by stating that once the Privilege Committee of the Assembly is constituted, notices will be served to Jagan and his affiliated organizations for violating norms.

PM calls for...

Continued from Page 1

During the meeting, Modi encouraged states to provide an investor-friendly environment and directed the NITI Aayog to prepare an 'Investment-friendly Charter' of parameters which would include policies, programmes and processes to be put in place for attracting investments.

NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery said that Modi wanted the states to compete for FDI so that investments could reach all the states, especially those that are less successful.

The Prime Minister also underscored the importance of law and order, good governance and infrastructure as vital for attracting investments, rather than just incentives. He also encouraged the creation of river grids at state level for effective utilisation of water resources. The Prime Minister emphasised on cooperation and collective effort of all states and the Centre to work together in order to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. Modi encouraged states to initiate Demographic Management Plans to address the issues of population ageing in future.

Modi observed that the vision of Viksit Bharat can be realized through Viksit States, and that the aspiration of Viksit Bharat should reach the grass-root level i.e. to each district, block, and village.

CM's White Paper...

Continued from Page 1

"Is the document released by Chandrababu a white paper or an excuse paper? His white paper on the financial condition looks like he is washing his hands on the matter. Chandrababu's 'Super Six' has been bowled out. His white paper only dashes people's hopes," Buggana said. He criticized the Chandrababu government for not providing funds even for regular schemes, let alone the 'Super Six,' stating that the TDP administration needs Rs 2.5 lakh crore.

"Under our administration, Andhra Pradesh's per capita income improved significantly. In 2018-19, the state's per capita income was ranked 18th, but by 2022-23, it had risen to 7th. Additionally, during our tenure, Andhra Pradesh's contribution to the nation's GDP increased by 2 per cent compared to the period of Chandrababu's rule. From 2014-19, the state's income was 6 per cent, while under the YSRCP government, it increased by 16 per cent," Buggana noted.

He further accused Chandrababu Naidu of incurring debts upon coming to power, which the yellow media never mentions. "When the YSRCP does something, or the TDP does, some media houses react as if it's a major issue. The people of Andhra Pradesh are still waiting for the promises made by Chandrababu to be fulfilled. Despite schools being open for so many days, no money has been deposited into the mothers' accounts," Buggana criticised.

Israeli airstrike hits school, kills 30 people in Gaza

PNS ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

Israeli airstrikes hit a school and a hospital in central Gaza on Saturday as the country's negotiators prepared to meet international mediators to discuss a proposed cease-fire.

At least 30 people sheltering at a girls' school in Deir Al-Balah were taken to Al Aqsa Hospital and pronounced dead after a strike that Israel's military said targeted a Hamas command and control centre used to store weapons and plan attacks.

Gaza's Health Ministry said 11 people were killed in other strikes on Saturday.

Israel's military ordered the evacuation of a part of a designated humanitarian zone in Gaza ahead of a planned strike on Khan Younis on Saturday, as the country's negotiators prepare to meet international mediators to discuss a proposed cease-fire.

The evacuation order is in response to rocket fire that Israel said originated from the area. The military said it planned an operation against Hamas militants in the city, including parts of Muwasi, the crowded tent camp in an



area where Israel has told thousands of Palestinians to seek refuge throughout the war.

The planned strike comes a day before officials from the US, Egypt, Qatar and Israel are scheduled to meet in Italy and discuss the ongoing hostage and cease-fire negotiations. CIA Director Bill Burns is expected to meet Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Abdul Rahman al-Thani, Mossad director David Barnea and Egyptian spy chief Abbas Kamel on Sunday, according to officials from the US and Egypt who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to discuss the plans.

It's the second evacuation order issued in a week that has included striking

part of the humanitarian zone, a 60-square-kilometer (roughly 20-square-mile) blanketed with tent camps that lack sanitation and medical facilities and have limited access to aid, United Nations and humanitarian groups say. Israel expanded the zone in May to take in people fleeing Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population at the time had crowded.

According to Israeli estimates, about 1.8 million Palestinians are currently sheltering there after being uprooted multiple times in search of safety during Israel's punishing air and ground campaign. In November, the military said the area could still be struck and that it was "not a safe zone, but it is a safer place than any other" in Gaza.

CM seeks Central nod for new proposals...

Continued from Page 1

CM Naidu urged Minister Patil to approve the complete proposals for the Polavaram project's construction, including the construction of a new diaphragm wall.

Later addressing the media in Delhi, CM Naidu emphasised the promises made under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, which include development initiatives for Amaravati, Polavaram, and the backward districts of the State. He recalled the Central government's promise of special status to Andhra Pradesh, which was instead substituted with capital investment assistance. He highlighted the disparity in per capita income between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which was Rs 30,000 at the time of bifurcation, noting that the situation has worsened over the past five years, with per capita income dropping signif-

icantly. CM Naidu criticised the destruction of key projects like Polavaram and Amaravati and the exodus of industries from the State.

He called upon the NDA government to fulfil its responsibility in restructuring Andhra Pradesh, emphasising the need for old dues to be settled. He condemned the politicisation of the State's issues, noting that Andhra Pradesh has lagged in Swachh Bharat and Jal Jeevan Mission initiatives over the past five years.

He also criticised the YSRCP government's mismanagement, alleging that Central funds were diverted, a fact corroborated by Central government departments. CM Naidu stressed the urgency of releasing Polavaram funds by November. Union Minister Rammoan Naidu and TDP MPs accompanied CM Naidu during these discussions.

AP poised to become FDI destination...

Continued from Page 1

The State aims to build on the 8.2% GDP growth recorded in 2023-24, continuing reforms to position India as a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years. Simplified FDI rules and policies are set to boost revenue for Andhra Pradesh by attracting foreign investments.

He noted that the Social Welfare Sector segment has received a substantial allocation of Rs 23 lakh crore, up from Rs 11 lakh crore in the previous budget, with a focus on an output-outcome framework to monitor program effectiveness.

Significant budgetary increases for PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, and mental health programs are expected to

enhance healthcare improvements, according to Dr. Murugan.

Flagship schemes aimed at bolstering infrastructure, teaching-learning resources, and nutritional support have received substantial boosts, with Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, PM-POSHAN, and PM-SHRI receiving enhanced budgets.

The Health Sector has also seen a significant increase, with allocations doubling to Rs 5.85 lakh crore from Rs 2.5 lakh crore. Dr. Murugan pointed out a 13% increase in health allocation from last year, reflecting the government's ongoing commitment to strengthening healthcare.

He further highlighted the budget's emphasis on Agriculture, Infrastructure, and Renewable Energy, especially for Andhra Pradesh.

Dr Murugan mentioned that special

allocations were made for Andhra Pradesh in the Union Budget after five years, including commitments to the Polavaram Project and industrial corridors.

He detailed Rs 15,000 crore for the reconstruction of Andhra Pradesh this fiscal, additional funds for the Polavaram Irrigation Project, and allocations for the Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor. Special funds have been earmarked for seven backward districts in Rayalaseema and North Andhra, including Prakasam district. He assured that "special financial support" will be provided by the Union Government through multilateral agencies and reiterated the Centre's full commitment to financing and completing the Polavaram Project, which he described as the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh and its farmers.

No extension of date to apply for TET

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The notification for the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) was released on July 2 and the last date for candidates to apply for the test is August 3. Eligible candidates should apply within the last date as there will be no extension of the last date to apply for the test. So far, 3,20,333 candidates have applied for the TET exam.

Director of School Education Vijayaraju in a statement said that these exams will be conducted online from October 3 to 20.



'Only CM Naidu & PM Modi can do'

• REVIVING ANDHRA PRADESH'S FINANCIAL POSITION

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Shivnath (Chinni) has praised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's dedication to the State's development and welfare, despite financial challenges, as evidenced during his tenure from 2014-19. Speaking to the media on Saturday at NTR Bhavan in Vijayawada, the MP said that only Chief Minister Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi can revive the State's current financial situation.

MP Kesineni Chinni strongly criticised the false allegations made by YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy regarding the financial assistance provided by the Centre for State development. He highlighted the tireless efforts of CM Naidu, Ministers Lokesh, and DyCM Pawan Kalyan in addressing the state's budget deficit. The financial status was made transparent through a white paper released by the Chief Minister. Kesineni credited Chandrababu Naidu's visit to Delhi for the significant



MP Kesineni Chinni strongly criticised the false allegations made by YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy regarding the financial assistance provided by the Centre for State development

budgetary allocations to Andhra Pradesh, contrasting it with Jagan's repeated trips to Delhi for personal interests, neglecting the state's needs.

Addressing the development of Vijayawada Railway Station, the MP mentioned that Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav assured that the station will be upgraded under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme to meet passengers' needs for the next 50 years. Amaravati railway station is also set for development, along with 76 other sta-

tions in the state under the same scheme. Additionally, plans are underway to introduce a new train service from Vijayawada to Bangalore.

MP Kesineni announced the upcoming construction of a new terminal at Gannavaram Airport, expected to commence within a year. During the Parliament session, he requested Union Minister Rammohan Naidu to establish flight connections from Vijayawada to various destinations, including Varanasi,

Cochin, Coimbatore, and Calcutta. Air India and IndiGo are set to start flight services between Vijayawada and Ahmedabad, as well as Vijayawada and Pune.

He also revealed plans for infrastructure improvements, including the commencement of the West Bypass within five to six months and the construction of connecting and radial roads from Gannavaram to Amaravati to alleviate traffic congestion. For the 6-km flyover between Mahanadu Junction and Nidamanuru, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has instructed NHAI officials to submit a detailed project report. Additionally, the Eastern Bypass project is expected to receive approval from NITI Aayog.

MP Kesineni affirmed TDP's commitment to implementing the Super Six schemes. Acknowledging the state's financial constraints, he stated that the government has devised a plan to roll out these schemes within the next five to six months.

81 Vizag police officers awarded for exemplary service

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

City Police Commissioner Dr Sankhabrata Bagchi honoured 81 police officers for their exemplary service during a monthly crime review meeting today. The event, attended by senior police officials, aimed to recognize the outstanding contributions of the force in maintaining law and order and ensuring the city's safety.

From home guards to Circle Inspectors, officers were felicitated for their exceptional performance in various domains of policing. Dr. Bagchi emphasized the importance of recognizing the efforts of police personnel at all levels. "Their dedication and commitment to duty have been instrumental in making Visakhapatnam a safer city," he said. Awards were presented for a variety of achievements, including successful anti-drug operations, recovery of stolen property, timely response to crimes, and proactive measures to address social issues such as public drinking and



The recipients expressed their gratitude to the Commissioner for acknowledging their hard work

prostitution. Notably, a police driver was also honoured for displaying exceptional alertness and reporting crucial information.

The recipients expressed their gratitude to the Commissioner for acknowledging their hard work. They emphasized that such recognition motivates the entire force to strive for excellence. One awarded officer remarked, "This recognition not only honours our past efforts but also inspires us to continue working diligently for the safety and well-being of our community." Dr Bagchi's initiative

is a significant step towards boosting the force's morale and reinforcing the department's commitment to public safety. By highlighting the outstanding contributions of its personnel, the Visakhapatnam City Police continue to set a benchmark for excellence in law enforcement.

CAMPUS DRUG ABUSE

Child rights panel for stern action

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Andhra Pradesh State Child Rights Commission Chairman, Kesali Apparao, has issued a stern call to action, highlighting the critical role of college principals and hostel staff in addressing the escalating drug abuse problem among students in Vizianagaram district. During a seminar on the protection of child rights and drug control, held at Apex College, Appa Rao expressed grave concern over the increasing prevalence of violence, substance abuse, and other detrimental behaviours among the youth. The seminar, convened by district-level officials, aimed to develop comprehensive strategies to combat these issues.

To address the crisis, partic-



ipants resolved to implement regular review meetings and awareness campaigns in collaboration with educational institutions. A key focus was the establishment of anti-drug clubs in all colleges. Principals were directed to develop comprehensive action plans to strengthen these clubs and implement effective drug pre-

vention measures. Regular review meetings and awareness campaigns were also mandated to foster a drug-free campus environment.

Additionally, to enhance security, especially for female students, the seminar recommended the installation of CCTV cameras in girls' hostels. This measure is aimed at mon-

itoring mobile phone usage and preventing unauthorized access. Apparao expressed disappointment with the low attendance of private college administrators at the seminar, emphasizing the need for full participation from all educational institutions.

The meeting was attended by prominent figures including District Child Welfare Samithi President G Himabindu, Intermediate Board Regional Officer Majji Adinarayana, and representatives from Mission Vatsalya and Child Line. Through concerted efforts, authorities aim to create a safer and more conducive learning environment for students by tackling the growing threat of drug abuse and associated anti-social behaviours.

RTA enforces helmet rule strictly to curb fatal mishaps

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

To combat the alarming rise in fatal road accidents, the Road Transport Authority (RTA) of Visakhapatnam has announced the strict enforcement of the helmet rule across the city. Deputy Transport Commissioner GC Raja Ratnam declared that violators caught riding without a helmet will face a hefty fine of Rs. 1,000 and have their driver's license suspended for three months. "Safety is our utmost priority," Commissioner Ratnam emphasized. "We urge all two-wheeler riders to adhere to this rule and wear ISI-certified helmets. It is a small yet crucial step towards ensuring their safety on the roads." This stringent measure is part of a broader strategy by the RTA to enhance road safety and significantly reduce the number of accidents. The authority hopes that the strict penalties will act as a deterrent and encourage compliance among the public.

With the rise in road accidents involving two-wheelers, this initiative



"By strictly enforcing the helmet rule, we aim to save lives and foster a culture of safety among our citizens. We call upon everyone to support this initiative and ensure that safety comes first."

aims to make a significant impact on protecting riders and reducing fatalities.

The RTA underscores the importance of community cooperation in this life-saving effort. "The statistics are concerning," said Commissioner Ratnam. "By strictly enforcing the helmet rule, we aim to save lives and foster a culture of safety among our citizens. We call upon everyone to support this initiative and ensure that safety comes first."

The RTA is also planning to launch awareness campaigns and collaborate with local law enforcement to ensure the rule is diligently followed. Road safety workshops and the distribution of informational pamphlets are part of the planned activities to educate the public on the critical importance of wearing helmets. As the city braces for this new regulation, the RTA remains committed to its mission of creating safer roads for all. The authorities believe that with collective effort and strict enforcement, Visakhapatnam can see a significant decline in road accident fatalities.

Vignan varsity students donate blood to mark Chairman's b'day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chairman of Vignan Educational Institutions, Dr Lavu Rathiah, urged students to donate blood, emphasising that it's equivalent to giving life. On the occasion of his birthday, Vignan University students participated in a blood donation drive on the university campus at Vadlamudi, Guntur district. The NSS department, in collaboration with GGH Guntur, Needs Blood Bank, Life Share, and Thalassemia Needs Blood Bank, organised the event.

Dr. Rathiah visited the camp and highlighted that every two seconds, someone in the world needs blood. He encouraged students to not only donate but also to motivate their friends to join the cause. He explained that the body replenishes the lost blood volume within 24 to 48 hours and emphasized that blood cannot be artificially manufac-



tured—it can only be provided through donations. He noted that blood is crucial in emergencies and praised the role of donors in saving lives.

A total of 400 students from Vignan University, Vignan Lara, and Vignan College of Pharmacy donated blood. The students received certificates in recognition of their contribution, and service programs were conducted. The event also featured competitions with prizes awarded to stu-

dents from Vejanla, Jagarlamudi, Angalakuduru, and Narakoduru government schools. Additionally, a medical camp was held at Veeranayakunipalem, and an eye checkup camp was organized in Vadlamudi.

The Vice Chancellor of Vignan University, Prof. P. Nagabhushan, Registrar Dr. M.S. Raghunathan, Deans, Heads of departments, and NSS students were present at the event.

Bullayya College clinches 1st prize

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a stunning showcase of innovation and academic prowess, students from Dr Lankapalli Bullayya College of Engineering have clinched the first prize in the prestigious "The Open Group INITIATE Enterprise Architecture Competition for Students 2024." Organized by The Open Group, a global consortium dedicated to Enterprise Architecture, this competition saw entries from students worldwide across seven distinct themes. Mandapaka Kamakshi Padma Vritika, a standout Computer Science Engineering student, led the victorious team, which included Syed Hamza Muhaayim and Bhogapurapu Niranjan Shaktik from the Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE) department. Their project, "Transforming Atal Tinkering

ARCHITECTURE CONTEST



Labs - Automation and the Rise of Student Innovators," focused on Digital Transformation and impressed judges with its innovative approach and practical application. The team was expertly guided by Raja Sekhar Vasa, Regional Mentor of Change for the Atal Innovation Mission, and Sri Anil Paingankar, IBM Executive Architect.

This triumph was facilitated by a collaborative effort between Dr. Lankapalli Bullayya College of

Engineering and Sri Sarada Vidya Nilayam. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), college students were able to participate in Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) and mentor younger students in their tinkering activities. ATL, an initiative by NITI Aayog, aims to spark innovation and creativity among young minds.

The winning team, aptly named the "Archimedes Trio," will be honoured with "The Open Group India Awards for Innovation and Excellence" at a ceremony scheduled for July 31, 2024, in New Delhi. This accolade is a testament to their dedication, ingenuity, and collaborative spirit.

Dr G Madhukumar, Secretary and Correspondent of Dr. L. Bullayya Colleges, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the team for their stellar achievement. He lauded their innovative approach and the significant impact of their project. Prof. D. Deepak Chowdary, Principal of Dr. Lankapalli Bullayya College of Engineering, along with heads of the respective departments, also commended the students for bringing pride to the institution. This victory not only highlights the exceptional talent and hard work of the students but also underscores the critical importance of fostering innovation and practical skills in educational institu-



300 kg of ganja seized, one peddler arrested

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

The notification for the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) was released on July 2 and the last date for candidates to apply for the test is August 3. Eligible candidates should apply within the last date as there will be no extension of the last date to apply for the test. So far, 3,20,333 candidates have applied for the TET exam.

Director of School Education Vijayaraju in a statement said that these exams will be conducted online from October 3 to 20.

Botsa raps govt for razing ex-serviceman's house

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Former minister Botsa Satyanarayana has unleashed a scathing attack against the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders, decrying their "tyrannical" actions and warning that their oppressive behaviour shows no signs of abating. His comments came in the wake of the controversial demolition of ex-serviceman Venku Naidu's house in Dannanapeta village, of Nellimarla Mandal, which he branded as an unprecedented act of cruelty.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, Satyanarayana lashed out, demanding, "Why unleash devastation on a remote village? What excuse is there for demolishing property without any warning?" He further condemned, "Is this how our so-called public representatives act? Will they bull-



doze homes simply for not supporting TDP? Why the disgraceful bias against a retired army jawan?" He charged that TDP leaders are driven by ruthless political vendettas.

Satyanarayana's remarks highlight growing concerns about political retribution and abuse of power in the state. Since the Alliance government assumed power, TDP activists have unleashed a wave of chaos

across Andhra Pradesh. Vandalism is rampant, with several vehicles destroyed and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders assaulted. The former minister's accusations suggest a deeply polarized political climate, where acts of violence and intimidation are becoming increasingly common.

In response to the allegations, the Tehsildar of Nellimarla mandal

Dharmaraju clarified that the demolition was conducted strictly according to government directives. The protective wall, which had encroached upon the road, was deemed a hindrance to public accessibility and safety. The tehsildar emphasized that the action taken was in the best interest of the community, ensuring the free flow of traffic and public movement.

Before the eviction, Dharmaraju stated that the encroacher was duly notified about the impending action. The tehsildar's office provided ample time for the encroacher to respond and take necessary steps. However, with no response forthcoming, the eviction process was carried out to restore the public pathway. Despite these official explanations, the incident has sparked widespread outrage

and debate. Supporters of Venku Naidu argue that the demolition was politically motivated, a claim that underscores the heightened tensions between the TDP and YSRCP. As accusations fly and justifications are offered, the plight of Venku Naidu and the broader implications for civil liberties and political fairness remain in sharp focus.

This controversy brings to the forefront critical questions about governance, political vendettas, and the treatment of veterans. As the political climate in Andhra Pradesh continues to heat up, the need for transparent and fair governance becomes ever more pressing. The fallout from this incident is likely to reverberate across the state, influencing public opinion and potentially shaping future political dynamics.

Probe ordered into village fire



PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Minister for MSME and NRI Affairs Kondapalli Srinivas has ordered an immediate and thorough investigation into a devastating fire that ravaged a cattle shed in Vasantha village in Gantiyada mandal on Saturday. The blaze, which resulted in the tragic death of several cattle, has sent shockwaves through the community and sparked fears of poten-

tial foul play.

The fire erupted in the early hours of Saturday, engulfing the cattle shed in flames and leaving the village in a state of distress. The loss of livestock and the suspicion that the fire may have been deliberately set have heightened the urgency of the situation. Minister Srinivas, acknowledging the gravity of the incident, has called for a swift and comprehensive inquiry to

uncover the truth and provide justice for the affected families.

Local police officials have been directed to conduct an exhaustive investigation, scrutinizing every aspect of the fire to determine its origins and confirm whether any malicious intent was involved. This decisive action by the minister reflects the state government's commitment to addressing such emergencies with the utmost seriousness and efficiency.

As the investigation unfolds, the residents of Vasantha village are grappling with both the emotional and financial impact of the disaster, hoping for answers and support to rebuild their lives. The community's calls for accountability and assistance underscore the critical need for a transparent and thorough examination of the incident.

1 killed, 16 hurt as private bus rams stationary lorry

PNS ■ ELURU

A woman passenger was killed and 16 others including the bus driver were injured when a private travels bus in which they were travelling, rams a stationary lorry at Kalaparru toll plaza in Pedapadu mandal on Saturday.

Police said that a group of people were going to Kanaka Durga temple in Vijayawada from Parvatipuram. The bus rams into a lorry stationed at a hotel near the toll plaza, killing Krishnamma (60). The driver of the bus was stuck at the driving wheel as the front portion of the private bus turned to be iron



Responding to the incident, Eluru District Collector K Vetri Selvi directed the Eluru RDO NSK Khajavali to rush to the accident place immediately and provide needed help to the accident victims

mangle under the impact of the collision with the lorry.

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and provide needed help to the accident victims.

The officials have made arrangements to send the body of Krishnamma to her native village. The seriously injured private bus driver

was extricated from the mangle of the bus and shifted to the GGH in Eluru.

As many as 16 bus passengers suffered minor injuries in the mishap. Transport officials said that they had made a vehicle to send the stranded passengers to their native places.

Swift police action helps recover Rs 2.02 cr after heist

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

In a swift operation, the police cracked a major heist and recovered Rs 2.02 crore within 24 hours of the crime. East Godavari Superintendent of Police Narasimha Kishore announced on Saturday that Vasamsetti Ashok Kumar (27) was apprehended for stealing Rs 2.20 crore meant for replenishing HDFC Bank ATMs by a private agency, HTC Cash Management.

The incident occurred on Friday when HTC Cash Management withdrew Rs 2,20,50,000 from an HDFC Bank to refill the bank's ATMs in the city. Ashok Kumar, an employee of HTC, was part of the team assigned for this task. After encashing the cheque at the Danavaipeta HDFC Bank branch, Kumar



seized an opportunity to abscond with the money in a car while his colleagues were occupied with their duties.

HTC management promptly reported the theft to the One Town police station. In response, six police teams led by South Zone DSP Vijay Pal were mobilized. They gathered crucial evidence by reviewing CCTV footage and tracking the accused's mobile data, which revealed that Kumar had fled in a Swift car. The

abandoned car was later found in Kothapet, Konaseema district. Police arrested Ashok Kumar in Mandapeta and recovered Rs 2.02 crore, which he had hidden in his flat.

Kumar had already spent Rs 18.50 lakh from the stolen amount. The investigation is ongoing to determine if any accomplices were involved in the crime. SP Kishore noted that Kumar's addiction to vices and desire for easy money led him to commit the theft.

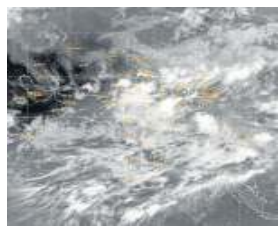
Women held on charge mobile theft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force (North) Zone in coordination with Mahankali police on Saturday arrested two women accused of mobile theft.

The two accused were identified as Orsu Sony (26), a resident of Borabanda and Vemla Sirisha (24), a resident of Fatehnagar. They were involved in five cases of mobile theft under the Mahankali police station.

The police seized four mobile phones, chargers and earphones all worth Rs 2 lakh from them. Sony and Sirisha targeted crowded places like Bonalu celebrations, Ganesh immersion or any other festivals to commit theft. They mingled with public and stole valuables. Based on the examination of CCTV footages.



Strong surface winds likely in AP over next 5 days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Strong surface winds with speeds ranging from 30-40 Kmph are likely to prevail at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days, the Meteorological Centre said on Saturday.

In a daily weather report here, said that light to moderate rain is likely to occur at a few places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

The southwest monsoon has been normal in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and weak in Rayalaseema. Rain occurred at many places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at a few places in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours.

AP hoteliers' plea to Union Minister Murugan over GST

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation from the Andhra Pradesh Hotels and Restaurants Association (APHRA), led by State president RV Swami, submitted a memorandum to Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Loganathan Murugan. The memorandum urges the GST Council to separate the GST taxation of restaurant food services from the room rates charged for accommodation. APHRA proposes that GST on restaurants be levied at 5% without input credit and 12% with input credit, independent of the accommodation tariff.

RV Swami highlighted that changes proposed in the 23rd GST Council Meeting on November 10-11, 2017, and detailed in Notification No. 46/2017-Central Tax (Rate) dated November 14, 2017, have adversely affected the hospitality industry. Currently, restaurants in hotel premises with a room tariff of less than Rs 7500 per unit per day are charged 5% GST without input tax credit under Heading 9963 (Accommodation, food, and



RV Swami highlighted that changes proposed in the 23rd GST Council Meeting on November 10-11, 2017, and detailed in Notification No. 46/2017-Central Tax (Rate) dated November 14, 2017, have adversely affected the hospitality industry

beverage services). Restaurants in hotel premises with a room tariff of Rs 7500 and above per unit per day are charged 18% GST with full input tax credit under the same heading.

Swami emphasized that the current practice of linking the taxation of food services in restaurants to the room rates charged for accommodation poses significant challenges.

He reiterated that APHRA has requested the Union Minister to advocate for the separation of GST taxation of restaurant food services from accommodation charges. The association's proposal suggests levying GST on restaurants at 5% without input credit and 12% with input credit, regardless of the accommodation tariff.

'Three 'abducted' minor girls traced to Hyderabad, Nanded, rescued'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Latur Police have rescued three minor girls allegedly abducted more than a year ago from Hyderabad and Nanded, and nabbed two persons, an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit official said.

Police tracked down the girls using technical analysis and following leads.

The missing persons reports of two 17-year-old girls were registered almost a year ago at Udgir Rural and Nilanga police stations in Latur. Another complaint was registered at MIDC police station about the abduction of a 16-year-old girl.

The 17-year-old were traced to Hyderabad and another one to Nanded district.

Over the past 45 days, 10 abducted minors have been rescued from Latur district, according to the AHTU official.

Edu schemes renamed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education Minister Nara Lokesh has said that the NDA government, led by Nara Chandrababu Naidu, in Andhra Pradesh, is determined to revamp the entire education sector which has been ruined by the previous YSRCP government.

In a statement here on Saturday, Lokesh said that the State government aims to turn all educational institutes into knowledge centres.



As part of this endeavour, the State government had

decided to rename all schemes named after the former chief minister. "We have decided to rename the schemes after great Indian personalities who had made significant contributions to the education sector," Lokesh disclosed.

The government would start renaming the schemes with the inspiration of former President Abdul Kalam on Saturday (July 27), on the occasion of his death anniversary.

OLD NAME	NEW NAME
Jagananna Amma Vodi	- Talliki Vandanam
Jagananna Vidya Kanuka	- Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Vidyarthi Mitra
Jagananna Goru Mudda	- Dokka Seethamma Madhyahna Badi Bhojana
Mana Badi Nadu Nedu	- Mana Badi Mana Bhavishyathu
Swechcha	- Balika Raksha
Jagananna Animutyalu	- Abdul Kalam Pratibha Puraskaram

Chegondi again raises bogey of 5% Kapu quota

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MP and veteran Kapu leader Chegondi Harirama Jogaiah has written a letter addressing Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, urging them to extend reservations to the Kapu community. In his letter, Jogaiah demanded that the TDP-led NDA government in the State provide reservations for Kapus in education and employment, at least under the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category if not under the OBC quota.

Jogaiah, who runs the Kapu-Balija Samkshema Sena, highlighted that the



Kapu have been fighting for reservations in education and employment since the British regime. He emphasized that the community has been agitating for this cause for several years in independent India.

He pointed out that the previous TDP government, headed by Chandrababu Naidu, had issued orders implementing a five per

cent reservation for Kapus out of the 10% EWS quota. However, the subsequent YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government halted this quota, citing that the matter was under the jurisdiction of the central government. Jogaiah reminded that the Kapus had even approached the AP High Court to restore the EWS reservation, but the YSRCP government opposed it in a counter-filing.

With the TDP back in power, Jogaiah expressed hope that the Kapus would receive the promised reservations.

"We request you to restore the 5 per cent quota for Kapus under the EWS category at the earliest," he stated.

MEDIGADDA PILLAR COLLAPSE

KTR sees Congress conspiracy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said that he suspected that there might be a Congress 'conspiracy' behind the collapse of the Medigadda Barrage's pillars.

He questioned why the barrage, which withstood lakhs of cusecs of floodwater, collapsed just before the elections and said that if anything happens to the barrage in future, it should be considered the result of the Congress government's 'conspiracy'.

Speaking to journalists dur-

ing a chat-chat at the BRS LP office on Saturday, he said that it is well known who some Congress Ministers are associated with and hinted that they might be capable of 'tampering' with the barrage.

He accused the Congress government of trying to evade responsibility for the Kaleshwaram Project by citing the NDSA report as a reason for not pumping water. He said that it is a relief that water is being pumped from Ellampalli, but emphasized that pumping two TMCs of water is not enough.

He said the government's ego

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is preventing the pumping of water from the Kannepalli pump house and criticised attempts to portray the Kaleshwaram Project as a failure.

He said that during his visit to Medigadda on Friday, he had found that 10 lakh cusecs of

water were flowing through the barrage and that the barrage withstood even a flow of 28 lakh cusecs.

He claimed that the NDSA report is actually an NDA report and criticised both the Congress and the BJP for their stance against the Kaleshwaram

Project. KTR pointed out the hypocrisy of the NDSA report not being mentioned when the Polavaram cofferdam was washed away and highlighted the wastage of 90 TMCs of water of the Godavari, which is equivalent to the capacity of the Sriram Sagar project.

TO FACILITATE SECOND OPINION

American doctors of Indian origin launch telemedicine for patients

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

US-based medical firm, My American Doctor, on Saturday launched Telemedicine service in India. The platform will allow patients in India to virtually consult doctors in the US for a second opinion. The service aims to address patient issues related to oncology, dermatology and cardiology among 30 specialties.

Speaking of the service, Dr Raj Narla, Emergency Medicine specialist and CEO, My American Doctor said, "It has been a collective vision of over 40 American doctors of Indian origin to reach out to the needy patients in India. My American Doctor has been conceptualised after understanding the need of the Indian community, the challenges being faced by an Indian patients in difficult situations



US-based My American Doctor members announcing the launch of Telemedicine platform at a programme in Hyderabad on Saturday

and with a clear mandate to reinforce the wonderful work being done by Indian doctors in India. It is not a commercial initiative, our vision is to create a patient-friendly sustainable initiative that bridges the gap

between an Indian patient and an expert American doctor in a cost-effective manner. We would like to complete the consultation and generate a written report within 72 hours. We are right now focused on servicing

patients only in India. Later we will extend our services to the Middle East and eventually in USA. Our price point is \$ 149, it's more of a service initiative to help our fellow Indians."

Dr Rajan Garg, ICU Medicine specialist and Board member, My American Doctor, said, "Almost over a million patients are travelling abroad from India, every year to seek medical treatment for complex medical conditions, rare diseases, difficult diagnosis and for privacy reasons, apart from those there are approximately four times more patients who would like to travel or get an expert medical opinion from the physicians abroad if they have the resources." He further said, "There is also a certain perception that treatment abroad is better, right or wrong that perception

does exist. My American Doctor will provide the latest treatment plan to Indian patients using the technology. Indian healthcare systems and Doctors are comparable to anyone anywhere in the world, sometimes patients just need the reassurance that the treatment being provided to them by their Indian healthcare system and the Indian doctor is the right treatment, and sometimes the treatment plan needs a small tweak. A study of the Journal of Clinical Oncology indicated that the second opinion led to significant change in the management of patients, the study had a sample of 300 to 600 patients and 50 per cent of the patients saw a change in the treatment. A study by Mayo clinic said approximately 26% to 50% patients had a decrease in the diagnosis error after a second opinion."

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

After assuming charge as the Additional EO of TTD, Ch Venkaiah Chowdhary, along with a team of officials concerned, inspected several places in Tirumala on Saturday evening.

In his maiden inspection, the Additional EO first visited Narayanagiri Sheds followed by the compartments in Vaikuntham Queue Complex 1 and 2 to understand the various types of darshans being provided to the pilgrims. And also the operation of queue lines including Rs.300, SSD, free darshan, Supadham entry, third line near Tirumala Nambi and other points.

He also personally verified the photo scanning process in the SSD counters and the luggage delivery system. Later in the compartments he inspected the washrooms and instructed the



concerned to keep them clean. He also monitored the distribution of milk by Srivari Sevaks to the pilgrims in the compartments of Vaikuntham 1, 2 and also appreciated the services of Srivari Sevaks.

The Additional EO inspected the Vaikuntham dispensary interacted with the patient undergoing treatment and also inquired about the

medication. The patient replied that his ailment was immediately attended to by the duty doctor and the medical services were satisfactory.

SE 2 Jagadeeshwar Reddy, Temple DyEO Lokanatham, DyEOs Harindranath, Vijayalakshmi, VGO Nandakishore and other officials were present.

Man jumps on railway tracks, crushed under train wheels

PNS ■ MUZAFFARPUR

An unidentified person jumped on the railway tracks and was crushed under the wheels of a speeding train in Bihar, an official said on Saturday. The ghastly incident, which was caught on CCTV cameras installed at Muzaffarpur Junction, took place on Friday evening, and his body with head and limbs dismembered was recovered, Deputy SP, Railway, Nidhi Kumari said.

"The person was on platform number one and jumped into the buffer between two cars of Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express after the train had chugged off and gathered speed," she said. The deputy SP said the mutilated body was sent for post-mortem examinations and a case of unnatural death lodged at the local GRP police station.

EAM: Be robust in combating terrorism in all its forms

Jayashankar at Lao's meeting

PNS ■ VIENTIANE (LAOS)

External Affairs Minister S Jayashankar on Saturday called on the international community to be robust in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and dismantle terror sanctuaries and UN-proscribed terrorism financing networks.

Jayashankar's remarks came as he participated in the 31st ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Laos' capital Vientiane.

"Be robust in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, dismantle terror sanctuaries and UN-proscribed terrorism financing networks and tackle cybercrime. #ARF can make a difference," Jayashankar posted on X about his address at the forum.

He said COVID, conflict



and climate highlight the world's predicament today.

"Solutions can only emerge through Cooperation - economic, political, technological and connectivity," he said.

"Neither the deployment of new technologies nor the interdependence of globalisation must be unfairly leveraged. Only international cooperation can ensure that the global commons is secure and global goods are delivered," he said.

Jayashankar is in the capital of Laos to participate in the meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

He said India strongly supports ASEAN unity, centrality and the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and synergy between India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and

the AOIP.

He said there is a need to recognise the importance of maritime safety and security, freedom of navigation and overflight and peaceful resolution of disputes in the region, in accordance with international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982.

He said the Quad mechanisms in their effort to make the region stable, secure and prosperous through the delivery of people-centric benefits.

In November 2017, India, Japan, the US, and Australia gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the Quad to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence.

Opposition creating false narrative over Budget: Min

PNS ■ JAMMU

Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Saturday said a strong foundation has been laid in the Union Budget to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat-2047' but the opposition was trying to create a 'false narrative' to mislead people.

He claimed the opposition parties' "Constitution in danger" propaganda fell flat during the recent Lok Sabha polls and the same thing will happen this time too.

The opposition parties have accused the Union government of meting out "step-motherly" treatment to states ruled by non-NDA parties and claimed the financial packages to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh showed this was a Budget of "compulsion".

Hitting back at the opposition, the Union minister of law and justice said, "A strong foundation has been laid in the Union Budget for 'Viksit Bharat-2047'."

"Since the names of Bihar and



Andhra Pradesh were mentioned (in the Budget), they are trying to create a false narrative. I come from Rajasthan and its name was not mentioned in the Budget. Does that mean that the state will not get money? When roads are expanded, wouldn't it be done in Rajasthan too?" Meghwal told reporters at the BJP headquarters here.

Opposition parties are deliberately raking up such issues to mislead people, he said at a press conference, also attended by Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief

Ravinder Raina and MP Jugal Kishore.

"They tried such a thing during Lok Sabha elections by claiming that the Constitution is in danger. But the propaganda fell flat as people... their false narrative about the Budget will also not succeed," he said.

Asked about the spike in terror activities in the Union Territory, especially in the Jammu region, Meghwal said peace is a pre-requisite for development and investment anywhere in the world.



Dhankhar laments oppn walkout in RS during PM's speech

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday criticised the opposition walkout during the speech of the prime minister, asserting that he does not belong to any political party but to the entire country.

Dhankhar also rejected suggestions about the Chair's partiality, saying his inclination is towards the basic sentiment of the member towards the Constitution, towards the law and towards the country.

Addressing the new Rajya Sabha members at an orientation programme here, Dhankhar said it hurts when members keep looking for an opportunity to create disruption.

"Political parties decide before the House begins that they will create disruption today. Is it appropriate?" he questioned.

He said such things do not happen in other thriving democracies. "Why here?"

Dhankhar described as deeply concerning the personal attacks and "hit-and-run

strategy" adopted by members to capture attention and "secure newspaper space".

He also said national issues and interests should take precedence over political considerations.

Referring to the walkout staged by the opposition in the Rajya Sabha during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reply on the motion of thanks in the last session, he said the PM does not belong to any political party.

"After six decades, a prime minister came for a third consecutive term. The prime minister does not belong to any political party.

"The prime minister is called the Leader of the House, the PM is of the country. The opposition did not listen to that prime minister in the Rajya Sabha," he said.

Ignoring time constraints, Dhankhar said, he gave more than 1.30 hours to Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and the Leader of the House Jagat Prakash Nadda, and did not let anyone interrupt them during the debate on the motion of thanks.

'Let's build better Bengaluru together'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Saturday called upon Opposition leaders from the city to join hands in building a better Bengaluru. Shivakumar, who is also the Bengaluru Development Minister said "Let's leave our politics at the booth levels and join hands to build a better Bengaluru," while addressing

elected representatives of all political parties representing the city, who cutting across party lines participated in the 'Public Voice-Government Voice' programme at Vidhana Soudha here to discuss the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill and issues concerning the capital city.

"There is nothing to be worried about the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill. The copy is available



with you and you can examine every word of it. We have taken all possible steps to ensure a better future for Bengaluru city. Let's debate and we are open to take your feedback. We have decided to form a House committee on the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill," he said. "Representatives of Opposition parties are here and if you can recommend names from your side, we will form the House commit-

tee this evening itself. We are open for discussion, let us know your thoughts," he added.

According to him, the Bengaluru Development Department is challenging, but they are trying to give a new shape to the city. Kempe Gowda built Bengaluru, Kengal Hanumanthaiah built Vidhana Soudha and SM Krishna made Bengaluru a global city.

Man's intestines bulge out as Bihar GRP beat up railway passengers

PNS ■ SAMASTIPUR (BIHAR)

Government Railway Police personnel brutally beat up a person on board a train in Bihar, causing his intestines to come out as stitches on a recent abdominal surgery got ruptured, an official said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on Thursday evening when the Mumbai-bound Karmbhoomi Express train reached Janakpur Road railway station and two groups of passengers engaged in a heated argument over seats in the train, which forced the GRP personnel to intervene, said a statement issued by the GRP (Muzaffarpur).

The altercation took an ugly turn when a group of passengers, fighting for seats, beat up the GRP personnel, and in retaliation, they "used mild force to disperse the passengers", it said.

The injured person has been identified as Mohamad



Furkaan, who had undergone surgery a few days ago, a police officer said.

Eyewitnesses alleged that GRP personnel resorted to use of batons to disperse the passengers and one cop struck Furkaan on his still-sutured abdomen with a baton, causing bulging out of his intestines.

The GRP authorities have suspended two personnel following the incident and ordered an inquiry into the incident, a senior officer said.

14 terror attacks in J-K since new govt took office at Centre: Priyanka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday expressed concern over the recent terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and called for strict and decisive steps against terrorism.

Her remarks came after a soldier was killed and four others, including a captain, were injured as the Indian Army on Saturday foiled an attack by Pakistan's Border Action Team (BAT) in the Kamakari sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district.

A Pakistani intruder was also killed in the exchange of fire. In a post in Hindi on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "The news of one soldier being martyred and 4 soldiers getting injured in an encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir is extremely saddening."

INDIA CORNER

Students in Kerala schools may soon have bagless days



Children will no longer have to lug hefty backpacks to schools, at least four days a month if the Kerala government decides to go ahead with its new 'bag free days' initiative. In view of increasing complaints about the weight of school bags, the state government is considering various measures to address the concerns of children and parents, General Education Minister V Sivankutty has said. The government would soon take a call on the issue of heavy school bags of students from Class 1 to 12 in the state, he said in a statement on Friday. Several complaints and suggestions are pouring in from parents and those who love the public education system. Sivankutty said the textbooks are already being printed and distributed among the children in the state as two parts, with an objective to alleviate the burden.

Woman Naxalite carrying Rs 8 lakh reward surrenders



A woman Naxalite booked for a murder and an attack on security forces and carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh surrendered before the police and CRPF in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Saturday, officials said. Rina Narote, alias Lalita, was a commander of the 'Tailor Team' and was responsible for logistics in the entire Gadchiroli Division of the CPI (Maoist), police said in a release. The 36-year-old woman Naxalite, a resident of Gadchiroli, is named in a murder case and an attack on security personnel, it said. The Maharashtra government had announced a reward of Rs 8 lakh for her capture. She surrendered before police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials, it said. Police said Narote will receive Rs 5.5 lakh under the policies of the Centre and state for the rehabilitation of surrendered Naxalites. Intensified anti-Maoist operations in the district and the opportunity provided by the state government for Naxalites to "surrender and lead a respectful life" has resulted in 23 hardcore rebels turning themselves in before the Gadchiroli police since 2022.

Man stages kidnapping, seeks Rs 60 lakh ransom from family



A businessman, who his family feared had been abducted for a ransom of Rs 60 lakh, had allegedly faked his kidnapping to repay a loan, police said on Saturday. According to police, Arjun Kumar (35), a flower trader from Basehiya village, reached Colonelganj market on Wednesday evening but did not return home. His family registered a missing person's complaint and teams were deployed to look for him. On Thursday, Kumar's brother Rakesh received a call claiming to have kidnapped the businessman and demanded a ransom of Rs 60 lakh, the police said. Gonda Superintendent of Police (SP) Vineet Jaiswal on Saturday said, "Arjun Kumar was caught by our team in Haridwar where he had fled to stage his kidnapping." Kumar told police he had taken a loan of Rs 31 Lakh without informing his family members. He was unable to pay the loan after suffering losses in the business. "Arjun Kumar staged his kidnapping, hoping that his family members would arrange the ransom, which he would then use to pay his loan. The police will take action against him for this act," said the SP.

'Telecom connectivity in all villages soon'

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Union Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said on Saturday that 100 per cent coverage of villages in terms of telecom connectivity in the country is targeted in the next 12 months.

Scindia, the Union minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), said special funds have been sanctioned by the Cabinet for the purpose and he has himself been monitoring the progress of work every week.

Addressing a press conference here, he said, "The prime minister is committed to 100 per cent saturation. We have identified around 24,000 villages in the country that still



need saturation in terms of telecom connection."

A special scheme to reach all these villages has already been rolled out along with funds sanctioned for the purpose, he said.

Areas in the northeastern states are among these villages, and strategies are being

worked out to reach these places, the minister said.

Provisions of the new telecom Act enable setting up required infrastructure and mixed technologies, like V-sat and satellite, are being utilised with the "target of cent per cent saturation within 12 months", Scindia said.

"I have been monitoring the work on a weekly basis, and 13,000-14,000 of these villages have also been covered," he added.

Scindia also spoke about the allocations for northeastern states in the 2024-25 Union Budget.

"For the past 75 years, North East was treated as an orphan. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi is determined to make the region the engine of

growth," he claimed.

Special funds of about Rs 11,000 crore have been earmarked for flood management in Assam and Sikkim, and 100 new branches of India Post Payments Bank will come up in the region as per provisions of the budget.

Scindia maintained that the region will benefit from the different schemes for women, farmers, youth and economically weaker sections as provided in the budget.

He asserted that the importance given to the region can be gauged from increased monetary allocation to the DoNER ministry, more funds coming through the devolution of central taxes and investment in developing connectivity infrastructure.

DEFAMATION CASE

SC sets aside HC order quashing summons to editors of 'The Wire'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has set aside a Delhi High Court order that quashed a summons issued to the editor and deputy editor of online news portal "The Wire" in a criminal defamation case over a publication on a dossier allegedly depicting the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) here as a "den of organised sex racket".

The complaint was filed by Amita Singh, former professor and chairperson of the Centre for Study of Law and Governance at the JNU, against several people, including the editor and deputy edi-

tor of "The Wire", for allegedly imputing in the April 2016 publication that she had prepared the dossier in question.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Arvind Kumar said the high court, in its March 29, 2023 order, exceeded its jurisdiction.

It said the high court, while finding fault with the reasoning adopted by the magistrate for issuing the summons, went ahead and decided the matter on merit and held that no case for defamation was made out.

"Though arguments have been made at length, we are of the view that the high court has certainly exceeded its jurisdiction."

'Please allow me to pass', says robot Ananya as she serves food

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Standing next to a national highway that connects the southern part of West Bengal to its north, a restaurant resembling a typical village house serves multi-cuisine platter to its patrons. But, it does that in style.

The food is brought to tables from the kitchen not by a human being but by a robot that can walk and talk.

Negotiating turns on its way, the robot named Ananya gently asks anyone blocking its route, "Please let me go. Please don't stand in the way and

allow me to serve."

Painted in white, the robot is about 5 feet tall and has a rectangular 'face' which doubles up as a sensor-driven digital screen to help the kitchen staff transport food ordered by customers sitting at a particular table.

Ananya has wheels but no hands. It also has four shelves placed vertically on which it carries the food. A human staff, waiting at the table, takes out the food from the tray to serve it to the enraptured patron who, more often than not, is found trying to cope with the amazement of a walk-



ing-talking machine standing right next to the table.

If met with a hurdle, the robot can turn right or left without toppling over or spilling the food items, to reach its destination.

"We have four robots, all named Ananya (Invincible), to project the resilience and fighting spirit of every woman. Our restaurant is run entirely by women hailing from the neighbourhood. They take care of everything - from house-keeping to cooking, from handling the cash counter to helping the reception desk. So, we

thought Ananya would be the most appropriate name," said Subhankar Mondal, manager of Mother's Hut restaurant.

The eatery is located near Krishnanagar in Nadia district, around 120 km from Kolkata, beside National Highway 12 (formerly NH 34).

Fast gaining popularity, diners from the metropolis and from neighbouring towns like Barasat, Barrackpore, Kalyani, Ranaghat and Berhampore are flocking to the eating joint to relish the experience of a robot serving them food, Mondal agreed.



THE STORY OF A TIGRESS LEGACY

Explore the journey through the lens of **MANISH KALANI**, a wildlife photographer, as he unveils the legacy of Ranthambore's tigresses, revealing their untold stories and the majesty of their wilderness, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Manish Kalani's *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* is more than just a coffee table book, it's a journey into the heart of Ranthambore National Park and a touching tribute to one of its most iconic residents, Machhli. This book is a celebration of the majestic tigresses who have roamed the park over five generations, captured through Kalani's lens in an eight-year photographic adventure. The book opens with a striking portrait of Machhli, the legendary tigress known as "The Lady of the Lakes." Kalani's photographs capture her in all her glory, her powerful presence, her regal bearing and the deep wisdom in her eyes. Machhli was not just a tigress; she was a symbol of strength and resilience, her story woven into the fabric of Ranthambore's conservation history. Kalani's images of her are infused with a sense of reverence, reflecting the profound impact she had on the park and its tiger population. Machhli's story is central to the book, but Kalani extends his narrative to include her descendants, creating a rich tapestry of the tiger lineage. The book features photographs of Machhli's daughter, Krishna, her granddaughter, Arrowhead and her great-granddaughter, Riddhi.



Each of these tigresses is portrayed with a blend of awe and intimacy. For instance, Arrowhead is shown with her fierce territorial instincts, contrasting with the more complex interactions of Riddhi, who navigates the challenges of her position within the family. Through Kalani's lens, these tigresses come to life as individuals with their own personalities, struggles and triumphs. Kalani's dedication to his craft is evident in every page. His photographs are not just visually stunning; they are imbued with emotion and context. Each image tells a story whether it's a serene moment of rest or an intense interaction with other wildlife. The book is filled with moments that make you feel as though you are right there in the forest, sharing in the experiences of these magnificent animals. The accompanying narratives provide insights into the lives of the tigresses, offering a deeper understanding of their



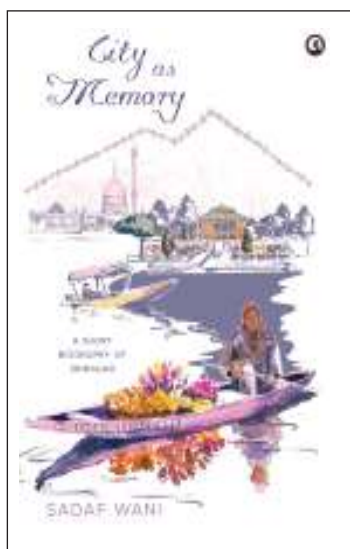
behaviors and relationships. What makes *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* particularly compelling is its role in conservation. Kalani has dedicated the proceeds from the book to the Regal Roar Trust, a tribute to his commitment to the protection of these incredible creatures. This aspect of the book highlights how storytelling can be a powerful tool for change, transforming a beautiful collection of photographs into a means of supporting conservation efforts. The book serves not only as a tribute to the tigresses but also as a call to action for their continued protection. Reading *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* is like taking a personal journey with Kalani into the heart of Ranthambore. It's more than just a visual experience; it's an emotional one. The book invites you to connect with

the tigresses on a deeper level, to feel their struggles and triumphs, and to appreciate the beauty and complexity of their lives. Kalani's passion for wildlife and his respect for the tigers shine through every page, making this book a heartfelt and moving experience. Arguably, *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* is a masterful blend of art and conservation. Manish Kalani's photographic journey offers a window into the lives of Ranthambore's royal tigresses, capturing their beauty, strength and spirit. The book is not only a must-have for wildlife enthusiasts but also serves as an important reminder of the ongoing efforts needed to protect our natural heritage. Through Kalani's eyes, we are reminded of the enduring spirit of Ranthambore's tigers and the crucial role we all play in ensuring their future.

A POIGNANT PORTRAIT OF SRINAGAR'S BEAUTY AND STRUGGLE

Sadaf Wani's *City as Memory* is a heartfelt exploration of Srinagar, where breathtaking beauty and deep-rooted pain exist side by side. Wani shares her personal experiences, creating a vivid picture of a city that is both fascinating and deeply scarred, says **TEAM AGENDA**

Sadaf Wani's *City as Memory - A Short Biography Of Srinagar* offers a deeply personal and insightful look into Srinagar, Kashmir - a city where breathtaking landscapes are often overshadowed by ongoing conflict. Wani blends personal stories with historical context to present a nuanced portrait of Srinagar, revealing how its natural beauty is entwined with its troubled past. The book begins by delving into Srinagar's rich historical backdrop. Founded in 250 BCE by the Buddhist king Ashoka, the city's history is marked by conquest and foreign rule. Wani uses this historical context to set the stage for understanding Srinagar's contemporary struggles. Her childhood memories from the mid-1990s, a period of waning insurgency and increasing militarisation, illustrate how historical forces have shaped the city. The beautiful gardens and serene lakes of Srinagar are persistently overshadowed by the heavy presence of military forces, which are a constant reminder of the city's ongoing issues. As Wani transitions to her teenage years in the early 2000s, the focus shifts to a time of intensified violence and civilian unrest. Her personal experiences during this period offer a close-up view of life in a conflict zone. The contrast between the picturesque Dal Lake and the harsh realities of military checkpoints becomes a powerful symbol of Srinagar's contradictions. Wani's descriptions of restricted access to public spaces and tourist sites shed light on the



psychological and emotional impact of living under constant surveillance. This juxtaposition highlights the deep scars left by ongoing conflict on both the city and its people. Wani's writing seamlessly weaves personal memories with broader historical and political analysis. Her stories reveal how conflict influences both individual identities and public spaces, providing a thoughtful commentary on how political strife shapes a city's character. The contrast between Srinagar's scenic beauty and its troubled reality underscores the city's profound contradictions. Through vivid descriptions and reflective insights, Wani captures a place that is both enchanting and beleaguered.

The cover of the book, illustrated by Zainab Tambawalla, truly brings Srinagar to life. It features a charming cityscape with a mosque, majestic mountains and a serene lake dotted with traditional boats. A delightful "Flower Man" in a shikara adds a touch of local character. The illustration's gentle, watercolor-like style creates a warm, nostalgic feeling, while the subtle barbed wire design hints at the region's complicated past. This artwork beautifully complements Wani's story, offering a vivid, heartfelt glimpse into Srinagar's captivating blend of beauty and struggle. *City as Memory* is more than a recounting of events; it's a profound exploration of Srinagar's complex character. Sadaf Wani's portrayal offers readers a deeper understanding of how beauty and conflict coexist, shaping the lives of its inhabitants. This book is a significant addition to the literature on Kashmir, providing both personal and political perspectives on a city at the crossroads of history and identity. Adding this book to your bookshelf is not just a literary choice but a way to appreciate the intricate relationship between place and memory. Wani's work is a must-read for anyone interested in the interplay between historical conflict and personal experience. It offers a compelling narrative and valuable perspectives that will resonate long after the last page is turned.

Publisher - Aleph Book Company (Rs. 399)

THE HAUNTING PAST

Mamta Sharma's debut novel masterfully intertwines personal loss with a suspenseful mystery, creating a profound narrative of emotional healing and the quest for answer, says **TEAM AGENDA**

Mamta Sharma's *Searching for Sarah* is a compelling narrative that delves into themes of grief, loss and the quest for closure through a gripping mystery. The story begins with Rini, a 34-year-old widow, navigating her life in Mumbai as she deals with the deep-seated sorrow following her husband's untimely death. Her personal journey intertwines with a decades-old mystery that unravels as she embarks on a quest for answers. The novel opens with Rini grappling with the emotional aftermath of her husband's passing. Her life, marked by a pervasive sense of emptiness, is depicted with raw honesty. Rini's struggle to find meaning and solace in her daily existence is palpable as she works as an estate agent, a role that provides her with some distraction from her grief. The routine of her professional life, however, cannot fully shield her from the emotional turmoil she faces. Her sleep is disturbed by recurring nightmares, adding to the weight of her sorrow. The turning point in Rini's life occurs during a routine work trip when she encounters a bungalow that piques her interest. The bungalow, owned by Mr. and Mrs. D'souza, an elderly Christian couple, holds a dark secret from the past. Their daughter, Sarah, disappeared 34 years ago, leaving the couple in a state of perpetual mourning and relentless searching for answers. The disappearance of Sarah has cast a long shadow over their lives, creating an atmosphere of melancholy and unresolved tension. Rini's curiosity is immediately sparked by the

D'souzas' story. The more she learns about Sarah's disappearance, the more she becomes emotionally invested in the case. Sharma effectively uses Rini's growing obsession with the mystery to drive the narrative forward, intertwining Rini's personal grief with the broader mystery of Sarah's vanishing. This dual focus enriches the story, providing a nuanced exploration of how personal loss can intersect with and amplify the search for external truths. As Rini delves deeper into the case, the novel reveals her complex emotional landscape. The investigation forces Rini to confront her own fears and insecurities, mirroring her internal struggle with her husband's death. Sharma's portrayal of Rini's psychological state is both sensitive and profound, illustrating how personal trauma can influence one's actions and decisions. Rini's interactions with the D'souzas and other characters involved in the case are marked by empathy and determination, showcasing her growth as she navigates the intricacies of the mystery. The narrative unfolds with increasing tension as Rini uncovers hidden layers of the case. Sharma crafts a suspenseful plot, filled with unexpected twists and turns, that keeps readers engaged and invested in the outcome. The process of unraveling Sarah's fate is depicted with meticulous detail, reflecting the complexity of real-life investigations where every clue can lead to multiple possibilities. The author's attention to detail enhances the authenticity of the story, making Rini's journey both credible and



captivating. In the "One Year Later" chapter, the novel takes a reflective turn as Rini looks back on the changes that have occurred in her life since her involvement in the case. This chapter provides a poignant conclusion to Rini's emotional arc, highlighting her personal growth and the impact of the investigation on her life. The passage of time allows Rini to evaluate the significance of her journey, offering insights into how the search for answers can lead to personal transformation and healing. In terms of style, Sharma's prose is evocative and often poetic, enhancing the emotional impact of the story. The descriptive passages are not merely visual but also sensory, immersing readers in the sights, sounds, and feelings of the settings. This sensory richness contributes to the novel's immersive quality, making the reader feel as though they are experiencing Rini's world firsthand. Sharma also employs a meticulous and

detailed approach to plot development. The author's careful attention to the investigation into Sarah's disappearance lends credibility to the story and engages readers with its methodical unraveling. The suspenseful elements of the narrative are crafted with precision, maintaining a steady pace that keeps readers invested in the unfolding mystery. Sharma's ability to blend personal grief with a compelling investigative plot showcases her skill in balancing different narrative threads. Sharma's writing throughout *Searching for Sarah* is marked by its emotional depth and character-driven narrative. The author skillfully balances the elements of mystery and psychological exploration, creating a story that resonates on multiple levels. The interplay between Rini's personal struggles and the mystery of Sarah's disappearance adds layers of complexity to the narrative, making it a rich and engaging read. *Searching for Sarah* is a masterful debut by Mamta Sharma that successfully blends elements of crime fiction with a deep psychological exploration. The novel's exploration of grief, loss and the search for closure is handled with sensitivity and insight, making it a standout addition to the genre. Sharma's ability to weave a captivating mystery with a profound emotional journey ensures that *Searching for Sarah* will resonate with readers long after the final page is turned.

Price of the book : Rs.200/- Self Publish and available on Kindle and Amazon



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

A DAZZLING DEBUT IN THE WORLD OF KUCHIPUDI

Aadya Gupta's breathtaking Kuchipudi debut, Rangapravesham, showcased her years of dedication and passion. Guided by the esteemed Drs. Raja Radha Reddy and Guru Kaushalya Reddy, Aadya's performance beautifully highlighted her mastery of the classical art form, illustrating her journey from student to accomplished dancer, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

As one steps into Kamaani Auditorium, they are immediately transported into the heart of a spellbinding Kuchipudi recital - Rangapravesham. This cherished milestone, marking a dancer's formal debut, was brilliantly embodied by Aadya Gupta. Under the esteemed guidance of Padma Bhusan and Padma Shri awardees Drs. Raja Radha Reddy and Guru Kaushalya

Reddy, Aadya's performance was a radiant showcase of her dedication and passion. Her recital not only highlighted years of rigorous training but also celebrated her remarkable journey from an earnest student to a consummate performer. The evening was more than just a performance; it was a celebration of art and tradition that captivated everyone present. The audience's presence in the hall was a tribute to the enduring

appreciation for Kuchipudi, as people from all age groups came together to admire the rich heritage of this classical dance form. The non-stop applause and standing ovation from the audience, spanning from children to elders, underscored the universal appeal and excellence of Aadya's performance. This enthusiastic response highlighted not only her individual talent but also the remarkable mentorship of her Gurus.



The evening's celebration was enhanced by a meticulous attention to detail in every aspect of the performance. The light design added a captivating depth to the visual experience, enhancing the emotional impact of the dance. The costumes and makeup, elegant and alluring, played a crucial role in bringing the traditional essence of Kuchipudi to life, ensuring that each movement was complemented by its visual presentation.

A particularly magical aspect of the performance was the live orchestra, whose contribution was essential to the recital's success. The musicians created a soothing and heavenly auditory experience, particularly in the Raga Ragamaalika, which accompanied the piece "Chhaap Tilak Sab Cheeni." The harmonious balance and deeply devotional quality of the music elevated Aadya's performance, creating a rich, immersive experience that resonated deeply with the audience. The symbiotic relationship between the dancer and the musicians underscored the true essence of classical performance, highlighting the integral role of live music in enhancing the beauty and emotional depth of the dance.

The program featured a range of pieces that demonstrated Aadya's mastery over Kuchipudi's expressive depth and technical brilliance. She began with "Shree Venkateshwara Stothram," a devotional piece that set a serene tone for

the evening. This was followed by "Jatthikattu" in Raag Maand and Taal Khandha Chapu, a dynamic dance that showcased her precision and rhythmic mastery. One of the evening's highlights was "Bhamakalapam," a narrative dance that vividly portrayed Satyabhama's intense love for Krishna. Aadya's nuanced performance captured the emotional complexity of the character, showcasing her ability to convey deep emotions through her dance. Her rendition of "Chhaap Tilak Sab Cheeni," a poem by the 14th-century Sufi mystic Amir Khusro, was another standout, blending romantic and devotional themes in a mesmerizing performance. The recital concluded with "Tarangam," a traditional Kuchipudi piece celebrating Lord Krishna's childhood stories.

Aadya's skillful execution of intricate footwork on a brass plate was a breathtaking display of her virtuosity and command over the dance form. Drs. Raja and Radha Reddy, along with Kaushalya Reddy, have played a pivotal role in promoting Kuchipudi globally. Their unique choreographic style and ability to blend tradition with modern sensibilities have garnered them numerous accolades. Natya Tarangini,

founded in 1976, stands as a testament to their dedication and vision, nurturing countless dancers over the years.

Aadya's journey, shaped by the disciplined and compassionate guidance of her Gurus, reflects the transformative power of Kuchipudi. The institute's focus on technical precision and emotional depth has enabled her to perform on prestigious platforms across India. This debut marks not just an achievement but a new beginning for Aadya, promising greater heights in her dance journey.

Aadya Gupta's Rangapravesham was a radiant celebration of her talent and dedication. The performance, accentuated by beautiful lighting, elegant costumes and a supportive audience, was a seamless blend of technical brilliance and emotional depth. The live orchestra's contribution added a magical dimension, making the evening an immersive experience that highlighted the essence of Kuchipudi.

The overwhelming appreciation from attendees, coupled with the meticulous execution of every element of the recital, left a lasting impression. With the unwavering support of her family, friends and mentors, Aadya is poised to achieve even greater success in her future endeavors.



A Celebration of Connection

M-tastic's inaugural Mother & Kids Exhibition offers a perfect blend of quality shopping and interactive fun. This vibrant event celebrates the special bond between mothers and children, featuring curated products and engaging activities that create unforgettable family moments, says **TEAM AGENDA**



Nagpal. Her decision to offer this service at no charge underscores the significance of such exhibitions in providing small businesses with a valuable platform. Vaishali's work adds glamour to the day and highlights how events like M-tastic play a crucial role in supporting the visibility and growth of emerging brands. This commitment enriches the experience for all attendees.

Another highlight is the variety of stalls. Rakhi stands by a mother-daughter duo buzzing with activity as children eagerly choose their favourite designs, reflecting the creativity and personal touch of the event. The Ritwik Collection, featuring handmade tote bags and file folders crafted by a mother-son duo, exemplifies collaborative creativity and practical products from small businesses. M-tastic's dedication to a holistic experience is evident in its food offerings. Health-conscious parents will appreciate the homemade bakery items and granola bites from Pinks & Grumps, crafted without preservatives. Sanchita's Gourmet Medleys provides a selection of additive-free snacks, including Nutri Hexas cheese basil crackers and Millet Murukku. This focus on wholesome, artisanal products underscores the organizer's commitment to creating a nurturing environment for families.

In essence, M-tastic's Mother & Kids Exhibition resonates with laughter, joy and discovery. It has set a new standard for family-centric celebrations and illuminated the beauty of shared experiences. Families leave with hands full of delightful finds and hearts brimming with cherished memories, experiencing a renewed sense of wonder and connection. M-tastic's dedication to thoughtful curation and the joy of family moments ensures that this exhibition will be remembered as a radiant chapter in the story of family celebrations.

In a world where family moments meet unforgettable experiences, M-tastic's inaugural Mother & Kids Exhibition has set a new benchmark for joy and connection. This enchanting event celebrates the special bond between mothers and their children, blending quality shopping, imaginative play and creative activities into a magical experience for families. Founded by Suryashi Juneja and Surbhi Sachdeva, the exhibition reflects their combined expertise and passion. Suryashi, a seasoned chartered accountant with a background in logistics, and Surbhi, who holds dual MBAs and extensive corporate experience, have crafted an event dedicated to enhancing family life. Their goal is to bridge the gap between emerging homegrown brands and discerning parents, providing a premier platform for quality brands and enthusiastic parents to connect and discover. The exhibition features a curated selection of products catering to every child's needs. Visitors are greeted with chic clothing, imaginative toys, innovative educational tools and stylish accessories. Highlights include the Norah Kids Collection and PNK by

Isha Arora, which offer adorable pink dresses capturing the essence of childhood wonder. Tiny COCO adds to the excitement with its chic finds for little minds, appealing to both children and their parents. Beyond shopping, the event is a celebration of creativity and fun. Children can participate in art workshops, science experiments, dynamic STEM projects and cupcake decorating. Face painting, gel nail art and a dedicated play area provide endless entertainment, while older kids enjoy exciting games. The creative free art corner stands out, allowing children to express their artistic talents and share special moments with their families. Seeing their faces light up with joy and concentration highlights the simple yet profound pleasures of childhood. A standout feature is the face painting, adding a special touch of joy to the event. Children and mothers are thrilled to see their favourite stars and characters come to life with vibrant designs. A particularly heartwarming sight was a little girl with a doll painted on her face in sparkling glitter, capturing the fun and creativity that define the exhibition. The event also includes free nail art by the talented Vaishali

Discover the Depths of Abstraction

Tejinder Kanda's latest exhibition is a vivid exploration of the human psyche, inviting viewers to delve into the realm of self-discovery through a mesmerising display of abstract artistry

BY **TEAM AGENDA**

Tejinder Kanda's latest exhibition, "In-Within," at the Shridharani Art Gallery, is a profound exploration of the human psyche through abstract art. Kanda, a celebrated contemporary artist known for his evocative and thought-provoking pieces, continues to push the boundaries of abstraction with this new series. The exhibition features 32 artworks, each painted with acrylic on canvas, offering viewers an opportunity to engage with art that is both visually stunning and deeply introspective. Kanda's work in this exhibition showcases a mastery of abstract techniques, utilising impasto methods and a vibrant palette to create canvases that evoke a powerful emotional response. The use of impasto techniques adds a tactile dimension to his work, inviting viewers to experience the paintings not just visually, but almost physically. This adds depth and complexity, drawing the audience into the layered and textured world Kanda creates. The swirling strokes and tonal gradations are reminiscent of the Abstract Expressionist movement, echoing the work of artists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. However, Kanda's approach is distinct in its exploration of the "unidentified and unknown," pushing beyond the traditional confines of abstraction.

Kanda's versatility as an artist is evident in his wide range of influences and mediums. While this exhibition focuses on acrylic paintings, Kanda's artistic practice extends to vibrant silk-screen prints and ceramics, showcasing his ability to adapt and explore various forms of artistic expression. This diversity is a monument to Kanda's commitment to exploring the creative process in its many facets, providing a richer context for understanding his work. It also speaks to his broader artistic philosophy that art is not confined to a single medium or style, but is a continually evolving dialogue between artist, material,



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

and audience. The palette in "In-Within" is notably varied, ranging from earthy tones of reds and browns to cool blues, purples and greens. This wide spectrum of color not only reflects Kanda's skillful use of color theory but also the emotional depth of his work. He also incorporates pinks, pastels and yellows, which are traditionally seen as more feminine colors. However, Kanda employs them with a vigorous application and powerful strokes that inject a masculine energy into his paintings, subverting traditional color associations.

This interplay of color and technique creates a dynamic tension in the artwork, allowing viewers to experience a range of emotions from calmness and contentment to intensity and excitement. One of the most compelling aspects of Kanda's work is his ability to capture the passage of time and emotion. The fluid application of watered-down acrylics allows him to layer colors in a way that reflects his emotions and thoughts at the moment of creation. This technique gives his work a sense of immediacy and authenticity, inviting viewers to

connect with the artist's emotional journey. It's as if each painting captures a fleeting moment in Kanda's personal exploration of his own psyche, offering a glimpse into his inner world.

The exhibition is curated by Georgina Maddox, who highlights the transformative power of abstraction in Kanda's work. Maddox emphasises how abstraction goes beyond the physical realm, allowing viewers to connect with the intangible essence of the world. In this regard, Kanda's work invites the audience to engage in a shared journey of self-discovery. His art dissolves the boundaries between the physical and the metaphysical, revealing the true essence of the human experience. In "In-Within," Tejinder Kanda offers more than just an art exhibition; he provides a profound and introspective experience that invites viewers to look beyond the surface and engage with the deeper layers of meaning and emotion embedded in his work. This series represents a significant milestone in Kanda's artistic journey, as he delves into the depths of his psyche, translating his internal exploration into a visually stunning and emotive body of work. The exhibition is a tribute to Kanda's skill and creativity, offering a compelling exploration of the human condition that is both intimate and universal. "In-Within" offers a unique opportunity to experience the transformative power of abstract art in a profoundly personal and meaningful way.

NDA govt to continue on path laid down in last 10 yrs: Goyal

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government will continue on the path that it laid down over the last 10 years and assured the market not to worry over it being a coalition government.

Speaking at an event here, Goyal also sounded optimistic about India becoming a US\$ 5-trillion economy within the third term of the Modi Government.

"Let me assure you that this is certainly a strong coalition government. All our partners are very strongly aligned with us. And you have absolutely no reason to worry of any uncertainties or any other," Goyal said.

For the next five years, the minister said, "This will be a strong government, which will focus on the nation first, which will work for national interests and will never have to compromise on our principles."



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will work for national interests and will never have to compromise on our principles."

The government's fight against corruption will also

remain strong and India's position in the world will also grow stronger going forward, he added.

"As far as the priorities of this

government are concerned, I think it will be a government which will continue on the path that we have laid down over the last 10 years. So, you look at our story of 10 years and look at the direction that this budget is placed before all," Goyal stated. Stating that one thinks big, unless one has whole targets to achieve one can never go for transformational outcomes or big outcomes, he said, "I'm glad that the nation as a whole has decided to progress from 3.5-trillion dollar economy, now the fifth largest in the world, to 5-trillion dollar."

He said that in his own estimate, the target of US\$ 5-trillion will happen "within the third term of the Modi government, possibly the next three-and-a-half years. By which time (it) will also be the third largest economy in the world given that our fourth and fifth current economies are not in the best of shape."



About 151 GW renewable capacity under implementation across nation: Joshi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Renewable energy projects of about 151 GW capacity are under various stages of implementation in the country, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has said.

The Minister for New and Renewable Energy further said that around 76.42 GW of renewable energy capacity will be operationalized in next 3-4 years.

"The government is taking several initiatives to prioritise renewable energy. Nearly 151 GW of renewable projects are being implemented, and 76.42 GW will be operationalized in

3-4 years," he said addressing a session at Mercom India Renewables Summit 2024 at the national capital on Friday.

The tendering process for 76.42 GW capacity of projects has already been completed, the minister said.

The renewable energy capacity has increased over 2.5 times from 76 GW in 2014 to more than 195 GW as of June 2024, Joshi said.

The solar power capacity witnessed a steep jump from just 3 GW in 2014 to more than 85 GW now while wind power capacity increased from 21 GW to more than 46 GW, the minister added.

Govt to decide on sugar MSP hike in coming days: Food Secy

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The government is likely to take a decision on increasing the minimum selling price

Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said on Saturday.

Speaking on the sidelines of a conference organised by All India Sugar Trade Association

In the coming days, we will hopefully take a call."

MSP of sugar has remained unchanged at Rs 31 per kg since 2019, despite annual hikes in the fair and remunerative price (FRP) paid to sugarcane farmers. Industry bodies, including National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCFSF), have urged the government to raise the MSP to at least Rs 42 per kg to help mills sustain operations amid rising production costs. Chopra noted that sugar production for the 2024-25 season (October-September) looks promising, with the area sown to sugarcane increasing to 58 lakh hectare so far from 57 lakh hectare during the same period last year.

For the 2023-24 season, sugar production is estimated at 32 million tonne, lower than 32.8 million tonne in the previous season, but sufficient to meet the domestic demand of 27 million tonne.

'A key step towards building new India'

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary on Saturday said that this year's budget is an important step towards building a new India, and is dedicated to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chaudhary, who was in Gorakhpur on Saturday, in a post on X in Hindi, said, "Addressed the media friends in a specially organized press conference on Budget-2024 in Gorakhpur. This budget is an important step towards building a new India. It is dedicated to the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji and building a new India."

Speaking with reporters at the Circuit House, Chaudhary emphasized that this year's budget has been crafted by keeping the interests of the citizens in mind.

"GST has been reduced, and significant relief has been provided in the tax slabs," he said. The 2024-25 budget aims to transform India into a devel-

oped nation by 2047, focusing on four key areas: women, the poor, farmers, and youth.

"This budget is entirely dedicated to employment and business. It is designed to boost GDP growth and create

"The overall budget has been increased, including the Railway Budget. The opposition should acknowledge these improvements," he said.

He assured that Uttar Pradesh has received a signif-



job opportunities, while also further developing the education sector. This year's budget is inclusive of all regions and sections of society," he said.

On the comparison between Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Chaudhary criticized the opposition for not highlighting the positive aspects.

icant budget allocation when analysed department-wise.

The Union minister reiterated that the budget has been increased across various sectors, including agriculture, education, and the military, reinforcing the government's commitment to comprehensive development.



(MSP) of sugar within the next few days, Union Food

(AISTA), Chopra said, "We are discussing the MSP (proposal).

ICICI Bank Q1 profit rises 10% to Rs 11,696 cr



PNS ■ MUMBAI

ICICI Bank on Saturday reported 9.96 per cent increase in June quarter consolidated net profit at Rs 11,695.84 crore.

The company had logged a profit of Rs 10,636.12 crore in the same period of 2023-24.

On a standalone basis, the country's second-largest private sector lender reported 14.62 per cent rise in profit at

Rs 11,059 crore as against Rs 9,648.2 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 45,998 crore in April-June FY25 from Rs 38,763 crore a year ago, as per an exchange filing by the lender. Expenses jumped to Rs 29,973 crore from Rs 24,624 crore.

Overall provisions came in at Rs 1,332.18 crore as against Rs 1,292.44 crore for the year-ago period, and Rs 718.49 crore in the March quarter.

India steel production to cross 300MT by 2030: Official

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Expressing optimism in steel demand amid headwinds, a senior central government official said on Saturday that the domestic production is likely to cross 300 million tonnes by 2030.

The ministry also does not foresee any hurdles in capacity addition due to decarbonisation efforts in the steel sector and will soon release a draft roadmap seeking public opinion to reduce the carbon footprint in the steel sector, which accounts for 12 per cent of total emissions, Steel Secretary Nagaendra Nath Sinha said.

"The current steel demand remains strong with infrastructure push from the government and expecting a growth of about 10 per cent. The GDP is



also growing robustly, and with continued emphasis on infrastructure from both government and private sectors, steel demand will continue to stay strong," Sinha said, while addressing members of the Bharat Chamber of Commerce (BCC).

Finished steel output during 2023-24 was 138.5 million tonnes, up 12.4 per cent year-on-year. To achieve 300 million

tonnes of installed capacity, a CAGR of 12 per cent would be required.

From January to April 2024, steel production was 49.5 million tonnes, a jump of 8.5 per cent, BCC president N G Khaitan said.

Sinha also stated that some steel makers were not reporting production and sales data accurately, and the ministry feels there are gaps. He urged

companies to report correctly to support policy framing.

The steel makers complain of several headwinds like iron ore shortage, cheap steel imports and policy shortcomings.

The steel makers of eastern India raised serious concerns about iron ore shortages in the sector and suggested several steps to address the 53 million tonne iron ore shortage in the Indian steel industry.

Asked about steel import concerns from the industry, Sinha said imports in quantity are only 5 per cent of consumption, but there are complaints about hot-rolled coil from Vietnam, which the Directorate General of Trade Remedies, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has taken up.

Coal India arrests declining trend in UG production after 14 year

PNS ■ KOLKATA

For the first time in 14 years, Coal India Limited (CIL) reversed the declining trend in underground (UG) coal production.

The company reported an output of 26.021 million tonnes for FY 2024, surpassing the previous fiscal year's production of 25.487 MT, marking a y-o-y growth of 2.10 per cent, Chairman P M Prasad told shareholders in its latest annual report.

Modern technology and equipment have helped reverse the declining trend of output, officials said.

CIL deployed six continuous miners as part of its strategy to enhance UG mechanization using mass production technology.

RBI selects 5 entities under its regulatory sandbox scheme

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has selected five entities, including Indian Banks' Digital Infrastructure Company and Signzy Technologies, to test products they have offered under the regulatory sandbox scheme.

Regulatory sandbox usually refers to live testing of new products or services in a controlled/test regulatory environment for which regulators may (or may not) permit certain relaxations for the limited purpose of the testing.

The Reserve Bank received 25 applications, of which five have been selected for the Test Phase.

Connecting dot Consultancy, Epifi Technologies and Finagg Technologies are the other entities that will commence

testing their solutions from August 2024, the RBI said in a statement.

The solution of Connectingdot Consultancy aims to provide high accuracy in predicting loan defaults by segregating the loan portfolios into high, medium and low-risk categories.

Epifi Technologies' solution allows the digital opening of NRE/NRO accounts through video KYC and identity validations, thus enabling a seamless account opening experience for NRIs.

The solution being proposed by Finagg Technologies is a blockchain-based deep-tier vendor financing solution that enables financing for MSMEs, which are part of the procurement supply chain of large enterprises commonly referred to as anchors.

India needs to avoid the Middle-Income trap: NITI document

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Upgrading capabilities in manufacturing and logistics and bridging the gap between rural and urban incomes are some of the structural challenges that India needs to address, according to a document prepared by NITI Aayog.

In the document titled 'Vision for Viksit Bharat @ 2047: An Approach Paper, the Aayog said India needs to avoid the Middle-Income trap and carefully work towards breaking out of it. This document was discussed during NITI Aayog's ninth Governing Council meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It noted that the country needs to achieve a balance between energy, security, access, affordability and sustainability. The document said improving the competitiveness of



The document said improving the competitiveness of industry is equally necessary for the transformation of the country's agricultural workforce into an industrial workforce and making India a global manufacturing and service hub

industry is equally necessary for the transformation of the country's agricultural workforce into an industrial workforce and making India a global manufacturing and service hub.

Noting that a vision for India cannot be the work of a few individuals or of one govern-

ment, the document said it has to be the result of the collective efforts of the entire nation. According to the document, India is at a turning point in its history and the 21st century can be India's century, as the country pole-vaults into the future confident of its capabilities.

MONEY MATTERS

NTPC Q1 profit grows 12% to over Rs 5,500 cr



State-owned NTPC on Saturday posted 12 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 5,506.07 crore for the June quarter, mainly on the back of higher income. In the year-ago period, its net profit stood at Rs 4,907.13 crore, the company said in an exchange filing. Total income rose to Rs

48,981.68 crore from Rs

43,390.02 crore in the same period a year ago. Expenses stood at Rs 41,844.18 crore against Rs 36,963.61 crore a year ago.

NTPC's consolidated power generation rose to 114 billion units (BUs) in Q1 FY25 from 104 billion units in Q1 FY24. On standalone basis, the company reported a net profit of Rs 4,511 crore, around 11 per cent higher as against Rs 4,066 crore in the year-ago period. Total income was at Rs 45,053 crore as against Rs 39,681 crore in April-June 2023-24. The company's standalone power generation was at 98 billion units, higher from 88 billion units in the year-ago period.

PNB records its highest ever quarterly profit of Rs 3,252 cr



Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Saturday reported its highest ever quarterly standalone profit at Rs 3,252 crore in April-June FY25 helped by decline in bad loans and improvement in interest income. The state-owned bank had posted a net profit of Rs 1,255 crore in June quarter FY24. This is the highest ever quarterly profit

recorded by the bank on account of improvement in various parameters, including net interest income, recovery and CASA, Managing Director Atul Kumar Goel said. Total income in the quarter rose to Rs 32,166 crore from Rs 28,579 crore in the same period a year ago. The lender's interest income also increased to Rs 28,556 crore from Rs 25,145 crore in the same quarter a year ago, as per a regulatory filing. Net Interest Income (NII) increased to Rs 10,476 crore in Q1 FY25 from Rs 9,504 crore earlier, showing an improvement of 10.23 per cent.

Dr Reddy's Q1 profit dips marginally to Rs 1,392 cr



Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Saturday said its consolidated profit after tax dropped marginally to Rs 1,392 crore for the first quarter ended June 30,

2024. The drug major had reported a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 1,402 crore in the April-June quarter of last fiscal. Revenue stood at Rs 7,673 crore for the first quarter against Rs 6,738 crore in the year-ago period, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a regulatory filing. "We had a good start to the new fiscal year and our growth & profitability were mainly driven by our generics business," Dr Reddy's Co-Chairman and MD, G V Prasad said. The company continues to strengthen its core businesses and have made strategic investments in biologics, consumer healthcare and innovation to drive patient impact and value creation, he added. North American generics business revenues rose by 20 per cent year on year to Rs 3,846 crore for the first quarter as against Rs 3,200 crore in the year-ago period.

More than 5 cr ITRs filed so far this fiscal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax department on Saturday said more than 5 crore I-T returns have been filed on the e-filing portal, an 8 per cent increase over last year.

It further said that Infosys has been instructed to ensure

uninterrupted services and the company has assured uninterrupted services during the e-filing peak period.

"More than 5 crore ITRs for AY 2024-25 have already been received on the e-filing portal of the Income Tax Department till 26th of July 2024.

Goa's per capita income has increased manifold: CM

PNS ■ PANAJI

Goa's per capita income has increased to Rs 5,96,260 in 2022-23 from Rs 2,41,893 in the year 2013-14, portraying a robust and healthy economy, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told a Niti Aayog meeting in Delhi on Saturday.

Sawant said the GSDP of the smallest state has swelled to Rs 74,157.92 crore in 2020-21 from Rs 38,120.02 crore in 2013-14 and Goa has emerged as the most preferred international tourist destination. "The per capita income of Goa has increased manifold from Rs 2,41,893 in the year 2013-14 to Rs 5,96,260 in 2022-23 (Q)," the chief minister told the 9th governing council meeting of the think tank, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Goa's GDP at current prices for the year 2022-23 (Quick Estimates) is Rs 93,672.38 crore compared to Rs 84,266.24 crore in the year 2021-22 (provisional esti-

mates), which reflects an 11.16 per cent growth as against 13.63 per cent in 2021-22, the chief minister stated.

Sawant recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the 8th governing council meeting wherein he had urged states to strive towards doubling their GDP.

"It gives me immense pleasure to state that, in the centennial year of Independence, Goa is poised to have its GSDP increased by two-and-a-half times," he said. Sawant said Goa has become a tourist hub for international festivals and events, emerging as the most preferred international tourist destination.

"Goa witnessed a footfall of 88.46 lakh tourists in 2023-24 of which 4.14 lakh were international tourists," he said.

Sawant stated India has emerged as the medical tourism hub of the world providing cost-effective treatments with the latest technology enabled by several path-breaking reforms and provisions.

MEDITERRANEAN WONDERS MARRIED TO MAGIC OF MIXOLOGY!

AARTI SREENATH

Tucked away in the heart of Hyderabad, beneath the sprawling embrace of a magnificent Banyan tree, lies Olive Bistro, a sanctuary where culinary magic and time itself seem to pause. This alfresco haven transcends the ordinary, inviting guests into a world where every meal is a timeless adventure and the outside world's chaos melts into distant memory.

Chef Dhruv Oberoi, a maestro of progressive Mediterranean cuisine, orchestrated a menu that was both innovative and rooted in tradition. Each dish was a proof of his allegiance to local, seasonal produce and sustainable practices. The pop-up experience, beginning from July 22 to August 31, promises to be an unforgettable experience that marries innovation and comfort with Mediterranean marvels and mixology magic. The *Amla and Aam-Aada salad*, a vibrant medley of amla, green mango and seasonal leaves—a refreshing start. The *Aam-Aada* dressing, sour cheese and poppy seed pistachios elevated this simple salad into a culinary masterpiece.

For the non-vegetarians, the *Duck and Aam-Aada salad* was a revelation! The smoky richness of

the duck and the crunch of poppy seed pistachios, created a harmonious blend of flavours that danced on the palate.

The small plates at Olive Bistro were a celebration of culinary artistry. The Himalayan Cheese and Jamun, a delicate soufflé served with pickled jamun and candied salted walnuts, is a delightful fusion of sweet and savoury. The Goat and Aubergine, with its minced Sirohi goat and quail egg "Kuffeh" meatballs, served with smoked aubergine labneh and pickled ivy gourd, was another symphony of textures and flavours. The Seawood and Avocado dish, featuring avocado and apple in a Himalayan ginger and tahini dressing, paired with marinated seaweed and a lentil cracker, was both refreshing and satisfying! The Andaman Tuna and Seawood, amidst its fresh tuna crudo, Himalayan ginger and tahini dressing, served with marinated seaweed and a lentil cracker, was a demonstration to the chef's ability to highlight the purity of each ingredient.

The main courses at Olive Bistro

were nothing short of spectacular. The Tahini and Sea Bass, featuring tahini miso-baked Chilean sea bass, smoked root puree and crispy



buckwheat, was a delicate balance of flavours and textures. The Chef's Edition pasta was a must-try! The Algae and Pici, with their hand-rolled thick spaghetti cooked in a seaweed beurre blanc emulsion, topped with a fried egg, were both luxurious and comforting. The Cuttlefish and Pici, with its charred squid and Goan chorizo creme, was a bold and adventurous dish that left a lasting impression.

No meal at Olive Bistro was complete without indulging in their decadent desserts. Jamun and Almonds, a caramelised Basque cheesecake baked with almond frangipane, served with jamun compote and almond turrón crunch, was a sweet symphony that ends

the meal on a high note. The Rum and Coffee Tiramisu Picnic Basket, among its coffee and rum-soaked sponge and mascarpone trifle, was a dreamy dessert that transported us to a picnic in the clouds.

Barkeep Harish Chhimwal's cocktails were the perfect accompaniment to this culinary journey! From the Hibiscus and Rosa Teq, with their tea-infused Patron Reposado and house-smoked rose cordial, to the Athena, a zesty blend of Bombay Sapphire, Funnell vermouth, lime and orange liqueur, each drink was crafted with precision and passion. The Tripoli Punch, with Patron Reposado, Italian Vermouth, hibiscus cordial and citrus zest, was a refreshing and invigorating drink that complements the rich flavours of the food.

The Olive, Hyderabad X Olive Delhi pop-up was not just a dining experience; it was a sensation that left an indelible mark on our palate.

FOOD
Must try - Himalayan cheese soufflé, hand rolled thick spaghetti

DECOR
Aesthetically pleasing for outdoor sitting, perfect for a white bohemian setting!

PRICE
Rs. 1,800 for two people (approx.)

VERDICT
★★★★★

A PEEK AT LEBANESE INDULGENCE

Novotel Hyderabad Airport (NHA), hosted the Lebanese Indulgence, with the celebrated Chef Jameela Ghani until July 28th, 2024, at the Food Exchange. The event celebrated the rich tapestry of Lebanese cuisine, offering guests a journey through its flavours and culture. Chef Jameela who is renowned for her expertise in Syrian, Lebanese and Middle Eastern cuisine brought her culinary mastery to this event.

The menu featured a diverse array of dishes, from mezze platters and grilled meats to traditional stews and flavourful vegetarian options. This culinary extravaganza highlighted Hummus, Shorbat Adas, Kusa Ma Jibin and Rubiyan Ma Fle among other dishes as well as Knafae, Mahalabia and Baklava—the delectable dessert platter.

The ambience at the Lebanese Food Indulgence was vibrant and meticulously crafted to reflect the essence of Lebanese culture, complemented by live music that creates a perfect backdrop for an exceptional dining experience.



WHAT'S NEW

PRAUSH BEAUTY
Here is an exciting way with new Praush Luxe Matte Liquid Lipsticks you can dazzle non-stop, all day long! They are extremely long lasting with a 10 hour stay, giving you a refreshing look throughout the day. The lipstick comes in 9 flattering shades to give you a flawless look for every occasion and at all times.
Price: ₹850/-

TYPE BEAUTY LIGHT UP LIPSTICK
World's first anti-pigmentation lipstick that also heals and hydrates lips, a smooth creamy, pigmented Light Up Lipstick will last up to 8 hours, leaving your lips totally nourished and visibly brighter!
Price: Rs 999/-

BOUJEE BEAUTY
Sehzadi mini lipstick combo has four enchanting lipstick shades - Noor, Pyari, Angel and Queen from the majestic warmth of browns of the sweet allure.
Price - 599/-

SWISS BEAUTY SELECT HIGH ON SHINE LIPSTICK
The High on Shine Lipstick brings a touch of luxury to everyday wear with its mirror-shine finish. It offers a glazed-lip effect that lasts for over 6 hours without smudging or bleeding. Available in 11 diverse and intensely pigmented shades, these lipsticks provide full coverage in a single swipe.
Price: INR 410/-

Try the best long-lasting lipsticks for **World Lipstick Day** to make wearing your trademark colour easier, whether it's a powerful crimson you want to last the entire day or a rosy nude you swipe on for work!

DEFI BEAUTY LIP SUEDE
Suede matte, non-transfer formula that delivers a weightless dose of colour in an easy glide-on texture. It's so hydrating and comfortable, you will forget you are wearing it.
Price - 975/-

THE BODY SHOP PEPTALK LIPSTICK
This lipstick is your finishing touch, a dash of moisturisation added in no time and a quick hint of colour applied on the way to brunch, all in one compact, travel-friendly, refillable case. The best of both worlds, this lipstick is a blend of matte and satin with a velvet finish, providing the color payoff and coverage of a heavy-duty lipstick without that tacky feeling. Not too shiny, but not too matte either.
Price: INR 1095/-

LOVE LOUD WITH YSL BEAUTY
In the spirit of Yves Saint Laurent, who redefined modernity with uncompromising audacity, YSL Beauty continues its mission to empower and inspire women worldwide. It's Rouge Pur Couture Lipstick is a luxurious range in bold, daring shades, tailored to complement Indian skin tones and make a powerful statement.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE JULY 21 - 27

ARIES
Your relationship will deepen. There may be challenges in direct communication. New project approval will bring new opportunities. Financial worries may arise.

TAURUS
Your efforts pay off, allowing you to relax. Tenacity will ensure success. Complex situations arise. Expect help from coworkers. Beware of anxiety and false friends.

GEMINI
You'll be attracted to someone with whom you'll share your thoughts. Career goals may be hard to achieve. Family disputes may arise from poor communication.

CANCER
Your hard work pays off. Avoid high expectations from siblings. Self-improvement is key. Friends and relatives will help. A close friendship may become lifelong.

LEO
Siblings resolve misunderstandings. Your peculiarities will prove advantageous. Balance work and family time. Avoid seclusion. Your innovative nature enlivens life.

clickastro
#FuturePositive

VIRGO
Minor setbacks won't hinder your progress. Face all situations calmly. Help your children. Avoid ego and pride. Think positively. Charitable efforts will succeed.

LIBRA
Your experimental ability wins your superiors' praise. Engage with influential people to overcome negativity. Patience aids in problem-solving. Expect opposition.

SCORPIO
You'll reveal your heart to someone new. Stay calm at times of mental stress. Friends' support will help you achieve your dreams. Use your survival skills wisely.

SAGITTARIUS
Your experimental nature gains attention. Stay calm during emotional blowups. Persevere despite delayed support. Innovate to enjoy life. Focus on your future.

CAPRICORN
New project ideas emerge; experiment to choose the best. Minor setbacks won't deter you. Engage with influential people. Patience and tenacity aid progress.

AQUARIUS
Be open to others' ideas and consult responsibly before innovations. Proceed with long-held plans as signs are favourable. Friend support helps achieve dreams.

PISCES
You might appear unreliable but remain enthusiastic. Novel ideas need coworker support. The family relies on you; expect exhaustion. Your loyalty brings support.

Peace returns with 'Prasanna Kutir' concept

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Readers, you may be surprised to learn that the worldwide wellness tourism market is currently valued at \$651 billion and that it is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 16.6% through 2027. Well, well, the industry enhances the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of tourists while also delivering long-term advantages to the local, regional and urban economies. But let us find some spiritual solace with fresh concepts together in this piece!

Immersion in a sanctuary created to support your mind, body and spirit—you could find that a wellness retreat is the ideal location to get away from life's everyday stresses. A wellness retreat that guides you on a transformative journey of wellbeing—and what if its name is connected to the tranquility you've been seeking—only seems like a cherry on the cake, is it not? "Ekaanta," that's correct, yes. Putting forward a special fusion of modern science and antique knowledge, through movement, energy renewal and mental calmness, you can reestablish your connection with yourself, others and the natural world in such places.

Over the past several years, there has been a noticeable increase in the popularity of travel themes that emphasise mental wellbeing, which is indicative of a larg-

er cultural movement to value self-care and mental health. But a travel trend like this encompasses a variety of activities and locations created especially to support mental, emotional and spiritual health! Two factors are driving this trend: the desire for more genuine experiences that foster a stronger sense of self and the stress and burnout that come with today's fast-paced lifestyle.

Inspired by peace and quiet, a wellness retreat embraces a mindfulness and self-discovery philosophy. Giving a posh environment where people may discover more about themselves, form deep connections and regenerate in the stunning scenery of nature—being in charge of the industry still in demand! The word *Ekaanta*, which means seclusion in Sanskrit, denotes a place where one can find serenity without feeling alone. These retreats' surrealistic ideas of detoxification and the allure of discovering inner peace are the reasons behind their trend.

As part of the larger movement towards holistic wellness and the pursuit of real, life-changing experiences, indigenous healing has become more and more well-known with these getaways. These experiences offer healing methods that have been established and handed down through the decades, drawing on the wisdom and customs of indigenous cultures worldwide. Reconnecting with the land, acknowledging indigenous healing techniques and taking a holistic approach are



the driving forces behind its popularity. Whether it's the ayurvedic program for COPD, which emphasises holistic therapies to lessen symptoms for people with respiratory disorders, such as disc bulge and herniated disc, or the holistic therapies used for cardiac ailments, there is increasing interest in wellness retreats such as these.

Now is also the perfect moment for us to present to you a very novel idea that has never been heard of in this nation before and that has also piqued our curiosity. A notion of "Prasanna Kutir!" We exclusively present to you a slice of history that will transport you to a place of mystique. It was once a center for transcendental meditation and wow, is it back? Integrating a rich

spiritual ambiance, inspired by the presence of three generations of saints who once resided in Haridwar, Ekaanta maintains the essence of the saints' *kutirs*, where they practiced "tap." The natural surroundings and the historical significance of the location enhance this holistic experience. And all we're doing is presenting to you its rejuvenated *avatar*. Modernised and influenced by the thousands of tents strewn during the Kumbh Mela — *Kutirs*' philosophy is on living simply but opulently while finding inner serenity. This shows that a spin class and a smoothie are no longer the only ways to achieve wellbeing!

The Ekaanta concepts—that is, engaging in mindful music sessions and storytelling by the river, which foster a deeper connection with your inner self and the environment, or experiencing the Japanese concept of forest bathing, which enhances your connection with nature and promotes mental clarity—have become the most talked-about ideas of the year.

One thing is clear from the outstanding numbers at the beginning of our read: wellness travel is popular and there are several new trends that look set to dominate the coming year and beyond!



the pioneer agenda

"It is not part of a true culture to tame tigers, any more than it is to make sheep ferocious"
— Henry David Thoreau



INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY

Forests, which are essential carbon sinks and wildlife habitats, play a crucial role in combating climate change.

Strengthening tiger conservation programs is vital to protect their ecosystems, benefiting both tigers and humans, writes

BK SINGH on the eve of International Tiger Day

DON'T LET THE ROAR DIE DOWN

Image Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on X post

Scientific studies have consistently brought out that the planet Earth is warming at a faster pace than ever before. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned of the consequences of frequent and destructive climatic catastrophes if the global rise in temperature is not contained within 1.5 degrees Celsius concerning pre-industrial (1850-1900 levels). Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) dealing with the European Union's 'earth observation program' launched in January 2023, has recently taken stock of the project and found that June 2024 marks the 13th month of global temperature at 1.50 C above pre industrial levels. The monthly average surface air temperature from June 2023 to June 2024 was 16.660C and was .760C higher than the average for 1991-2020 and 1.640C above pre industrial 1850-1900 levels. So far 2023 has been the warmest year on record, but 2024 is on course to break this.

We are left with no option but to transition away from fossil fuel consumption and develop renewable energy with speed and scale. Forests are the biggest carbon sink that can suck CO2 emitted into the atmosphere due to industrial activities and fossil fuel burning. It is the home of wild animals. Forests not only provide food and shelter to wild animals but also provide a series of ecological services necessary for the survival of mankind.

Tiger is at the apex of wild animals. If a tiger is saved, other wild animals and the forests are secure. Project Tiger was launched in India in 1973 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi covering nine tiger-bearing areas extending over 16338 sq km of good quality forests across the country namely Corbett, Kaziranga, Melghat, Bandipur etc. Since then many more areas have been added to the list and by now there are 53 Tiger Reserves (TRs) in India. To commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger an international conference was held at Mysuru on 9th April 2023, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The most important takeaway of the conference was the launch of the international big cat alliance to protect seven species namely tiger, leopard, jaguar, lion, snow leopard, puma and cheetah worldwide. Among 94 member countries harbouring these species, the Ministers from India, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Suriname, Tanzania, Vientiane, and Vietnam presented the status of conservation of big cat species in their country. They also pledged to conserve the species. Forests and wildlife have a symbiotic relationship and both cannot survive without the other.



BK SINGH

In this long journey of 50 years, the Project tiger coverage has been increased from 9 to 53 sites. The area under Project Tiger management has also been increased from 16338 sq km to 75000 sq km. Though tiger security was the focus in all 53 tiger reserves of the country, aggressive activities of interstate poaching gangs who killed tigers at will and decimated tigers from many reserves namely Sariska (Rajasthan), Panna (Madhya Pradesh), Buxa (West Bengal), Namdapha and Kamlang (Arunachal Pradesh) and Dampa (Mizoram). Project Tiger was revamped when the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was brought in 2006 and enabling provisions were made in the Wildlife (Protection) Act through amendment. A robust methodology for All India Tiger estimation was developed by our Scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India and experts from NTCA and used for tiger estimation in the same year. First first-ever exercise was carried out in all forest areas of the country, which revealed that India had 1411 tigers in the wild. Thereafter the estimation was repeated every four years that was in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2022 which brought out the tiger numbers as 1710, 2226, 2967 and 3682 respectively.

An increasing trend in tiger numbers has been noticed, but the most worrying part that surfaced was the shrinkage in the areas of tiger occupancy. Though the recovery of tigers has grown from 1411 to 3682, the area of its occupancy has declined. From 92,000 sq km area in the first cycle of estimation in 2006, it has been reduced to 88,000 sq km in the fourth cycle in 2018. Despite all stringent measures the fragmentation of habitats and encroachments in forest lands have continued resulting in the loss of tiger-occupied areas. The western Ghats landscape itself has lost 527 sq km of tiger occupancy in four years between 2014 and 2018. North northeastern part of the country has lost more than 6000 sq km area under tiger occupancy in this period. Survey of India biannual report, which was last published in 2021 has assessed the change in forest cover of all tiger reserves over a decade (from 2011 to 2021). The report brings out that the forest cover has decreased by 22.62 sq km (0.04%) in this period. Twenty tiger reserves have gained in forest cover, while the remaining 33 have lost. While Buxa (West Bengal, Annamalai (Tamil Nadu) and Indravati (Chhattisgarh) have gained, Kawal (Telangana), Bhadra

(Karnataka) and Sunderbans (West Bengal) have lost.

The latest tiger estimation report about the Western Ghats landscape reads, "Majority of tiger populations remain stable and some have declined, a significant reduction of tiger occupancy has been observed throughout the landscape." Central Indian Highlands and Eastern Ghats landscape are reported to have added tigers but several threats are looming large; The report adds "High concentration of mining activity poses a significant challenge to conservation. The forests of this region are under threat from various activities, despite their high biodiversity and conservation significance. - Tiger occupancy declined in states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Telangana." The description from the north eastern landscape is no different. It indicates some major threats the region is facing "The landscape has experienced extensive change in land-use patterns in the past, leading to severe loss of natural habitat." Overall, the report is positive about the increase in tiger numbers from 2967 to at least 3167; the loss in the Western Ghats

landscape has been wiped out by the gains in the central Indian landscape. Human-carnivore conflict is prevalent in several landscapes, especially where buffer forests are disturbed due to human and livestock presence. When an area of occupancy decreases and the number increases, tigers are bound to stray outside the reserve and come in conflict with humans. Forest department faces challenges across the tiger landscapes; the conflicts can disturb the relationship with communities. The country should pledge to focus on conservation even outside tiger reserves. Diversion of natural forests, whether inside or outside the tiger reserve is detrimental to conservation. There is a mechanism for paying

compensation for the loss of human life as well as livestock, but the community has to be taken in confidence. Losing tigers would mean losing tree cover and vice versa. Loss of forest cover is the loss of sink for Carbon dioxide and further warming of the planet.

The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Karnataka; views are personalK

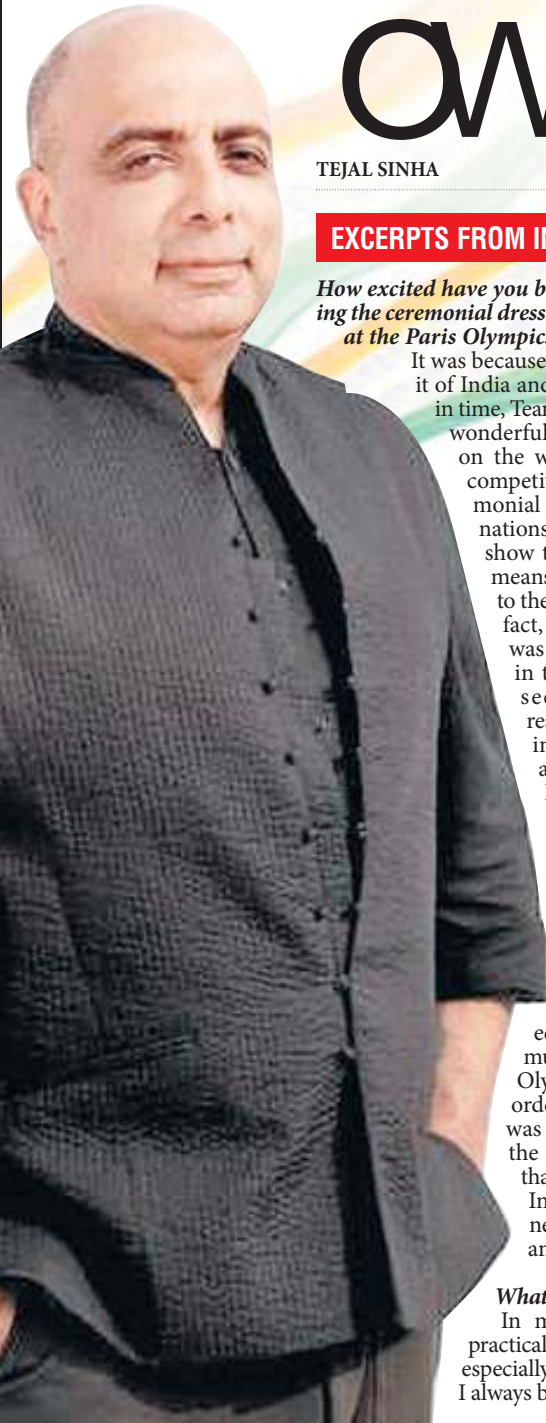


PROJECT TIGER WAS LAUNCHED IN INDIA IN 1973 BY THE THEN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI COVERING NINE TIGER-BEARING AREAS EXTENDING OVER 16338 SQ KM OF GOOD QUALITY FORESTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY NAMEDLY CORBETT, KAZIRANGA, MELGHAT, BANDIPUR ETC. SINCE THEN MANY MORE AREAS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE LIST AND BY NOW THERE ARE 53 TIGER RESERVES (TRS) IN INDIA. TO COMMEMORATE 50 YEARS OF PROJECT TIGER AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT MYSURU ON 9TH APRIL 2023, WHICH WAS INAUGURATED BY PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



AMBANI WEDDING TO PARIS OLYMPICS CRAFTING WEIGHTLESS GLAMOUR OWING TO INDIAN HERITAGE

Tarun Tahiliani is most known for his ability to blend fitting silhouettes with Indian textile craftsmanship and heritage. In addition to becoming the preferred designer for B-town celebrities, Tarun has added a feather to his cap by accepting the prestigious responsibility of creating Team India's ceremonial outfit for the Paris Olympics 2024. The traditional clothing embraces a feeling of patriotism embodied in the tricolor scheme of saffron, green and white, drawing inspiration from the rich cultural tapestry of India, collaborating closely with the Indian Olympic Association to design the clothing that conveys an Indian narrative. **The Pioneer** got an opportunity to interact with the designer connoisseur over an exclusive telephonic interaction, as we not only discussed the design of Team India's ceremonial dress but also designed dresses for several celebrities for the much-talked-about Radhika-Anant wedding.



TEJAL SINHA

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW

How excited have you been for designing the ceremonial dress for Team India at the Paris Olympics?

It was because of the new spirit of India and at this moment in time, Team India wears this wonderful dress to compete on the world stage of the competition in the ceremonial path, where all the nations come together and show their best. This also means that it takes us back to the times of history. I, in fact, did not know there was a ceremonial address in the past, but now you see where India has reached, very proud and conscious of our image in the world. That's how we are able to use our expertise in modern India, bringing growth and relevance.

A privilege for you and the team alike; how did it all come about?

As a result, Piyush Pandey, Tasva's head of marketing, was questioned about it. We were all excited to be asked to carry out this task once we learned that it was a possibility. I wanted a brief about it; we didn't have much time, but it was clear that the Olympics logo had to be on it in order to represent India and that was done on the pocket. That was the beginning of it—something that felt worldwide but appeared Indian. There has to be a connection between Kurta, Bandi and other things.

What considerations were made?

In my opinion as a designer, practicality should always come first, especially when creating bridal wear. I always believe that fashion needs to be

something that you are comfortable in and something that allows you to easily move. We did our research and this time the Olympics are in Paris. I have been there since July and it's been boiling hot there! First of all, we cannot control the weather. So the fabrics had to be made accordingly. We made it from lightweight moss cotton, taking the weather into account. Then, similarly, we designed for the flag bearers. We had to incorporate Indian colour, so we added those stripes to the bandi using tricolor Indian fabric and that's how we created the Indian costume, Indian flag and comfortable feel. We tried to make a similar uniform for the women as well, but they were keen that a saree is something familiar for a woman in India, so we gave them an Ikat-inspired digitally printed panel in saffron, green and

blue buttonholes representing the Ashoka Chakra, and an ivory base that represents peace and unity. The look is completed with modern trainers adorned with traditional Benares brocade, seamlessly blending tradition with contemporary fashion. During the entire process, we did go back and forth before we could bring the final one. PT Usha was very much a part of it!

Your designs were the major highlights of the Ambani wedding, too. What would you like to say about it?

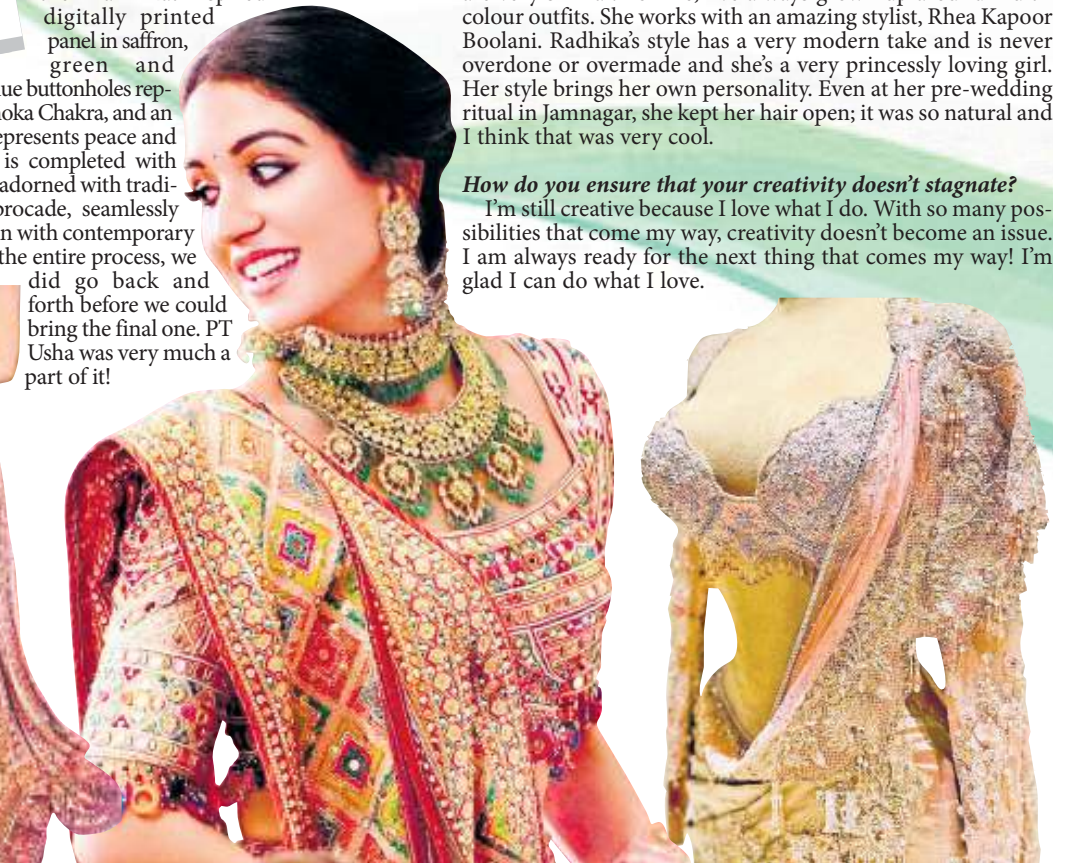
We wanted to give the Kardashian sisters an updated version. As designers, we need to think of the contemporary and modern variations that come in. We aim to make the dresses beautiful and light. For example, Priyanka Chopra was looking beautiful in our designs and in the way she was dancing wearing that lehenga during the *baraat* because it was light. That's the beauty we wish to bring in. We don't want to create a museum. As a designer, even after such a long time, whatever I do, I kind of work with the same principles unconsciously and that's the DNA of the house.

Radhika's pre-wedding lehenga was exquisite that featured intricate mirror works. What was the inspiration behind that?

Radhika is from Kutch and I'm a Sindhi. So Kutch and Sindhis are very similar. For me, I've always grown up around multi-colour outfits. She works with an amazing stylist, Rhea Kapoor Boolani. Radhika's style has a very modern take and is never overdone or overmade and she's a very princely loving girl. Her style brings her own personality. Even at her pre-wedding ritual in Jamnagar, she kept her hair open; it was so natural and I think that was very cool.

How do you ensure that your creativity doesn't stagnate?

I'm still creative because I love what I do. With so many possibilities that come my way, creativity doesn't become an issue. I am always ready for the next thing that comes my way! I'm glad I can do what I love.



AARTI SREENATH

In the digital age, social media has become the heartbeat of the beauty industry, breathing new life into how trends are created, shared and celebrated. To uncover the forces driving this seismic shift, we delved into conversations with industry trailblazers, influencers and brand visionaries, exploring how these virtual arenas are not just reflecting but actively reshaping the beauty landscape.

Influence of social media on beauty trends

Palak Chandel, a social media analyst, notes, "The very first thing are maybe influencers. If you have accessibility to tutorials, it helps brands to be more promoted because influencers hold a lot of power."

Dr. Chytra V Anand, celebrity cosmetic dermatologist founder & CEO, Kosmoderma Founder, SkinQ, adds, "Social media has revolutionised the skin-care industry by making information more accessible and influencing consumer behaviour. On the positive side, people are more informed and engaged, discovering new products, routines and treatments through influencers and dermatologists. However, misinformation can spread quickly, leading to the adoption of ineffective or potentially harmful practices."

Dr. Sunil Kumar Prabhu, consultant dermatologist and aesthetic physician, Aster RV hospitals observes, "The immediacy with which trends can go viral has changed the way consumers engage with beauty products. However, it also places a burden on consumers to discern between genuine and misleading information." He further adds, "This speed can sometimes lead to the proliferation of unverified claims and temporary fads, which may not always be beneficial."

Kanikka Dewani, founder & director of Mintree, underscores the role of social media in niche markets, stating, "For a boutique brand, social media has been crucial as it allows us to directly connect with our niche audience. Through targeted ads, influencer partnerships and user-generated content, it helps build a loyal community."

Sahil Gupta, CEO, Bodycraft Spa & Salon shares, "Social media's role in shap-



Click, post, glow: How social media is redefining beauty standards

ing beauty trends cannot be overstated. The platforms not only allow for the rapid dissemination of new trends but also provide a space for real-time customer feedback and engagement. This feedback loop helps refine offerings and stay aligned with consumer preferences."

Smita Vallurupalli, Founder of Old School Rituals, observes, "Posts featuring videos of creators and influencers I collaborate with tend to get the most engagement from her followers." She also highlights that minimalist skincare routines and sustainable beauty practices are currently popular trends on social media.

Role of influencers in promoting beauty trends

Naera Charania, a beauty social media influencer and makeup artist, shared how social media has profoundly influenced her journey. "When I entered the industry, Instagram wasn't really famous. It was more about TikTok and I was fascinated by how people created such unreal makeup looks. That triggered my interest," she reflects. "At that time, I wasn't properly into makeup; I used to look at all those looks and cre-

ate something avant-garde, like face painting. Also, because it was COVID, I had nothing to do except explore. So, social media did influence me a lot to get into it and I am glad I did. Seeing so many people get famous through it, I realised this is the kind of content people like, so that influenced me to create more creative things."

Notable trends and viral moments

Several notable trends have emerged from social media's influence.

Discussing process for creating engaging and informative beauty content, Charania reveals, "Sometimes the ideas come through scrolling or maybe just by looking at something random near you. Keeping the colors and music in mind, I try to create a transition or probably a tutorial on topics that engage people's attention. I try to add elements in my videos that give something of value, making them worth saving."

Challenges and solutions in social media marketing

Marketing beauty products on social media presents various challenges. Rupali

Sharma, founder Aegte discusses some of these: "One major challenge is the skepticism surrounding the effectiveness of natural and vegan products. To overcome this, we focus on transparency and education. We regularly share detailed information about our product USPs, ingredients, their sourcing and the science behind their efficacy."

MALE GROOMING: A rising trend

For decades, male grooming has been a topic overshadowed by its female counterpart. Rarely discussed openly, it is nonetheless a practice that is demonstrably on the rise. Salons traditionally catered to a predominantly female clientele and discussions about skincare routines or beard care were relegated to hushed whispers amongst men. However, a powerful shift is underway, fueled by evolving social norms, media influences and a growing understanding of the benefits of self-care.

Today, male grooming encompasses a vast spectrum of personal care routines, including skincare, haircare, beard management, and overall hygiene. The market research firm IMARC Group reports that the global male grooming market surpassed a significant milestone, reaching US\$85.2 billion in 2023 and is projected to climb even higher, reaching US\$148.9 billion by 2032. Salons, once hesitant to cater specifically to men, are now expanding their services to meet this burgeoning demand. Even traditionally "feminine" services like manicures and pedicures are finding new customers among men seeking a complete grooming experience. The driving forces behind this market expansion include a growing focus on personal hygiene and appearance, the proliferation of specialised men's grooming products, the influence of social media and celebrities and the increasing accessibility of these products and services through various retail channels.

The benefits of this grooming revolution extend far beyond aesthetics. Studies have shown that self-care practices like maintaining a grooming routine can contribute to reduced stress and anxiety. A well-groomed appearance creates a positive first impression, which is crucial in professional settings where a polished image can be the difference between landing a job or closing a business deal.

How travel insurance can help travellers during natural calamities

In an era of climate uncertainty and increasing extreme weather events, the joy of travel must be balanced with foresight and preparedness.

Going on a travel vacation is not just about exploration; it also involves anticipating the unexpected. The thrill of discovery comes with the potential for trip cancellations, medical emergencies, lost baggage and travel delays, all exacerbated by today's changing climate. Even seasoned travellers can be caught off guard by cancelled flights, flooded accommodations and impassable roads. With 1.4 million lost luggage incidents annually and the very real threat of natural disasters turning dream vacations into nightmares, the risks of modern travel have never been higher.

Benefits of having travel insurance during monsoons

As we have hit the month of July, a lot of people are already planning their mid-year travel plans. However, with late and extremely uncertain monsoons hitting India this year, it is strongly advised to travel wisely and travel insured. Travel insurance is particularly valuable during the monsoon season, offering a comprehensive safety net for travellers facing various challenges. Beyond flight-related issues, it provides coverage for personal accidents, medical emergencies and baggage delays or losses. Personal accident coverage ensures financial security for hospitalisation expenses, medical treatments and emergency evacuations resulting from accidents during the journey. Add-ons like flight delay cover and cancellation by operators protect against flight disruptions, caused by weather-related issues, easing the financial impact on travellers.

Essential travel insurance tips

The resurgence of travel has led to a surge in demand for travel insurance, with reports showing that over 76%

of travellers now purchase policies, especially post-pandemic. It is advisable to disclose any pre-existing medical conditions to the insurance company to ensure coverage in case of a medical emergency during the trip.

Know how to choose the right policy

The key to finding the right travel insurance policy is to ensure it fits one's unique needs and circumstances, providing robust protection for everything from adventurous pursuits to leisurely explorations. One should avoid settling for the first policy; instead, draw comparisons from multiple quotes from various providers, considering coverage, deductibles, and price. Before purchasing, consumers should check for any travel advisories or warnings issued by the government regarding the destination, as some policies may not cover areas with high security risks or during pandemics.

How do I make a travel claim?

When a consumer has to file a travel claim, it is important to act immediately and reach out to the insurance provider, highlighting the challenges. It is also important that the consumer take the necessary advice and guidance from the insurance provider, which is essential for a smoother claim settlement process. The process of filing the claim includes understanding the issue, assessing the coverage, deductibles, assistance and premiums, and thoroughly reviewing the policy's terms and conditions. It is also crucial that proper documentation is done; hence, consumers should keep records of their medical bills, police reports (in case of theft) and any other relevant documents to facilitate the claims process. Every policy comes with its own coverage limits; hence, one should be aware of these limits, especially when it comes to medical expenses, as healthcare costs can vary significantly depending on one's location.

(The author, Chetan Vasudeva, is the Senior Vice President of Business Development at Elephant.in.)



TRENDING

PERSON

SHAH RUKH KHAN

Shah Rukh Khan was presented with personalised gold coins by the Grevin Museum in Paris. The Bollywood actor is now the first in the museum to own gold coins.

VIDEO

NEPAL PLANE CRASH

On July 24, while attempting to take off from the airport serving Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, a civilian plane carrying 19 people went off the runway and crashed, killing at least 18 passengers.

MOVIE

ULAJH

Uljah's release is officially just a few months away and to celebrate, the film's makers have released a tantalising teaser that's already making quite the stir. Just wait until you witness Janhvi Kapoor and Gulshan Devaiah in action if you thought your summer was scorching.

SONG

AAJ KI RAAT

On July 24, the first song from *Street 2*, which features Tamannaah Bhatia, was released. Her stylish fashion sense was equally impressive as her amazing dancing skills.

PICTURE

FM POSES WITH TABLET

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman left the finance ministry carrying a tablet with the national emblem and a red "bahi-khata" sleeve before delivering the Union Budget for 2024-25 to the Parliament.



PRE-PARALYMPIC SELF

I guess I was a little mischievous. I feel so happy about the start of this interview, because it takes me back to my pre-paralympic self. I have been curious to try new things from my childhood.

NEVER ASK FOR HELP!

In my family, I am the youngest. I have always been content with the way I tried doing a variety of things in my own way. I never ask for assistance, since I have been raised to believe that I could do any task given to me on my own. Even so, being the youngest member of the family, I enjoyed having those privileges to be pampered. I remember the times when my dad arrived home late at night from his factory job, or if I saw my *bade papa*; I would cry at random and beg them to spoil me. I was so notorious that I found it odd that my older brothers were being beaten up, hehe! I also remember how other students used to stare at me with odd eyes when I went to school. Still, I never gave a shit! Whenever someone asked if I would like help in tying my laces or sharpening pencil, my conscience used to tell me 'no' right away. Looking back, I realised that I was one of those kids who could tie my own laces quite early, when other kids were still learning how to do it.



BORN WITH AN AFFLICTION

I was born with an impaired forearm. While growing up, I was initially unaware of it. Only when I used to visit parks or schools did I begin to realise gradually my limitations. I was then somewhat immature; so, I did not know how to respond. However, I started to sense anxiety creeping into me as I approached adolescence. I will always remember that period of my life. I could tell some girls were quite self-conscious about how they looked; perhaps, this contributed to a feeling of inadequacy. I started to feel like I had a responsibility to address my impairment. I did not want my appearance to be the basis for criticism! I did not want to be labelled as 'Palak is handicapped' or have my abilities disregarded. Identifying the likes of us as 'disabled' is incorrect.

IGNORED AT TIMES

There have been occasions when I was ignored because of my arm. That caused me to become very self-conscious. It was a dance move, I recall! I was unable to participate in some sports. These factors made my childhood quite difficult for me.

TRANSFORMATION INTO CONFIDENT BACCHI

Although I was born and raised in Jalandhar, I moved to Lucknow to further my badminton skills. My family and I are very far away from one another and we miss each other terribly. Having grown up in a blended household, I never experienced any sense of being a 'different' child from them. They never held me to account! Punjabi blood runs in my family. It would have truly hurt my heart if someone had repeatedly made me realise that I have only one functional hand. Fortunately, nobody did. I was transformed into a 'confident bacchi' by the entire family. Among other things, my granddad has been such a strong and encouraging figure in my athletic career! My favourite weekend activities as a child growing up in a joint household were playing cards or cricket. I miss my mom's homemade meals a lot these days.



DESTINED TO PLAY BADMINTON

I was destined to learn badminton! When I took to badminton, many people attempted to discourage me from playing the game. But then something quite startling occurred in my life: I realised that playing badminton was something I was meant to do. After learning about sports quota for the differently abled, numerous females persuaded

AWAITING PALAK'S JHALAK AT PARIS

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Okay, the T20 World Cup is over. Hold your breath, the excitement has not ended yet. This year, there is a lot more to look forward to. The world's greatest spectacle, the Olympics, is about to begin! Approximately 10,000 athletes with differing abilities and accomplishments and an estimated 10 million ordinary tourists and spectators will gather in Paris for the 33rd Summer Olympic Games, which will be held for the first time in the City of Lights since 1924, from Friday, July 26, 2024, to Sunday, August 11, 2024. Friday marked the formal start of the Paris Olympics and Paralympics. *The Pioneer's Shikha Duggal* caught up with Indian paralympic athlete Palak Kohli, who won her first-ever medal at the Para-Badminton World Championships in Pattaya,

Thailand, to know the gritty girl's prospects as the nation awaits her *jhalak* at Paris. Of course, the young athlete is proud of her incredible return at the BWF Para-Badminton World Championships, which served as a qualifying event for the Paralympics in Paris. The para badminton path of Palak Kohli is replete with examples of her tenacity. When para badminton made its debut at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021; Kohli, who was born with an undeveloped left arm and left leg, competed in women's doubles, mixed doubles and singles. It was an amazing feat for her! But she had to have emergency surgery for a bone tumour on her left ankle a year later. Even though a significant change was on the horizon, Kohli persisted in her efforts as usual. It is now over to Paris Paralympics! Palak Kohli, our special interviewee who represents India, is oozing supreme confidence. Hurray!



me to safeguard my future. They said, 'Go take that route!' There was also another group of people that made me fearful that I would hurt my other hand. That stage of life was emotionally upsetting. I was broken on the inside. The media greatly aided me! The national coach of the Indian badminton team, who works with para athletes and I got to meet outside of a mall. It was in my ego. The rest is history; the winning streak, touchwood, continues to this day. I never looked back from winning large national championships to competing in tournaments.

COACH'S BACKING: FROM WAITING OUTSIDE OTS TO SEEING HER RECOVER

My coach has witnessed the most significant, life-changing events; he was in Jalandhar for a national railway competition. I would not have been a gold-winning national paralympic athlete today if it were not for Gaurav Khanna! He has been with me through thick and thin. He used to wait outside the operation theatre and was always there for me during major surgeries and whenever I had serious injuries. He has helped me accomplish so much, from teaching me how to grip a racquet to making me a paralympian twice. He puts up a lot of effort on behalf of every para-athlete now competing for our country.

EARNING A SPOT AT THE PARIS PARALYMPICS!

After being absent from the international circuit for over a year, I had to start the tournaments over in order to earn a spot at the Paris Paralympics, which was difficult for me to do. Everyone is aware of my handicap in both my left arm and left leg. They generally aim for my rear end. For me, it is more difficult, but I am making progress. I will only be playing singles in the upcoming Paris Paralympics because I am also dealing with some obstacles in my recovery.

HARD-PRESSED FOR TIME

Playing back-to-back tournaments wears you out so much. Those from outside would say, "Whoa, Palak is visiting Japan!" Here, reality sets in, even if I am about to enjoy the time of my life! We travel overseas two days before our tournaments; so, we arrange our schedules appropriately. It's just one day, but my nation's reputation is involved; so, I have to give it my all! I barely have time to myself on Sundays; the rest of the week is spent being utterly weary. I also cannot have a lot of hobbies because that could make my injuries worse.



MAKING IT TO THE TOKYO OLYMPICS

Regarding the Tokyo Olympics, I was expected to compete for my nation in three different categories. But you have to heal in order to play the following one, right? I also suffered a calf muscle tear during that time! Still, I battled for the medal in that! Every event, after all, is a fresh opportunity for me to succeed and it has worked for me. The largest competition is the Paralympics. And I was fortunate to qualify for it when para badminton was first featured in the Paralympics in Tokyo, making it one of the tournaments that everyone hopes to compete in. Being the youngest athlete in history to qualify for the Paralympics and have it included in the games for the first time was an amazing sensation. Aside from that, I was also dealing with bone marrow edema and a leg injury that was bothering me all the time. In addition, I had three Paralympic events to compete in, which was really taxing. However, the tournament taught me a lot. It was like getting a ton of experience from playing against athletes who had been competing since before I was even born.

EXPECTATIONS AS A PARA-ATHLETE

There are so many excellent amenities for us that I got to know whenever I travelled overseas for my tournaments. They were such a helping hand, whether they were Chinese or Japanese! I would like a database to keep track of the number of para-athletes in our nation so that they can be identified at an early age.

DIAGNOSIS OF BONE TUMOUR!

And a few months after the Paralympics, I participated in the Asian Youth Games, where I was placed first and took home three golds. And then, all of a sudden; my injuries grew worse and an additional diagnosis of a bone tumour was made. I had to go through a very trying time in my life, requiring emergency surgery and bed rest, after which I returned this year to resume my tournament career in April and finish with over 10 international medals. I was terrified to have surgery because I was so nervous. My family was astounded by how quickly things transpired that day. The issue might have gotten worse if I had not decided to get the surgery. I had nothing left to do. Overall, I think it has gone really well. I believe that I would dedicate this year to making a return to this place, where I was informed by the best surgeons and doctors that I would never be able to resume my sport. Additionally, I find it challenging because there have been numerous issues. Both the tumour and my operation are to blame for this.

LIFE POST BONE TUMOUR SURGERY

I love being here in Lucknow. The academy athletes would come home after the sessions. Everybody used to get coffee from my mom and we would play cards, have fun and chat. They would grab juice or coconut water for me on their way over. They would always video-call me while they were on their way to a tournament. The foot is smaller now. I now have to wear a six-size shoe on my right foot and a 3.5-size shoe on my left. We decided on some bespoke ankle support and shoes, which help me keep my balance on the court and prevent my ankle from twisting. Every evening, I get a separate strengthening session in addition to my rehab session. Because the right leg must compensate for the left leg's burden, we want to strengthen it. I need to focus on strengthening my back because I walk with a tiny limp, which has caused back issues. The posture has also altered as a result. It is challenging and complex, but I cannot really complain.

RAPID FIRE

- PINCH ME MOMENT OF LIFE:** When I was back on the podium after a bone tumour!
- LATEST THING I DISCOVERED ABOUT MYSELF:** Rehab and strengthening sessions
- AN ATHLETE WHO INSPIRES YOU:** Calvin Carrie
- PRODEST MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER:** Qualifying for the Paris Olympics
- FAVOURITE CITY/COUNTRY TO LIVE IN:** Paris

