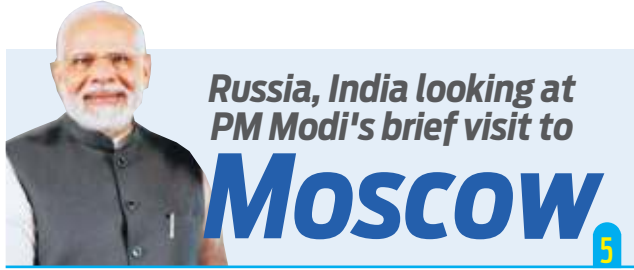




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QUOTE OF THE DAY
I said Jai Bhim, Jai Meem, Jai Telangana and Jai Palestine. Other Members also said different things. How can it be wrong? Tell me the Constitution provision which says so. You should also listen to what others say. I said what I had to. Read what Mahatma Gandhi had said about Palestine

-Asaduddin Owaisi, Hyderabad MP



P4

DON'T MISS...

Let us fulfil people's aspirations...

Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has called upon newly-elected JSP MLAs to work to fulfil the aspirations of the people. An awareness meeting was held for the newly elected JSP MLAs in the state office at Mangalagiri on Tuesday. Addressing the MLAs, Pawan Kalyan recalled that the JSP had won the elections with a 100 per cent strike rate with the blessings of the people. "Keeping this in view, the MLAs should work efficiently and sincerely as per the aspirations of people. The JSP MLAs should raise..."

-PAGE: 4

'Non-coffee drinkers at 60%...

Non-coffee drinkers who sat for six or more hours a day were at almost 60 per cent higher risk of dying compared to coffee drinkers sitting for less than six hours, according to a research published in the journal BioMed Central (BMC) Public Health. This indicated an increased risk of dying in sedentary people not consuming coffee, but not among those drinking coffee, researchers following over 10,000 adults in the US for up to 13 years said. The researchers at the Medical College of Soochow...

-PAGE: 5

Elastocalorics, carbon-capturing...

Privacy-enhancing technologies, elastocalorics as sustainable cooling solutions and livestock feed sources from single-cell proteins were listed on Tuesday among the top 10 emerging technologies for addressing global challenges. AI-powered scientific discovery, carbon-capturing microbes, reconfigurable intelligent surfaces and high-altitude platform stations were also featured in the annual list published by the World Economic Forum. The WEF said these top 10 emerging technologies focus...

-PAGE: 8

A lot of credit for my wickets goes...

The pinpoint accuracy of Jasprit Bumrah allows other bowlers in the Indian team to go for wickets even in extreme pressure situations, said pacer Arshdeep Singh. The 25-year-old left-arm pacer is among the leading wicket-takers in the T20 World Cup with 15 scalps in six games at an average of 11.86 and economy rate of 7.41 runs per over. Bumrah, on the other hand, has taken 11 wickets in the same number of games, conceding just 4.08 runs per over, a rarity in the shortest format...

-SPORTS

Priority for welfare, growth: CM

Naidu visits Kuppam after assuming office for fourth time

PNS ■ KUPPAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu made his first visit to the Kuppam constituency after taking office for the fourth time. He was warmly welcomed by a large gathering of party MLAs, leaders, and activists. Chandrababu Naidu emphasized that the National Democratic Alliance Government, led by TDP, is committed to fulfilling the aspirations of the people, prioritizing welfare alongside rapid state development.

During his visit to the incomplete branch canal of the Handri-Neeva Srujala Srujanthi at Santhipuram of Chinnari Doddhi, the Chief Minister paid homage to the late NT Rama Rao by visiting his statue.

Addressing a significant public gathering near the NTR Statue, Chandrababu Naidu acknowledged the challenges facing the new government and pledged proactive measures to steer the state towards progress. He characterized the previous YSRCP-led regime as a period of rampant corruption across the state.

"We will soon release white papers detailing the severe impacts on various sectors, and new farmers' passbooks with official seals, replacing those with photos of YSRCP president Jagan Mohan Reddy," the Chief Minister assured the public. Reflecting on his longstanding bond



- Promises to fulfil all expectations of the people under the NDA-led TDP government.
- Criticises the previous YSRCP government for widespread corruption.
- Announces plans for white papers on sectors severely affected by the previous regime.
- Pledges new farmers' passbooks without photos of YSRCP president Jagan
- Expresses a deep bond with Kuppam, winning eight out of 9 Assembly elections there.
- Promises to develop Kuppam into a model constituency with comprehensive plans.
- Thanks DWCRAs groups for donating Rs 4.5 crore towards building the canal.
- Assures completion of the Handri-Neeva Srujala Srujanthi branch canal for better water supply.
- Criticises previous welfare schemes for inefficiency and promises better distribution.
- Highlights historical electoral success in the Chittoor Lok Sabha constituency.
- Emphasises the educational qualifications of newly elected MLAs.
- Affirms commitment to supporting youth and weaker sections of society.
- Promises minimum support prices for agricultural products and increased dairy production.
- Vows to transform Kuppam into an education hub and complete pending projects.
- Says govt committed to releasing salary dues for Draavidian University staff.

with Kuppam, where he has won eight out of nine Assembly elections, Chandrababu Naidu expressed deep affection for its people, stating, "If I

were to be reborn, I would wish to be born as a son of this soil." Highlighting his commitment to develop Kuppam, Chandrababu

Naidu pledged to transform it into a model constituency with comprehensive action plans. *Continued on Page 2*

LS SPEAKER POST It's Birla vs Suresh

EFFORTS TO REACH CONSENSUS FAIL



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP's Om Birla will fight it out with Kodikunnil Suresh of the Congress for the Lok Sabha Speaker's post after efforts to reach a consensus between the government and the opposition failed on Tuesday.

The voting will take place on Wednesday. Both Birla and Suresh filed their nominations as NDA and INDIA bloc candidates, respectively.

Birla served as Speaker in the previous Lok Sabha as well and if he wins he would be the first person to get the post for the second term in 25 years. Before filing his nomination, Birla also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He has returned to the Lok Sabha for the third time from Kota in Rajasthan, Suresh, an eight-time MP from Kerala, said it is not about winning or losing, but about a convention that Speaker will be of ruling party and deputy speaker will be of opposition. *Continued on Page 2*

Cong issues whip

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday issued a three-line whip to its MPs asking them to be present in Lok Sabha at 11 AM on Wednesday during the election for the Speaker's post.

"Very important issue will be taken up in the Lok Sabha tomorrow i.e. Wednesday, June 26, 2024. All Members of Congress Party in the Lok Sabha are requested to kindly remain present in the House from 11:00 A.M. onwards till the adjournment of the House on June 26, 2024 without fail and support the Party stand," the whip issued by Congress chief whip K Suresh said. Suresh is also the joint candidate of the opposition INDIA bloc for Speaker's post. He takes on NDA's Om Birla

TDP MPs asked to vote for NDA candidate

VIJAYAWADA: TDP Chief Whip in Lok Sabha, Harish Balayogi, on Tuesday, ordered that all MPs of the party attend the session on Wednesday. He instructed the TDP MPs to be present in the Lok Sabha by 11 a.m. and vote for the NDA's Speaker candidate.

YSRCP to back Birla?

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) will support BJP MP Om Birla in Wednesday's election for the Lok Sabha Speaker's post, according to sources on Tuesday evening. The YSRCP, which was defeated by its arch-rival TDP in the general election, has only four elected MPs in the Lok Sabha.

In the 2019 elections, the YSRCP had a significant victory in the southern state, winning 22 out of 25 seats. However, this year, the scenario changed dramatically. Chandrababu Naidu's TDP, which also won the Assembly election, secured 16 seats, while its allies - the BJP and actor Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party - won five seats between them.

While the YSRCP's support may not be critical, given that Birla and the BJP already have the numbers to ensure victory, it underscores a recent trend. The YSRCP has frequently backed the BJP in Parliament, especially in the Rajya Sabha, assisting in the passage of key legislation when the BJP lacked sufficient numbers.

During the previous government, Jagan's party supported the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act and the abrogation of Article 370.

The additional four votes from the YSRCP mean that Birla will have the support of 297 MPs, giving him an even more decisive lead.

Jagan asks Speaker to recognise him as Oppn leader

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP chief and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday requested Assembly Speaker C Ayyannapatrudu to recognise him as the leader of the opposition and his party as the principal opposition party.

Reddy made this plea in a letter to the speaker.

"Law mandates that whichever party has the highest number of seats in the Opposition should be recognised as the principal opposition," Reddy said in the letter. He claimed that no law states that 10 per cent seats are required to confer the principal opposition party status, and added that such a practice has not been followed in Parliament or the state's assembly.

According to Reddy, making him take oath as a member of the Assembly after the swearing-in of ministers recently was against tradition. He alleged that the ruling NDA alliance of TDP, BJP and Jana Sena had already decided not to confer him the status of leader of the opposition.



"The ruling alliance and the Speaker are already exhibiting enmity towards me. Videos of the Speaker saying that I should be beaten to death went viral. In this backdrop, I don't see the possibility of opening my mouth in the Assembly. The recognition as principal opposition will only enable us to voice people's problems in the House."



AP cadre IAS man Sreenivasa Raju takes voluntary retirement

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Senior IAS Officer of AP cadre, K S Sreenivasa Raju has taken voluntary retirement from service.

According to a Government Order issued by Chief Secretary to the Government Neerabh Kumar Prasad on Tuesday, Sreenivasa Raju has been permitted to voluntarily retire on personal grounds with immediate effect following a letter submitted by him to the government.

Woman attempts suicide near Dy CM's office



Pawan vows total revamp of Panchayat Raj system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, K. Pawan Kalyan, has assured that revolutionary changes will be implemented to strengthen the Panchayat Raj system.

During a meeting held on Tuesday with Panchayat Raj and Rural Development officers, employees, and Union leaders, Pawan Kalyan emphasized his commitment to transforming Panchayat Raj into a robust institution. "This endeavour requires collective effort. I strongly believe that with everyone's cooperation, we can make Panchayat Raj a strong and efficient institution," he stated.

Pawan Kalyan expressed concern over the deterioration of several government institutions during the YSRCP regime, noting that revitalizing them would be a significant challenge. He urged all stakeholders to work diligently towards this objective.

During the meeting, department employees presented memorandums to Pawan Kalyan regarding their dues, arrears, and promotions, seeking resolution. Pawan Kalyan attentively listened to their grievances and assured them that efforts would be made to address these issues promptly.

"We will publish a 'White Paper' detailing how the YSRCP regime undermined government institutions," he announced. He reiterated



ed his dedication to ensuring the efficient functioning of the Panchayat Raj Ministry.

However, he cautioned that these changes would not happen overnight. He contrasted the previous government's approach of intimidating employees with the current alliance government's understanding and supportive stance.

Acknowledging the substantial losses suffered by Andhra Pradesh after bifurcation and the ongoing financial crisis, Pawan Kalyan called for coordinated efforts between rulers and employees to navigate the situation.

He highlighted the importance of securing matching grants from the Centre to improve the state's financial position. He pointed out that Andhra Pradesh is yet to receive Rs. 1600 crore from the 15th Finance Commission and expressed regret that the state had not received matching grants under the Jal Jeevan Mission programme.

58.4% candidates qualify in TET

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

IT Minister Nara Lokesh released the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) results on Tuesday. Out of 2,35,907 candidates who appeared for the TET exam, 58.40 per cent qualified. The minister congratulated the successful candidates and assured those who did not qualify that the TET would be conducted again soon.

Candidates had been eagerly awaiting the TET results, as 20 per cent weightage marks are mandatory for the Mega DSC. More than 2.35 lakh candidates appeared for the exam.

Minister Lokesh wished good luck to all those preparing for the Mega DSC announced by the NDA government.

He urged those who did not qualify in this TET not to be disappointed and posted this message on the social media platform 'X'. Lokesh

also suggested that candidates who have completed BEd and DEd can apply for the upcoming TET and Mega DSC.

A total of 2,35,907 candidates (88.90%) appeared for the TET conducted from February 27 to March 6. Officials disclosed that 1,37,904 candidates (58.4 per cent) qualified in this examination, which was conducted in two papers. For Paper-1A (SGT Regular), 1,13,296 candidates appeared, with 78,142 (66.32 per cent) qualifying. In Paper-1B (SGT Special Education), 1,700 candidates applied, and 790 (46.47 per cent) qualified. For Paper 2A (SA Regular), 1,19,500 candidates appeared, with 60,846 (50.96 per cent) qualifying.

A statement revealed that in Paper-2B (SA Special Education), 1,411 candidates appeared, and 1,125 (79.73 per cent) qualified.

PNS ■ SACRAMENTO(CALIFORNIA)

One method of making electricity cleanly to address climate change has been quietly advancing and on Tuesday it hit a milestone.

A California utility is backing the largest new geothermal power development in the US — 400 megawatts of clean electricity from the Earth's heat — enough for some 4,00,000 homes.

Southern California Edison will purchase the electricity from Fervo Energy, a Houston-based geothermal company, Fervo announced.

The company is drilling up to 125 wells in southwest Utah. Clean electricity like this reduces the need for traditional power plants that cause climate change. The boost



could go a long way toward bringing down the cost of a new generation of geothermal energy, said Wilson Ricks, an energy systems researcher at Princeton University. "If these purchases help to get this

technology off the ground, it could be massively impactful for global decarbonization," he said.

BIG BOOST FOR CLIMATE SOLUTION

Electricity made from the heat of the Earth

Decarbonization refers to switching out things that produce carbon dioxide and methane, which cause the climate to change, in favor of machines and methods that don't.

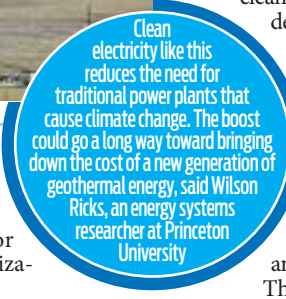
Today the world still relies mainly on fossil fuels for round-the-clock power. This new deal shows that clean power can meet a growing demand for electricity, said Sarah Jewett, vice president of strategy at Fervo.

"I think that's why it's so exciting. This isn't a niche energy resource going to a niche use," she said. "And that is something we have not had, you know, readily available" and able to be scaled up. The first generation of geot-

hermal plants, for example, The Geysers in California, tapped into superheated reservoirs of steam or very hot water close to the Earth's surface. Such reservoirs are relatively rare.

New geothermal companies are adapting drilling technology and practices taken from the oil and gas industry to create reservoirs from hot rock. That unlocks the potential for geothermal energy in many more places. Engineers have been working to advance the methods for years.

The United States is one of the world leaders in using the Earth's heat to make electricity, but geothermal still accounts for less than half a percent of the nation's total large-scale electricity generation, according to the US Energy Information Administration.



Tribals take initiative to build road amid govt inaction

PNS ■ PADERU

Tribal communities in remote hamlets like Buruga and China Konela, located in the ASR district, have started building an 8-kilometer road from Buruga to Vonija village in Mentada mandal, Vizianagaram district. Faced with long-standing infrastructure neglect, they've taken matters into their own hands, relying on voluntary labour (shramdaan) to drive this initiative forward.

For years, these communities have suffered from a lack of essential infrastructure, prompting around 100 villagers to take matters into their own hands. Over the past week, they have diligently cleared a 1.2 km pathway connecting Buruga village to Vonija village. Their ambitious goal is to extend this road by an additional 7 km within the coming month.

A stark disparity exists between India's progress on the world stage and the realities faced by its tribal communities. Despite decades of independence, these communities lack essential infrastructure, particularly proper road access. This compels residents to undertake arduous journeys of 10-12 km on foot, often carrying critical-



ly ill patients or pregnant women in improvised stretchers. Only after reaching the nearest accessible point can they be transferred by ambulance to medical facilities.

A tragic incident earlier this year highlighted the dire situation. In April 2024, Sara Kothaiah, a tribal man from China Konela hilltop hamlet, had to carry the body of his two-and-a-half-year-old son, Eswara Rao, who died at a private hospital, on his shoulder for 8 km. The ambulance could not reach China Konela from Vonija due to the lack of road connectivity. CPM leader K. Govinda Rao criticized the tribal welfare

department for failing to construct the road between Buruga and Vonija despite allegedly spending over Rs 1 crore on the project. "Officials claim to have spent significant funds, but no tangible work has been done," he stated.

Buruga Pentayya, a respected community leader, expressed hope for swift intervention from the newly elected government. "We urge the authorities to acknowledge the challenges we face and take prompt action," he said. "Construction of a road would significantly improve our quality of life and alleviate the daily struggles we endure."

Somula Yerayya, Kothayya, and Somula Appalaraju, fellow villagers, echoed Pentayya's sentiments. "By undertaking this project ourselves, we not only aim to secure improved infrastructure but also highlight the urgent need for development in our region," they stated.

This grassroots initiative undertaken by the Buruga and China Konela communities exemplifies their unwavering resolve and resilience in the face of adversity. As they diligently progress with their road construction project, they remain hopeful for governmental support and recognition of their efforts.

New policy and infra push to triple AP's IT industry turnover

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The newly-formed NDA coalition government is ready to unveil a comprehensive strategy aimed at catapulting the State's IT industry to an annual turnover target ranging between Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000 crore. Presently, the sector generates an average annual turnover of Rs 2,500 to Rs 3,000 crore, with Visakhapatnam serving as its focal point.

Local IT entrepreneurs have actively engaged with the new IT Minister, Nara Lokesh on Monday emphasizing the crucial role of policy stability and government support in achieving substantial growth. A recent meeting between these entrepreneurs and Minister Lokesh highlighted their request for continuity in leadership, particularly advocating for the retention of IT Secretary Kona Sasidhar to ensure coherence in strategic objectives.

Underpinning the government's initiative is a robust policy framework designed to bolster the industry through streamlined regulations, attractive incentives, and significant infrastructure enhancements. A pivotal aspect of this strategy includes the development of



a 23-acre IT park within the Rushikonda IT SEZ, a joint endeavour aimed at providing top-tier facilities to IT firms. Concurrently, a new IT incubation centre facilitated by STPI is slated to promote innovation and support burgeoning local tech startups.

Further bolstering this vision is the establishment of a Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) in Visakhapatnam, aimed at fortifying the city's research capabilities in supercomputing and advanced technologies. The initiative seeks to position Visakhapatnam as a frontrunner in technological innovation and development. The state government's agenda also encompasses strategic infrastructure improvements, including advocating for a submarine landing cable from Singapore to enhance internet connectivity and advocating for the establishment of a

National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) to optimize connectivity costs.

Plans for two innovative IT concept cities in Rushikonda and Bhogapuram aim to complement existing infrastructure and attract further IT investments. Additionally, the forthcoming Adani data centre project in Visakhapatnam is poised to augment sectoral growth, leveraging the city's strategic advantages and burgeoning infrastructure. However, the sector faces several challenges, such as a shortage of office spaces, limited international connectivity, delays in incentive disbursements, and a drain of skilled professionals to larger metropolitan areas. Addressing these obstacles is critical for sustained growth and long-term success.

O Naresk Kumar, Vice-President of the Rushikonda IT Park Association, has articulat-

ed these concerns and presented several recommendations to Minister Lokesh. Kumar has proposed substantial measures including rent-free office space allocations and rent subsidies for new companies, alongside initiatives for skill development in emerging fields like artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. Kumar's suggestions also include the establishment of a finishing school modelled after Infosys' IT Mysore campus, aimed at nurturing talent in cutting-edge technologies. He emphasized the urgency of addressing these issues through regular engagements between the government and local industry representatives to foster a conducive business environment.

As Andhra Pradesh endeavours to replicate the success of Hyderabad's emergence as a significant IT hub under previous administrations, stakeholders are optimistic about the current government's commitment to transforming the state into a thriving IT destination.

The forthcoming initiatives underscore a proactive approach towards fostering regional growth, innovation, and technological advancement in Andhra Pradesh's burgeoning IT sector.

FIR filed against former MP of Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

An FIR has been lodged in a criminal case against former YSRCP Visakhapatnam MP MVV Satyanarayana, his auditor Gannamaneni Venkateswara Rao (GV), and realtor Gadde Brahmaji at Arilova Police Station on 22 June 2024. This development stems from allegations related to the contentious Hayagreeva lands case.

The complaint, initiated by Jagadeeswaru, head of Hayagreeva Constructions, accuses Satyanarayana and his associates of fraudulently signing blank documents under the guise of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). These documents were purportedly used in an attempt to sell valuable lands belonging to



Hayagreeva Constructions.

The gravity of the accusations led to the registration of ten non-bailable sections under FIR No. 227/2024. In response to the FIR, Satyanarayana has swiftly moved to the High Court, filing a quash petition to challenge the charges brought against him. His legal team is expected to argue for the dismissal of the FIR, claiming the

accusations are unfounded and politically motivated.

This case follows another incident wherein MVV Satyanarayana was issued a notice by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) to stop work on an extensive construction project named 'MVV The Peak,' situated across the Tycoon Hotel intersection road in Siripuram, Visakhapatnam.

This project, spearheaded by former YSRCP MP MVV Satyanarayana, has faced significant opposition from residents. The order, directed at H RR Constructions Pvt Ltd and 17 other associated entities, follows numerous complaints about the damaging impact of ongoing massive drilling and rock blasting activities on the foundations of nearby houses.

MP Avinash raps govt for encouraging political attacks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP Avinash Reddy criticised the Chandrababu Naidu government for its alleged failure to maintain law and order in Andhra Pradesh. Accusing the Chief Minister of hypocrisy, he claimed that while Chandrababu Naidu preaches ethics, he simultaneously encourages attacks on political opponents. Reddy noted that the YSRCP cadre did not pursue their opponents following their party's victory in the 2019 elections.

Ahead of taking his oath as a Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Avinash Reddy expressed gratitude for his third consecutive victory from the Kadapa constituency. He attributed his success to the support of YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the people of the Kadapa constituency, and party activists. He thanked the electorate for their belief in him despite the widespread false propaganda by rival candidates.

The newly elected Kadapa MP pledged to work for the



development of his constituents and criticized the state government for not pursuing the demand for Special Category Status for Andhra Pradesh. He urged the TDP to use its influence to persuade the BJP-led Central government on this issue.

Avinash Reddy dismissed rumours circulated by the "yellow media" about YSRCP MPs leaving the party. He firmly stated that all YSRCP MPs remain loyal to YS Jagan and his party.

GVMC issues notice to ex-minister Amarnath

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) Commissioner CM Saikant Varma has issued a notice to former minister Gudivada Amarnath. This action comes in the wake of a serious allegation raised by Jana Sena corporator Peethala Murthy Yadav during the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) on Monday. Yadav's complaint highlights the alleged construction of illegal multi-storied commercial complexes along the Chittivanipalem National Highway in Gajuwaka, prompting swift municipal intervention.

The complaint, targeting ward no. 70 of zone-5, accuses Amarnath of constructing several commercial buildings without GVMC's requisite permissions. These developments reportedly violate the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development

Authority (VMRDA) Master Plan-2041, which mandates an 80-metre-wide road. The complaint claims that the new constructions have blatantly disregarded this crucial urban planning guideline.

Yadav's complaint highlights the significant oversight by local authorities, questioning their role despite the presence of a responsible minister in Andhra Pradesh.

He emphasized that these unauthorized buildings not only bypassed GVMC's approvals but also evaded municipal taxes, resulting in considerable revenue losses for the corporation. Yadav has demanded the immediate dismantling of these illegal structures to ensure compliance with urban planning regulations.

Responding promptly to these serious allegations, the GVMC issued a notice to ex-minister Amarnath on Tuesday Morning. The notice detailed the unauthorized construc-

tion of a building on 374 square meters of land, lacking the necessary permissions and breaching the Andhra Pradesh Metropolitan Region and Urban Development Authorities Act.

This development sheds light on the ongoing challenges in urban governance and the enforcement of regulatory frameworks essential for orderly city development. The GVMC's response underscores its commitment to combating illegal constructions and highlights the importance of adhering to urban planning norms to foster sustainable urban growth.

As the situation unfolds, the public and stakeholders will be closely monitoring GVMC's actions to enforce regulations and prevent future violations. This case serves as a critical test of the corporation's resolve to uphold the law and maintain the integrity of Visakhapatnam's urban planning efforts.

Woman killed in suspected leopard attack

PNS ■ NANDYALA

A big cat suspected to be a leopard has mauled a woman to death in Nandyala district on Tuesday, a forest department official said.

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF, Wildlife) Shanti Priya Pandey said the incident occurred 1 km inside the Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR). "The woman is from Pacherla village in Nandyala district. The woman's body has been sent for post-mortem," Pandey told PTI, sharing the preliminary information.

Located in the Nallamala hill ranges, an offshoot of the Eastern Ghats, NSTR is 3,728 sq km big, spread across Palnadu, Nandyala and Prakasam districts.

Bapatla man's killer in USA arrested

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The US police have arrested Davanta Mathis (21) for killing Dasari Gopi Krishna (32), who hailed from Bapatla in Andhra Pradesh. Gopikrishna, was shot dead at the convenience store in Pleasant Grove, Dallas, on Saturday. During the robbery, Mathis brazenly entered the store, approached the counter, and shot Gopikrishna multiple times, including in the head.

The assailant then proceeded to pilfer items before fleeing the scene. Gopikrishna was shifted to the hospital in critical condition but succumbed to his injuries.

Mathis, who was initially apprehended and charged with robbery, now faces the grave charge of capital murder due to

Gopikrishna's untimely demise. The deadly incident was captured on the supermarket's CCTV cameras, providing crucial evidence in the case. Gopikrishna, a native of Yajali village in the Bapatla district, had completed his engineering at a private institution and had ventured to the US in search of job opportunities eight months back. He was residing with a relative and working at the supermarket when the tragic incident occurred.

The death of Gopikrishna left his family, friends, and relatives in a state of shock and grief. He is survived by his wife and son. Efforts are underway to repatriate his mortal remains to his hometown, with his uncle, Laxman, expecting their arrival by Thursday.

Woman attempts suicide near Dy CM's office

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A distressed woman from Rajahmundry, M Durga Devi, attempted suicide in front of Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's camp office in Vijayawada on Tuesday. She alleged that a YSRCP corporator had illegally encroached upon her family's land, depriving them of their rightful property.

Durga Devi stated that repeated complaints to the authorities had yielded no results, driving her to seek justice directly from the Deputy Chief Minister. Upon arriving at the camp office in



Amaravati, she intended to convey her plight but was prevented from meeting Pawan Kalyan by the police. This led her to attempt suicide, a desperate plea for intervention.

Vigilant police personnel promptly intervened, rescuing her and preventing the suicide attempt. The Suryaraopet police

confirmed that Durga Devi's actions were motivated by her frustration over the land issue. She accused a female corporator and a broker of seizing her 1200 square yard property in Rajahmundry.

Despite numerous efforts to resolve the matter through official channels and YSRCP lead-

ers, Durga Devi and her husband found no recourse. They had also tried to meet with the AP Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu but were denied access by the police.

In her final attempt to seek justice, Durga Devi approached the Deputy Chief Minister's office. Though Pawan Kalyan was unavailable at the time, the police advised her to meet with Minister and Jana Sena leader Kandula Durgesh. The police assured her that her concerns would be communicated to the appropriate authorities for further action.

HC deals blow to Kejriwal

● Stays trial court order on bail

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



In a blow to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday stayed the trial court order granting him bail in the money laundering case arising from the alleged excise scam, holding that the lower court did not "appropriately appreciate" the material placed before it by the Enforcement Directorate.

A vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said the ED's contentions assailing the bail order required serious consideration.

"The Vacation (trial) Judge while passing the Impugned Order did not appropriately appreciate the material/documents submitted on record and pleas taken by ED and the averments/grounds as raised in the petition under section 439(2) of the Code require serious consideration," it said. "Accordingly, the present application is allowed and the operation of the Impugned Order is stayed," the court said.

'Priority for welfare..'

Continued from Page 1

He expressed gratitude to DWCRAs groups for their generous contribution of Rs 4.5 crore towards building the capital.

Assuring prompt completion of the Handri-Neeva Srujala Sravanthi branch canal to ensure water supply to every acre in the area, Chandrababu Naidu criticized the previous government's welfare distribution methods. "While they distributed Rs 10, they siphoned off Rs 100. We will provide Rs 15 and pave the way to earn Rs 100," he declared.

The Chief Minister affirmed the government's commitment to elevate living standards across the state. He noted the historical electoral success of the Alliance in all seven segments of the Chittoor Lok Sabha

constituency and highlighted the educational qualifications of newly elected MLAs. "Encouraging youth and supporting weaker sections has always been our priority," Chandrababu Naidu emphasized, pledging to address past injustices and ensure fair treatment for all sections of society.

Promising minimum support prices for all agricultural products, especially commercial crops, Chandrababu Naidu vowed to boost dairy production and transform Kuppam into an education hub. He assured prompt release of salary dues for Dravidian University staff and committed to completing pending projects in the constituency.

Local TDP leaders also contributed generously towards building the capital, reflecting their commitment to the party's vision for progress and development.

It's Birla vs Suresh..

Continued from Page 1

"Last two Lok Sabhas, they denied us deputy speaker's post because they said you are not recognised as the opposition."

"Now we are recognised as the opposition, deputy speaker post is our right. But they are not ready to give us. Till 11.50 we were waiting for reply from government's side but they did not give any reply," he told reporters. Senior BJP leader and Union minister Rajnath Singh reached out to opposition leaders for their support to Birla, but the Congress wanted the deputy speaker's post for the Opposition in return citing convention and past practices. There was no deputy speaker in the previous Lok Sabha. Union Ministers Rajiv Ranjan Singh and Piyush Goyal said it was wrong on the part of Opposition to put conditions and Rajnath Singh told them that the issue can be discussed when time comes for election of deputy speaker.

The opposition, however, wanted the post immediately and the NDA would not agree to such conditions, the two ministers told reporters.

TDP to contest for VMC Standing Committee seats

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Despite the YSRCP holding the majority in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Council, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is planning to contest for seats on the VMC Standing Committee. The TDP aims to secure at least two out of six posts in the committee, currently chaired by Mayor Rayana Bhagya Lakshmi. To achieve this, TDP corporators are strategising to win these seats.



Vijayawada Municipal Corporation office building

VMC Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar has issued a notification for the election of the six Standing Committee posts. For the past three years, these positions have been held by YSRCP corporators.

In the recent general elections, the TDP, BJP, and JSP alliance won the majority of MLA seats in the state, forming the government. Consequently, the TDP is now targeting the prestigious VMC. According to the notification, nominations from corporators will be accepted until July 1.

In the 2021 municipal elections, the TDP won 14 divisions, but one member, Kesineni Swetha, resigned, and another switched to the YSRCP. The YSRCP currently has 50 corporators, with one member switching to the BJP. The VMC council now comprises 50 YSRCP corporators, 13 TDP and BJP corporators, and one vacant post.

In the 2021 municipal elections, the TDP won 14 divisions, but one member, Kesineni Swetha, resigned, and another switched to the YSRCP. The YSRCP currently has 50 corporators, with one member switching to the

BJP. The VMC council now comprises 50 YSRCP corporators, 13 TDP and BJP corporators, and one vacant post.

Despite these numbers, the TDP plans to contest the Standing Committee elections, particularly if a secret

voting system is used. The party leadership believes some YSRCP corporators might vote for TDP candidates. Therefore, the TDP is keen on participating in the Standing Committee election.

According to TDP sources, a final decision will be made after consultations with MLAs and party leadership. Some corporators have already expressed interest in contesting for the VMC Standing Committee. A senior corporator mentioned that if the election uses a secret ballot, the TDP will contest.

Commissioner Pundkar has invited nominations from corporators for the Standing Committee, with the process closing on July 1. If more than six nominations are filed, an election will be necessary. Otherwise, an election will not be required, according to VMC officials.

When contacted by 'The Pioneer', TDP floor leader N Balaswamy stated that the final decision would be made after consulting party leadership and MLAs. He noted that there are still five days left to file nominations.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar takes charge as Vizianagaram Collector

PNS ■ VIJIANAGARAM

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar officially took charge as the District Collector of Vizianagaram on Tuesday. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Dr. Ambedkar affirmed his dedication to the district's progress, stating, "I will do my best for the development of the district and lead the development path in all fields."

He highlighted the significance of aligning with government priorities and drew upon his extensive experience in various capacities within the district, which he believes will provide valuable insights into local conditions.

The new District Collector was warmly welcomed by Joint Collector K Karthik, DRO SD Anitha, and officials from various departments. A large number of representatives from associations and employees also gathered to extend their congratulations to Dr. Ambedkar.

As part of his immediate agenda, Dr BR Ambedkar will chair a crucial review meeting on the spread of seasonal diseases. This meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday at 11 AM in the Collectorate meeting hall.

Govt keen to balance welfare & development: Minister Kolusu

The Minister for Housing and I & PR calls for cooperation from officers and employees



Minister KP Saradhi interacts with APNGO leaders at his residence in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing, Information & Public Relations (I & PR) Kolusu Pardha Saradhi held a meeting with the APNGO leaders to discuss various issues. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government, officers, and staff to achieve sustainable growth across all sectors. He emphasized that all departmental officials must work together to ensure that welfare and developmental activities reach 100% of the public.

On Tuesday, Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted Officers' Association (APNGO) president KV Siva Reddy, general secretary Chowdhary Purushotham Naidu, NTR district president A Vidya Sagar, and other members visited Minister Saradhi at

his residence in Vijayawada. They congratulated and felicitated him.

Following this, Minister Saradhi held a meeting with the APNGO leaders to discuss various issues. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government, officers, and staff to achieve sustainable growth across all sectors. He emphasized that all departmental officials must work together to ensure that welfare and developmental activities reach 100% of the public.

Minister Saradhi called for the cooperation of government employees to ensure that Andhra Pradesh gains significant recognition at the national level within the next five

years. He assured that the government is committed to creating a healthy working environment and will provide all necessary financial and non-financial benefits. He urged the leaders to communicate the government's objectives during their association and union meetings.

The meeting was attended by APNGO Association Secretary MD Iqbal, Associate President P Ramesh, Treasurer V Satish, Vice President Ramakrishna, Joint Secretaries Dilip and Sivaleela, Vijayawada City President CVR Prasad, Secretary Sk Naziruddin, Associate President P Rajasekhara, Organizing Secretary Vemuri Prasad, and other members.

Australian Consulate General meets CRDA Commissioner

Investment prospects in Amaravati discussed



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Since the TDP-led NDA government took office in Andhra Pradesh, its top priority has been to expedite the construction of the Amaravati capital and attract investors from across India and abroad. In line with this objective, Australian Consulate General Silai Zaki, accompanied by a delegation, met with Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (AP CRDA) Commissioner Katamneni Bhaskar at the CRDA central office in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Commissioner Bhaskar elaborated on the Amaravati capital master plan. Consulate General Zaki inquired about the business opportunities available for Australian investors in Amaravati. Commissioner Bhaskar highlighted the significant potential for investments in the business and commercial sectors within the region. The visiting delegation also sought information on the geographical location and other key aspects of Amaravati.

Commissioner Bhaskar indicated that the delegation expressed interest in investing in Amaravati and collaborating with the state government.

Atchannaidu assures all help to farmers during Kharif season

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kinjarapu Atchannaidu, Minister of Agriculture, instructed officials to provide comprehensive support to farmers during the Kharif sowing season. In a review meeting held at the office of the Special Commissioner of Agriculture, the Minister discussed the implementation of relevant action plans with senior officials from the Agriculture and related departments. On his first visit to the office, the Minister received a warm welcome from Special Commissioner of Agriculture Ch Hariikiran and other officials.

During the meeting, the Special Commissioner briefed the Minister on the current conditions and planning for Kharif crops, as well as the number of vacancies in the Agriculture Department. Detailed information on the state's agricultural conditions, farmer demographics, land usage, rainfall statistics, and crop areas was also provided.

The Minister emphasised the importance of expanding departmental services to farmers, especially during the ongoing sowing activities. The



Special Commissioner updated the Minister on seed distribution efforts, available seed stocks, and related schemes, noting that subsidized seeds are being distributed through the "D-Krishi App." Due to timely and sufficient rainfall in the Rayalaseema districts, seeds for Phaseolus trilobus (Pillipesara) and Sunhemp (Janumu) are available, though additional funds are needed.

In response, the Minister directed officials to prepare and submit proposals for outstanding dues to farmers and ensured that all necessary seeds and fertilizers would be supplied without shortage during the Kharif season. He

highlighted the government's commitment to the welfare of tenant farmers, particularly through the agricultural loan scheme.

Attendees included B Rajasekhar, Special Chief Secretary (Agriculture & Cooperatives); Babu Commissioner, Cooperatives; Prashanthi Commissioner, Marketing; Shekhar Babu Geddam, VC & MD, Mark Fed; M Sivaprasad, VC & MD, Andhra Pradesh Seed Development Institution; Sarada Jayalakshmi, VC, ANGRAU; Paladugu Satyanarayana, Director of Research, ANGRAU; and senior officers from allied departments.

Heavy rain likely in north coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Meteorological Centre has forecast heavy rain at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next four days.

According to the daily weather report issued by the Meteorological department, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh is likely to experience similar conditions on June 26 and 27. Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph may occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next five days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at many places, with a few places likely to experience rainfall in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Govt will do justice to cricketer Hanuma Vihari: Nara Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

IT Minister Nara Lokesh announced on Tuesday that the State government is extending a warm welcome to star cricketer and Telugu luminary, Hanuma Vihari, following his resignation as captain of the Andhra cricket team due to excessive political interference.

In a press release, Lokesh stated that the people have vociferously rejected the political outfit that acted in a dictatorial manner, ignoring the fundamental principle that politics should not interfere in sports. He criticized the previous government for its political manoeuvres, including appointing P. Sarath Chandra Reddy, an accused in the Delhi liquor scam, as president of the AP Cricket Association.

Lokesh highlighted that Hanuma Vihari, an outstanding cricketer with unparalleled talent, was harassed and insulted by the Andhra Cricket Association to promote the son of a party leader, Kuntrapakam Prithviraj, who was the 17th



player on the team. Frustrated with the Andhra Cricket Association's functioning, Vihari opted to step down from the captaincy.

Lokesh emphasised that upon learning of this situation, Chief Minister and TDP chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan, he responded immediately, standing firmly by Hanuma Vihari. The hashtag #WeStandWithHanuma also received tremendous support on social media, with numerous cricket fans expressing solidarity with Vihari.

The previous system also obstructed Vihari's efforts to train aspiring cricketers and refused to issue a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for him to lead cricket teams in other states.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP corporators seek solution to drinking water problem

TDP corporators led by floor leader Nelibandla Bala Swamy met Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar and handed over a representation seeking to address the drinking water issue in the city. During the rainy season, contaminated water is supplied through the public taps, they told the Commissioner.

Subsequently, Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar held a meeting with the TDP members. They said that people are calling them to complain about the issue and asked the Commissioner to find a solution as early as possible. The corporators also



TDP corporators submitting a representation to VMC Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar seeking solution to the drinking water problem in Vijayawada on Tuesday

expressed concern over the mosquito menace and spread of viral fever and urged the VMC authorities to address the issue. They also requested Commissioner Swapnil to repair the damaged water pipelines.

TDP corporators Ummadi Venkateswara Rao, Mummaneni Prasad, Potluri Siva Sai Prasad, Vallabhaneni Rajeswari, Chennupati Kranthi, Channagiri Rammohana Rao, Kanchi Durga and former corporator Chennupati Gandhi were present.

NRI donates Rs 2 lakh to Nunna ZP High School

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bhimavarapu Siva Reddy, an NRI and an alumnus of Zilla Parishad High School in Nunna, has donated Rs. 2 lakh for the construction of a shed on the school premises. He handed over a cheque to the school's Headmaster Vazral Bhupal Reddy in Nunna near Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Siva Reddy, a member of the 1988-89 SSC batch, is now settled in the US. Recently, he and his family visited his hometown of Nunna to spend the summer holidays. His wife, Bh Sudha Rani, is also an alumnus of Nunna ZP High School, having completed her SSC in 1990-91.

Invited by the Nunna ZPHS Old Students' Association representative Naredla Satyanarayana Reddy, Siva Reddy visited the high school. He was impressed by the development activities initiated by the former students and donors. This led him to express his willingness to contribute to the school's development, and he announced a Rs. 2 lakh donation for the construction of a shed.

After handing over the



Nunna ZPH School alumnus Bhimavarapu Siva Reddy handing over a cheque for Rs. 2 lakh to HM Bhupal Reddy towards construction of a shed in the school

cheque, Siva Reddy visited the school playground and expressed his happiness. He also toured the toilets constructed by the Rotary Club, as well as the additional classrooms, an auditorium, a science laboratory, and a cycle shed built by former students. He appreciated the efforts of the Physical Directors T Vijaya Varma and T Sri Latha, for producing 11 national-level and numerous State-level athletes. He noted that 11 students from the school participated in the national competitions organised by the School

Games Federation of India for the first time in the school's history, lauding the achievement.

Siva Reddy expressed his commitment to raising more funds for the school's development in the days to come. He stated that he would reach out to old students of the school residing in the USA.

Representatives from the Nunna ZPH School Old Students' Association, including Naredla Satyanarayana Reddy, and School Staff Secretary Nageswara Rao were also present.

Tax Payers' Association demands construction of check dam on Krishna River

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President and secretary of the Tax Payers' Association, V. Sambhi Reddy and M.V. Anjaneyulu, have called upon the State government to construct a check dam upstream on the Krishna River to store approximately 5 TMCs of water. This initiative aims to address Vijayawada City's drinking water issues and reduce reliance on the Prakasam Barrage.

In letters addressed to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Water Resources Minister Nimmala Rama Naidu, Chief Secretary



Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Irrigation Special Chief Secretary G. Sai Prasad, and Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar, the association leaders emphasized the critical need for the check dam.

They noted that 2.70 TMCs of water is essential for the drinking and household needs of Vijayawada's 1.4 million residents, with an additional 2.50 TMCs required for industries, hospitals, hotels, hostels, offices, restaurants, cinema theatres, bus stations, educational institutions, and other establishments.

The leaders also pointed out that the water storage capacity of the Prakasam Barrage has been decreasing due to evaporation, and other sources like the Pulichinthala Project and the Godavari River are experiencing constraints.

The construction of the check dam is viewed as the only viable solution to ensure a dedicated water source for Vijayawada City. Additionally, the association leaders highlighted the necessity for repairs to the city's water pipelines to prevent contamination and recommended replacing old pipelines with new HD pipelines.

Water to tailend lands assured

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources, Nimmala Rama Naidu, has issued instructions to ensure the supply of irrigation water to every acre located at the tail end of each irrigation canal. He directed department officials to focus on field-level canal maintenance to guarantee adequate water supply. Officials were instructed to clean the canals and drains urgently, with a completion deadline of ten days. Necessary measures should also be taken to prevent crop submergence due to floods.



vened a video conference with Superintending Engineers (SEs), Executive Engineers (EEs), and other officials, along with Special

Chief Secretary G. Sai Prasad, Advisor Mamidi Venkateswara Rao, and Engineer-in-Chief (ENC) C. Narayana Reddy, from his

chamber at the Velagapudi Secretariat on Tuesday. During the conference, Rama Naidu criticised the previous government's neglect of many irrigation projects, canals, drains, and lift irrigation schemes, which failed to provide adequate irrigation water. He emphasized that both current Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and former CM Dr. N.T. Rama Rao prioritized the irrigation sector.

With the Kharif season underway, the minister called for detailed proposals to clean canals and drains within ten days and instructed immediate action for the removal of

silt and weeds. He noted that these maintenance activities should have been completed by May but were neglected by the previous YSRCP government. He also questioned officials for their lack of attention to Maintenance and Operation (O & M) works.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the neglect of significant irrigation projects such as Pulichinthala and Gundlakamma, Rama Naidu requested proposals for repairs across all state projects. He affirmed his government's commitment to ensuring that every acre at the tail end of canals receives sufficient irrigation water.



'Let us fulfil people's aspirations'

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan has called upon newly-elected JSP MLAs to work to fulfil the aspirations of the people.

An awareness meeting was held for the newly elected JSP MLAs in the state office at Mangalagiri on Tuesday. Addressing the MLAs, Pawan Kalyan recalled that the JSP had won the elections with a 100 per cent strike rate with the blessings of the people.

"Keeping this in view, the MLAs should work efficiently and sincerely as per the aspirations of people. The JSP MLAs should raise the issues of people in the Assembly, reflecting the aspirations of people," Pawan Kalyan told them.

Stating that most of the JSP MLAs are first-timers, he asked them to improve their knowledge on how to behave in the Assembly. He advised them to behave in a dignified manner

in the Assembly and follow the traditions of the House.

"Our behaviour and manner of discussion should be appreciated by people. We took oath in the House a few days ago. For the first 100 days, focus on understanding and studying administrative matters. Study the Government procedures, rules, schemes, their implementation and reaching of welfare schemes to the beneficiaries also. If you do so, your discussions in the House will be powerful," he told them.

Advising the MLAs to strive hard to resolve the grievances of people, he underlined the need for infrastructure development at the village level.

"Do not compromise anywhere to maintain law and order. Prioritise the protection of women. Cannabis and drug mafia have created alarming situations. The society must protect the youth from drug mafias and blade batches. We are cracking down on those

gangs," the Deputy Chief Minister asserted.

There may be intensity of feeling while talking about the matter, he said adding that the language they use, should be simple and polite. He instructed the JSP MLAs not to use abusive language in discussions in the House and with officers and employees. Be respectful to people and listen carefully when they express their grievances, he told the MLAs.

Pawan Kalyan also asked the JSP MPs and MLAs to organize 'Abhinandan' programmes in their constituencies to reach out to the people and to convey gratitude for electing them.

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar said that the budget session would begin soon and asked the MLAs to prepare to raise issues and participate in debates in the Assembly by studying relevant subjects. Tourism and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh was also present.

6-foot snake captured in Tirumala



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A 6-foot Indian Krait snake was captured in the D Quarters area of Tirumala on Tuesday.

The pilgrims at the D quarter spotted the poisonous snake slithering into the area. The TTD vigilance staff informed the matter to the officials. Snake catcher Bhaskar Naidu rushed to the place and captured the reptile. Later, he released the snake in the forest area.

SP gives away communication sets to cops in Kurnool dist

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Superintendent of Police G Krishnakanth here on Tuesday gave away advanced communication sets to the traffic police personnel.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP said that the communication sets are very useful in emergencies to pass information to the officials concerned.

He said that Advanced Communication sets (Man Packs) were given to the traffic police personnel to deploy police personnel to the place where traffic congestion or a major accident occurs.

The SP added that the Communication sets are useful when vehicular traffic is disrupted for any reason, VIP visits and Ganesh immersion to know the situation and to deploy additional forces.

When a major accident takes place, the traffic police could pass on information to the officials immediately so that the officials concerned reach the place at the earliest, the SP said.

The SP exhorted the traffic



police personnel to work with diligence and ensure that there would be no traffic snarls in the city. Traffic CI Gowthami

and Communication CI K Manohar were among those who took the Communication Sets.

Pawan to visit Pithapuram for 3 days from July 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan is scheduled to visit his constituency of Pithapuram from July 1 for a three-day tour. On the evening of July 1, he will host the Varahi Sabha in Pithapuram to express gratitude to the constituency for their overwhelming support in the elections. During his visit, he will engage in various official engagements across Pithapuram and the former East Godavari district.

During his stay, Pawan Kalyan will also review the developmental and welfare initiatives in the Pithapuram constituency, alongside officials from the Kakina district, culminating in a special meeting focused on the constituency's infrastructure and growth prospects.

Additionally, before his Pithapuram visit, on June 29, the Deputy CM will visit the Anjaneya Swamy Temple in Kondagattu to offer prayers and perform special pujas.



Expedite construction of BC hostel buildings: Minister Savitha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC Welfare S Savitha directed the officials concerned to take steps to expedite the construction of BC hostel buildings.

On Tuesday, she met with the state BC and WWS welfare department officials at the state Secretariat and reviewed the progress of various welfare and development programs being conducted departmentally. Minister Savitha has directed the officials to speedily complete the construction works of unfinished BC buildings and BC residential schools in the state.

She directed the officials to submit a report on the repairs to be undertaken to provide better facilities to the students in the hostels and residential schools. The Minister instructed the officials to take needed steps to complete the construction of buildings in Chittoor, Srikakulam and Kurnool districts.

The construction works of BC residential school build-

ings, which are under construction at Gundumala, Gudibanda, Gonebavi, Roddam, Dhone, Bethancharla and Thondur areas should be completed expeditiously, she directed.

"To more effectively implement the schemes by the BC and WWS welfare department, complaints should be received through the toll-free number," she told them.

The officials were directed to provide an effective training programme to the candidates competing in Mega DSC through BC Study Circles, advising the officials to prepare a calendar for conducting training programs in the study circles.

"If the tools and equipment, meant for the distribution of BC artisans, are still in the warehouses," the Minister said and ordered the officials to submit a comprehensive report on them.

BC Welfare Special Secretary Anantaram, Director Krishna Mohan and BC Finance Corporation MD Kishore Kumar were among those who attended the meeting.

Aide of Akhila Priya murdered in Allagadda

PNS ■ NANDYALA

In a gruesome incident, unidentified miscreants attacked a couple at Paturu Street in Allagadda town on Tuesday night and brutally stabbed to death a woman while her husband was critically injured.

Police said that miscreants attacked Atla Bhashar Reddy and his wife the deceased Atla Sridevi (55) and stabbed them indiscriminately. Both were shifted to the government hospital where the woman died.

The deceased woman Atla Sridevi is said to be a close associate of former Minister and TDP MLA Bhuma Akhila Priya. She worked actively in the election campaign for the TDP.

MLA Akhila Priya visited the body of Sridevi in the hospital. She directed the police officials to take stringent action against the culprits. The murders sent shockwaves in Allagadda town. The police are yet to ascertain whether the murder was faction-related.

Scrap GO No 2430: APUWJ

Union says it was brought by previous YSRCP government to threaten media

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State executive committee meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) has demanded that the State government scrap GO No.2430, which was brought by the previous YSRCP government to threaten the media. The previous government did not concentrate on resolving the journalists' problems. However, they faced harassment from the governments, the meeting said.

The APUWJ State executive meeting was held at the Vijayawada Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Union State president IV Subba Rao presided over the meeting and the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) national president and Telangana Media Academy chairman K Srinivas Reddy attended as a chief guest. Before the meeting, guests and the union leaders paid floral tributes to Ambati Anjaneyulu.

Speaking at the event, Srinivas Reddy expressed journalists' expectations from the new government to address



Telangana Media Academy Chairman Srinivas Reddy addressing the APUWJ State executive committee meeting held at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Vijayawada on Tuesday

their issues and suggested giving the government some time for resolution. However, he emphasised that if the issues were not resolved, journalists should stand up against the government. He also stressed the need for unions to condemn any government actions that threaten press freedom and freedom of expression.

He further stated that unions should denounce the government's actions against press freedom and freedom of expression. He also urged journalists to resist attacks and called for opposition to

changes in the laws governing working journalists by the Central government.

Besides, he called for resistance against any changes to the working journalists' acts proposed by the Centre. The union leaders also honoured senior journalist Dr K Murali Mohan, who was elected as MLA from the Puthalapattu constituency. APUWJ State general secretary Ch Janardhan, IJU national secretary D Somasundar, along with other members and leaders, were present at the meeting.

TIDCO housing scheme beneficiaries face loan payment ordeal

Construction delays have left them facing monthly loan installments without occupying the houses

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A significant bureaucratic hurdle has emerged within the TIDCO housing scheme for underprivileged families in Visakhapatnam. While over 11,575 beneficiaries have received loan approvals for their allotted houses, construction delays have left them facing monthly loan installments without occupying the promised dwellings.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government initiated the TIDCO scheme, constructing 4,000 houses allocated through a lottery. However, the YSR Congress Party government, upon assuming power in 2019, annulled previous allotments and conducted a fresh survey, re-allocating over 24,000 houses. Despite this renewed effort, construction has stalled.

Financial institutions approved loans for houses ranging from 300 to 430 square feet for the re-allocated beneficiaries. With a two-year grace period, these loans have now transitioned to requiring monthly installments. This financial burden falls upon families who are still paying rent for their current residences, creating a financial strain.

While loan approvals proceeded, construction overseen by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has yet to be completed. Only 7,500 houses have been handed over to date, leaving a considerable number of beneficiaries in a precarious situation. Complaints to GVMC officials have yielded limited results, prompting some beneficiaries to formally lodge grievances.

Owaisi says 'Jai Palestine' after taking oath

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi Tuesday hailed a conflict-hit West Asian country after taking oath as a member of the 18th Lok Sabha, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches that led to the Chair ordering that the remarks be expunged.

Owaisi, however, justified his slogans after he came out of the House and told reporters there was nothing wrong in him saying "Jai Bheem, Jai Meem, Jai Telangana, Jai Palestine".

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, meanwhile, said he has received complaints from some members about the mention of Palestine.

Asked about his remarks, Owaisi told reporters, "Other members are also saying differ-

ent things... How is it wrong? Tell me the provision of the Constitution? You should also listen to what others said. I said what I had to. Read what Mahatma Gandhi had said about Palestine".

Asked why he mentioned Palestine, he said, "They are oppressed people."

The All India Majlis-e-Muslimeen leader, who has been elected from the Hyderabad seat for his fifth term, took oath in Urdu. He also recited a prayer before taking oath.

After taking oath, he hailed his state Telangana, Bhimrao Ambedkar, apart from raising the AIMIM's slogan for Muslim, along with the West Asian country. His remarks led to uproar in the Lower House. Radha Mohan Singh, who was in the Chair at



the time, assured the members that anything apart from the oath will not go on record.

The uproar continued for few minutes, after which the oath-taking resumed.

Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahant returned to the Chair soon, and said that only oath or affirmation is being recorded.

"I have said earlier please avoid invoking anything other than oath or affirmation. That is

only to be recorded... That should be adhered to," Mahant said.

Talking to reporters outside Parliament later, Rijiju said he will check the rules regarding remarks.

"We do not have any enmity with Palestine or any other country. The only issue is, while taking the oath, is it proper for any member to raise the slogan praising another country? We will have to check the rules. Some members have come to me and complained about raising of Palestine slogan at the end of oath," Rijiju said.

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy, meanwhile, took a jibe at Owaisi, questioning if he could say "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" (hail mother India).

He said Owaisi's remarks are "totally wrong and against the

rules of Parliament". "Living in India, he cannot say 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', but he can hail Palestine. Such people are doing anti-Constitutional work in the name of Constitution, that should be understood,"

BJP leader Amit Malviya, meanwhile, objected to the prayer said by Owaisi.

"Palestine apart, is invoking religious idioms kosher, while taking oath in secular India? Is Owaisi guilty of infusing religion and communalising a solemn occasion?" Malviya said in a post on X.

Malviya claimed Owaisi can be disqualified for this. "As per extant rules, Asaduddin Owaisi can be disqualified from his Lok Sabha membership, for demonstrating adherence to a foreign State, that is Palestine."

15 red sanders logs seized; 6 smugglers arrested

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The task force police seized 15 red sanders logs, and two cars and arrested six smugglers at Mallepally forest area in Kadapa district.

DSP Chenchu Babu told the media here on Tuesday that on the directions of SP V Harshavardhan Raju, a police team led by RSI Muralidhar Reddy conducted combing in the Mallepally forest area on Tuesday.

The police team saw a group of smugglers loading red sanders logs into two cars. When the police team approached them, some of the smugglers fled into the forest. However, the police chased and apprehended Yatagiri Hari, Koppili Sudhakar Reddy, Prabha, Ramesh, Ravi and Ayyappa Muncan. All the smugglers belong to Tamil Nadu state. The police seized 15 red sanders logs, two cars and two motorcycles. The police launched a search to nab the escaped smugglers. CI Suresh Kumar registered a case.

Fake news circulated to divert public attention from poll promises: Perni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) has said that false propaganda has been cooked up against former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's security. There were 196 security personnel when YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was the CM. Nani alleged that CM Chandrababu and Lokesh are spreading fake news every day and carrying out venomous campaigns with their pro-media to tarnish the image of Jagan Reddy.

Nani said that this false news is being circulated only to mislead people from the election promises given to the people including Super Six. He asked if they have the guts to reveal how many people are providing security to Chandrababu. "If Jagan has 196 security personnel, how can they write 986 security personnel? When Chandrababu was CM, security was given to Lokesh, Bhuvaneshwari, Brahmini and Devansh. Wasn't Devansh given security with four security personnel," Nani asked.



"Because it is a matter of security no one questioned them, but they are hell bent on spreading false news against YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's security now. False propaganda is being done against the former CM's Tadepalli residence, too," he said, asked if they have the guts to release the photos of Chandrababu's residence in Jubilee Hills. Nani asked what is there in Jagan's residence in Tadepalli. He asked if they are ready to give the details of the luxuries in their homes and appoint an expert committee to value them. "Are you ready to show Jubilee Hills residence to all the media including Sakshi," he challenged.

INDIA CORNER

Court rejects gangster Abu Salem's plea against prison transfer

Sessions court here on Tuesday rejected gangster Abu Salem's application against his planned transfer from the Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai to another jail in Maharashtra. Salem, sentenced to life imprisonment in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case, claimed that the decision to shift him out of the Talaja prison was a "conspiracy to kill him" as he was likely to be released in a few months. The current prison was very safe for him and he could be attacked by members of rival gangs in other jails in the state, his plea said. The jail administration told the court that his current cell was needed to be rebuilt, and there was no other safe cell for him at Talaja. Judge B D Shelke, after hearing both the sides, rejected Salem's plea. The court, however, asked the prison authority not to implement the order till July 3 to enable the gangster to approach the high court.



10 more fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka, CM tells Centre

Chief Minister M K Stalin on Tuesday flagged the arrest of ten more Tamil Nadu fishermen by Sri Lanka and sought the Centre's intervention to secure the release of 47 fishermen, now in custody in Sri Lanka. He also sought measures to get as many as 166 fishing boats in the island nation's custody released. Writing to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Stalin, expressing anguish, said the Sri Lankan Navy on June 25, 2024 apprehended ten fishermen, who set sail from Nagapattinam fishing harbour and their mechanised fishing boat. This year alone, 203 fishermen and 27 boats have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. The frequent arrests of fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan authorities have created an insecure atmosphere among the fishermen community.



52 drug samples fail regulatory body's quality test

India's apex drugs regulatory body has found the samples of around 50 drugs, including that of widely-used paracetamol, pantoprazole and some antibiotics for treating bacterial infections, as not of standard quality. Of these sub-standard drugs, 22 are manufactured in Himachal Pradesh, according to the alert issued by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) for the month of May. Besides Himachal Pradesh, the samples were collected from Jaipur, Hyderabad, Waghodia and Vadodara in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Indore, among other places. A total of 52 samples have failed the quality test conducted by the CDSCO, according to the drug alert issued on June 20. Sources said state drug regulators have reportedly sent notices to the pharmaceutical companies concerned and the failed samples would be recalled from the market.



Russia looking at Indian PM Modi's brief visit to Moscow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Russia are looking at the possibility of a brief visit to Moscow by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in early July to hold wide-ranging talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday.



If the visit takes place, it will be Modi's first trip to Russia in nearly five years. His last visit to Russia was in 2019 when he attended an economic conclave in the Far East city of Vladivostok.

"But we are actively preparing. I will emphasise once again, this visit will take place," he told reporters, replying to a question.

Diplomatic sources said the Indian prime minister's day-long visit is being planned around July 8, adding there is no finality on the date yet and various options are being explored.

If Modi travels to Russia, then he and President Putin are set to hold the India-Russia annual summit after a gap of three years.

The annual summit between the prime minister of India and the president of Russia is the highest institutional dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The summit saw both sides sealing 28 MoUs and agreements, besides coming out with a joint statement titled "India-Russia Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity". Prime Minister Modi and President Putin last held bilateral talks on the margins of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at Samarkand in Uzbekistan on September 16, 2022.

Cong crushed spirit of Constitution for maintaining a family in power: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah came out strongly against the Congress on Tuesday for imposing the Emergency in the country and said the opposition party crushed the spirit of the Constitution several times for the sake of "maintaining a certain family in power". On the 49th anniversary of the 1975 Emergency, Shah also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, calling him the "yuvraj" of the party and saying it has forgotten that his grandmother Indira Gandhi had imposed the Emergency and his father Rajiv Gandhi said in Parliament on July 23, 1985, that "there is nothing wrong with an emergency". "The Congress crushed the spirit of our Constitution several times for the sake of maintaining a certain family in power. Indira Gandhi unleashed ruthless atrocities on the people of India during Emergency," Shah wrote on X.

IAF chief: India must invest in modernisation of armed forces

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari said on Tuesday the contemporary security landscape presents "multi-faceted challenges" from border disputes and terrorism to cyber threats and regional volatility, and India must invest in modernisation of its armed forces to navigate through these "turbulent times". Delivering a keynote address at a seminar here, the IAF chief also said modern warfare is characterised by rapid technological advancements, asymmetric threats and the need for a comprehensive understanding of geopolitical, social and cultural contexts.



His remarks come amid the backdrop of evolving geopolitics with conflicts being seen in some of the regions of the world. The seminar was hosted by the Indian Air Force (IAF), College of Air Warfare (CAW) and Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) at the Air Force Auditorium at Subroto Park to mark the culmination of the

third Warfare & Aerospace Strategy Programme (WASP). "This programme has enabled us to refine the definition of scholar warriors," the IAF chief said. "This 'multi-faceted landscape' requires such military personnel who are not only adept at combat but also possess a deep understanding of the broader implications of their actions, the air chief marshal said. Therefore, in my opinion, a scholar warrior is a military professional who combines intellectual acumen with combat prowess in today's increasingly complex and dynamic security environment," Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari asserted.

CJI appeals to citizens, lawyers to take part in special Lok Adalat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Highlighting the huge backlog of cases, Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Tuesday appealed to all litigants and lawyers to participate in the special Lok Adalat from July 29 to August 3 to facilitate amicable settlement of suitable pending cases.



The special Lok Adalat is being organised in the 75th year of the establishment of the apex court, which came into existence on January 26, 1950 with the coming into force of the Constitution.

He said all judges, as people dedicated to the institution of justice, are concerned about the large backlog of cases. "The Lok Adalat represents a very informal and technology-based solution to resolve cases involving our citizens to their satisfaction in a purely voluntary consensual mode. Therefore, on behalf of all my colleagues and the staff of the Supreme Court, I would appeal to all the citizens who have cases before the court and

Rahul, Akhilesh, Hema, Kanimozhi take oath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Hema Malini, and Kanimozhi Karunanidhi were among the prominent members to be sworn in on the second day of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha.

Union minister and BJP leader Narayan Rane, Supriya Sule of the NCP (SP), Arvind Sawant of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and Shrikant Shinde of the Shiv Sena were also among the newly-elected members who took oath on Tuesday.



Among those present in the House for the swearing-in speaker said 262 newly-elected members of the Lok Sabha took oath on Monday and the remainder would be sworn in on Tuesday.

Many of the MPs raised "Jai Hind", "Jai Maharashtra", "Jai Bheem" and "Jai Shivaji" slogans after taking oath. BJP leader Om Birla, who has been nominated for the speaker's post, also took oath on Tuesday.

'Ruckus' over hooch tragedy

AIADMK MLAs suspended from TN assembly for a day



Members of the opposition AIADMK in the Tamil Nadu Assembly were suspended for a day on Tuesday for allegedly creating a ruckus after they tried to raise the issue of the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy during Question Hour.

NHRC issues notices to Tamil Nadu govt, DGP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NHRC on Tuesday said it has issued notices to the Tamil Nadu government and police chief in connection with the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi district and sought a report in a week. Till Monday, 58 people had died in the district after consuming illicit liquor. As many as 219 people have been admitted to various hospitals.

TALKS OVER WATER SHARING WITH B'DESH Centre denies Mamata's claim of not including Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Centre on Tuesday claimed that the West Bengal government was kept well-informed and actively involved in the review and renewal process of the 'India-Bangladesh Treaty'.

Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, said West Bengal government officers participated in the meetings, held between August 2023 and April 2024, to review the 'India-Bangladesh Treaty' of 1996.

There are communications which revealed that the West Bengal government was not only informed but there were representatives who also actively participated in the process by providing critical data necessary for the water sharing treaty's renewal considerations. These actions unequivocally show that the state government was kept well-informed and actively involved in the treaty's review and renewal process," the official told PTI from New Delhi.

MP ministers to now pay IT; Cabinet revokes 52-yr-old rule

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday decided that state ministers will have to pay their Income Tax, instead of the state government bearing such burden.



Chief Minister Mohan Yadav in a statement said the Cabinet has taken a decision to strike off the 1972 rule, under which the state government was paying the Income Tax on the salaries and perks of ministers.

'Non-coffee drinkers at 60% more risk of dying'

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Members of the opposition AIADMK in the Tamil Nadu Assembly were suspended for a day on Tuesday for allegedly creating a ruckus after they tried to raise the issue of the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy during Question Hour.

The researchers at the Medical College of Soochow University's School of Public Health in China also found that sedentary coffee drinkers were at a 24 per cent lower risk of death compared to non-coffee drinkers sitting for at least six hours a day.

The result, not featuring in the study, was calculated at The Washington Post's request, according to the media website's report. "The benefits of coffee consumption in improving overall survival in adults compared to sedentary behaviour are manifold," the authors wrote in the study. Consuming coffee lowers risk of metabolic problems known to worsen inflammation, which contributes to heightening death risks because of sedentary behaviour, they said.

In their study, the authors found that the risk of dying from any cause significantly lowered -- by 33 per cent -- among a fourth of all the participants consuming highest amounts of coffee compared to non-coffee drinkers.



The results were consistent with those from previous studies, which have found a link between drinking more coffee and a lowered risk of dying from any cause and heart disease, they said.

Compounds present in coffee, including caffeine and polyphenols, are anti-inflammatory in nature. However, how exactly coffee works in the body to lower risk of dying is still unclear, the researchers said. Further, the team also found that sitting for more than eight hours a day was linked with over 40 per cent higher risk of death from any cause and almost 80 per cent higher risk of dying due to heart disease.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A new leaf

The 18th Lok Sabha begins on a promising note amid Opposition challenges to the Government

The much-awaited inaugural session of 18th Lok Sabha started on June 24th. This marks a pivotal moment in India's democratic journey. With the NDA returning to power albeit with lesser seats would make it a much-balanced house than the 17th Lok Sabha in which NDA had brute majority. However, the political landscape has undergone significant shifts which will reflect in the functioning of the new Lok Sabha. Indeed, the priorities set in this session will shape India's trajectory for the next five years. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha hit the controversy on its very first day. The leaders of the INDIA bloc staged a protest outside Parliament on Monday, coinciding with the oath-taking ceremony of newly elected Members of Parliament. Key figures, including Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, party leader Sonia Gandhi, and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, held copies of the Constitution as they demonstrated against the BJP-led NDA government. The swearing-in process for other Union ministers and newly elected MPs was conducted by Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab. Members of the Congress and the INDIA bloc, who are part of parliamentary panels, opted out of assisting with the oath-taking process for the newly elected MPs. They expressed their dissatisfaction over the appointment of BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahtab as pro-tem Speaker instead of their preferred candidate, eight-time Congress MP K Suresh. This is a first indication that the functioning of this Lok Sabha would not be smooth.



The 18th Lok Sabha's first session will continue until July 3. The election for the Lok Sabha Speaker is set for June 26, and President Murmu will address a joint session of both houses on June 27. Interestingly this session will see the appointment of a Leader of the Opposition for the first time in a decade. The session is expected to be contentious, with the opposition poised to challenge the BJP-led NDA on various issues, including the Speaker election on June 26, paper leaks in NEET-UG and UGC-NET exams, and disputes over the pro-tem Speaker's appointment. The opposition aims to address rising prices, food inflation, fatalities due to extreme heatwaves, and recent 'irregularities' in exam administrations. The 18th Lok Sabha is expected to prioritize measures to boost economic growth, tackle inflation, and create employment opportunities. The new session is also expected to focus on social justice, addressing issues related to inequality and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth reach all sections of society. Besides India's strategic interests and security concerns are expected to be prominent in the 18th Lok Sabha's deliberations in the wake of terrorist attacks in Jammu. Beefing up security and restoring law and order in various parts of the country should be taken up on priority. This session not only sets the legislative framework but also reflects the aspirations of a diverse and dynamic nation, eager to carve out a resilient and equitable path forward in a rapidly changing global landscape.

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PICTALK



An Indian cricket fan blows into a shell horn prior to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket match

AP/PTI

Lessons from the life of Lord Rama!

Our experiences, coupled with the wisdom imparted through stories told by our elders or discovered in books, often shape us in profound ways

Our experiences, and even the stories narrated by our elders or those read by us, impart a certain wisdom. Many of these get so deeply ingrained in our minds that often we develop characteristics unknown to our conscious self. My mother always kept a copy of Ramcharitmanas in her prayer corner. We would listen wide-eyed to her recitation of the chaupais (a quatrain verse of Indian poetry), my imagination running wild with the story of Lord Rama, and his victory over evil. It remained a story to me in my growing up years, till I joined my railway job.



I was the head of my department in a division, sandwiched between two other divisions. My location required me to have smooth coordination with my neighbours. One day I complained to our mutual boss in the headquarters about the non-cooperation of my colleagues from the adjoining divisions, to be snubbed by him, "You are now a senior officer. You should handle these minor issues at your level." I was 29, with a working experience of only 5 years. It did not mat-

ter that I did not consider myself senior enough. It was the position that I held that imparted me the authority and consequently responsibility. The observation had gone home. I was a leader and had to act like one taking everyone with me to attain my goals. As a branch head, I was also responsible for allotting government accommodation to the staff under my control. It was a routine exercise following the waitlist; however, the branch head had the discretionary authority to make an out-of-turn allotment. A few days into my posting, I was approached by the widow of

one staff, supported by a few union leaders, for an out-of-turn allotment on compassionate grounds. I passed the orders. Then I started having doubts, knowing that I would now also be approached by the rival union for favour. I refused the approach several weeks later despite their polite requests to follow the precedence I had set. I learned that it was important to be fair while making decisions. One day a few union leaders came to me quite agitated. They complained about the disrespectful communication by one of my junior officers. The officer had used the Hindi tum (you), instead of the more respectable aap (you), when addressing a staff. I tried to assuage their hurt sentiments by pointing out the north Indian origins of the junior officer, where, in some regions, even the parents are addressed as tum. I learned to respect the local sentiments. I also learned the importance of nurturing relations. Armed with bookish knowledge, I was a novice in the practical professional life. The staff had been dealing with these issues far before I had

joined the engineering college and many even before I was born. I had no hesitation to sit with them without any biases and learn. I took strength from the stories of Nishad, Shabri, Sugriva, and many others. It was only after I faced difficult situations in my professional life, I understood that the life of Lord Rama as a prince and then king was tough. He had to uphold integrity in his public life even at the cost of personal suffering. He also had to build and nurture new relationships without preconceived notions to fight for the good. I had learned important lessons from the stories narrated by my mother. Ramcharitmanas was not just a story, it was a way of life! Following the principles that He lived and fought for on this earth was the true devotion that I could offer. I did not need the sanctuary of a temple to pray!

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

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Inordinate delay in naming new army chief

The Govt's decision to extend the tenure of Chief of Army Staff by 30 days, instead of announcing the new appointee has sparked controversy and conjecture



ASHOK K MEHTA

It is intriguing why the appointment of Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi was not announced on 26 May but on 11 June which would have obviated a 30-day extension to COAS Gen Manoj Pande and the unnecessary speculation that followed. Government would not have been deterred by Model Code of Conduct for election as it had already appointed VAdm Dinesh Tripathi as Chief of Naval Staff on 19 April. That a supersession was contemplated but not implemented as the '400 paar' goal, even 272 mark were missed probably led to discretion superseding valour. Further NDA allies had already flagged the Agniveer issue!

Strange are the ways of the government. Just six days before Pande's superannuation - bringing the appointment down to wire - it ordered an extension after he had been feted out by his successor on 21 May. The extension was quite baffling. Government officials like Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary and others (including Director ED) who run government for politicians get extensions as a matter of routine. In the case of ED's Sanjay Mishra, Supreme Court had to intervene to issue a deadline. But bureaucrats have made themselves indispensable like the repetition of NSA shows. The extension to COAS triggered extensive speculation: The last extension was given to COAS Gen Gopal Bewoor who succeeded Field Marshal Manekshaw. This extension ensured that Lt Gen PS Bhagat, a Victoria Cross winner was denied the post of COAS, opening the path for Lt Gen Tappy Raina, a Kashmiri, to get the coveted job. Incidentally, both Bewoor and Bhagat were Rimcolians (studied at RIMC Dehradun) and good friends. Appointments of CDS and COAS have got highly politicised but their stature diminishing - as their most conspicuous relegation in the seating plan during PM's oath taking ceremony demonstrated. No one but they are to blame. Equally unusual was Defence Minister Minister Rajnath Singh being welcomed back to MOD by CDS Gen Anil Chauhan holding



a bouquet. A soldier's salute is the highest tribute. A month's extension in the armed forces is a first, though in one case, extension was given for one day. The extension will affect the line of succession beyond the present contenders. VCOAS Lt Gen Dwivedi was the seniormost followed by Lt Gen Ajai Singh GoC-in-C Southern Command. Both were batchmates but the tyranny of order of merit while graduating from IMA dictates seniority. Both were to retire on 30 June. Next senior was Northern Army Commander. Lt Gen Suchindra Kumar followed by Lt Gen Raja Subramani Central Command. Interestingly all the Generals named except the outgoing COAS who is an Engineer officer are Infanteers. Pande is the first Sapper officer to break the glass ceiling. On 1 July the new Army Commanders will be Lt Gens Raja Subramani VCOAS, Devu Sharma AARTRAC, Dhiraj Seth Southern, Sengupta South Western and Manjinder Singh Central. Traditionalists hold that extensions in the military are not par for the course as they disrupt the line of succession and officers should refuse to accept extension. It is the government's prerogative to choose a Service Chief by seniority, merit and deep selection



GOVERNMENTS MUST NOT BE SEEN BREACHING THE SACROSANCT SERVICE RULE BOOK OR INVENTING NEW RULES. INSTANCES OF SUPERSESSON ARE RARE: THE MOST RECENT BEING THE APPOINTMENT OF LATE GEN BIPIN RAWAT AS COAS WHO OVERTOOK TWO SENIOR GENERALS

superseding officers or even recalling the selected from retirement. But service rules should not be tweaked whimsically. In 2014 after BJP won the elections it tried to prevent the ruling UPA from appointing the senior most Gen Dalbir Suhag as COAS. The thing is, Governments must not be seen breaching the sacrosanct service rule book or inventing new rules. Instances of supersession are rare: the most recent being the appointment of late Gen Bipin Rawat as COAS who overtook two senior Generals. Supersessions have happened in the Navy and Air Force also. Admiral Robin Dhawan in 2014 and Admiral Karambir Singh in 2019 superseded their senior VADM's Shekhar Sinha and Bimal Verma. Superseded officers have generally resigned but some continued to serve. So why the one-month extension to Gen Pande. The government wanted to be back in power (as it was on 9 June) before taking any unusual step like deviating from seniority principle. Remember all three - Incumbent Pande, next senior Dwivedi followed by Singh - were all to retire on 30 June. If government had wanted to appoint senior most Lt Gen Dwivedi as COAS, his name could have been announced on 26 May as it had announced appointment of

VAdm Tripathi as CNS on 19 April while moral code of conduct was on. Instead, the government preoccupied with election extended service of Gen Pande giving itself more leeway in naming new COAS. Choices were A) appoint the senior most Dwivedi, B) retire both Dwivedi and Singh and appoint either Suchindra Kumar or Raja Subramani or And C) Supersede Dwivedi and appoint Singh by tweaking the rulebook (one day extension for Singh) or deep-select from other eligible Army Commanders. In the Air Force, service rules were tweaked by MoD in 1988. Air Chief Marshal Polly Mehra retired on 31 July. Air Marshal Nimmi Suri who was to retire on 31 July was given one day extension and appointed Air Chief Marshal and Chief of Air Staff, superseding Air Marshal MM Singh. In another case I believe the forenoon/afternoon tweak was applied which is being replicated now - retiring Gen Pande F/N and appointing Gen Dwivedi in A/N. The extension merely created a storm in a tea cup, the El Nino effect! (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COMBATING LONELINESS

Madam — The World Health Organization (WHO) declared loneliness a "global health threat" in November 2023 and should be commended for launching the WHO Commission on Social Connection to address this issue. Connecting with others has become easier in our modern era of smartphones and the internet. Here are a few practical suggestions to help older individuals combat loneliness: Each apartment complex or neighborhood should have a common room for social gatherings and reading, where people can read newspapers and magazines, chat, discuss general topics, and stay until family members return home from work. Employ a coordinator for the social room to attend to the needs of the elderly, such as running errands, engaging in conversations, and providing a cheerful atmosphere.

A written understanding should be established that discussions in the common room remain private to prevent controversies. Allow lonely individuals from nearby homes to join. Provide cots for naps and encourage bringing lunch boxes. Encourage keeping pets. Promote hobbies such as gardening, puzzle-solving, and reading. Participate in social platforms. Create quiz groups on WhatsApp and other social platforms for daily quizzes, with participants taking turns to pose questions and answers. Make humor and laughter sessions mandatory in every apartment complex, educational institution, and workplace, at least for 10 minutes each morning and evening. The internet offers an endless supply of jokes that are considerate of others' feelings.

PVS Sreelekha | Secundarabad

OPPOSITION TAKES ON GOVT

Madam — The parliamentary session starting on June 24 promises to be significant, as it marks the first time in a decade that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will not govern alone. New mem-

Monetary compensation to housewives



Housewives are just as valuable as their employed male counterparts in families. From managing household chores to planning family events, housewives possess a range of skills that many working men cannot match. Years ago, the Supreme Court challenged the census for categorizing homemakers as 'non-workers' and called for laws to recognize their economic contribution. A woman's

role as a mother, wife, and homemaker should itself be regarded as productive work, transcending mere monetary value. She brings emotional attachment and selfless service to the family. Society often views housewives solely as nurturers, failing to respect them as individuals independent of their familial roles. It took insightful minds and the efforts of many women to rebrand the term 'housewife' to the more respectful 'homemaker.' Unpaid household work by women must be recognized as productive labor, not just as tasks done for the family's welfare. The reality is that in most cases, women have little choice when it comes to housework. It's high time the contributions of homemakers are acknowledged through appropriate monetary compensation.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

bers of Parliament will take the oath of secrecy, overseen by temporary speaker Bhartruhari Mehtab. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), including the BJP's 240 members, now totals 294 members, highlighting a shift in the political landscape. The Congress party, with 100 seats, alongside its allies totaling 234 seats, will have a strengthened position, allowing it to assume the role of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha for the first time in ten years. This change amplifies the opposition's ability to hold the government accountable on issues like inflation, unemployment, and the ongoing violence in Manipur. This 18th Lok Sabha stands out for its strong opposition, and how the ruling party navigates this dynamic will be closely observed in the coming days.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

INDO-BANGLADESH TIES GET A BOOST

Madam — This has with reference to your editorial "Friend in need" published on June 24. Bangladesh Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina's two-day visit to India highlighted the tight relationship between the two countries. The two countries signed ten agreements and memoranda of understanding, but the agreement struck on India's plan to send a technical team to conserve and manage the Teesta River garnered special notice. The distribution of Teesta River water has been viewed as a problematic issue between the two countries. Considering this, China began to express interest in the management and conservation of the Teesta River in 2020. All parties were aware of the sensitivity of the situation, given India's reservations about it. Looking at countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives, we can see that China's approach was not new. However, given India's good relations with Bangladesh, the issue over Teesta water sharing did not raise suspicions and animosity between the two countries.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN WE ARE PLAYING THE SCRIPT OF LIFE

The world is a stage where we each have a unique, pre-scripted part to play



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

Recently a veteran actor from the Indian film industry was given the Highest Civilian Award for his contribution towards spreading cultural values across the Globe through his acting career. While he was given the award, everyone in the audience stood up to give him a standing ovation with so much love and respect to the legend, who brought so many characters to life on celluloid screen. We all have experienced this euphoria in theatres, while a heroic character makes an entry on screen, there are loud cheers, whistles, applause and more. And at the end of the film, the hero wins the audience's hearts and steals the show. Whether he plays a prince or a pauper, it does not matter as his fans through the theatres to catch a glimpse of him.

The beauty of his performance lies in his ability to internalize the character to the extent that he and his role seem one to his fans. But even while doing it, he is very much conscious of the fact that he is merely an actor in a particular drama, his role is carved, his dialogues are scripted and the costumes are designed for that particular character. Hence, his greatness lies only in playing the role to the best of his capability. On his long journey to stardom, every actor often turns a spectator and critiques his own work so that he can improve upon his act. It is this element of detachment from the different roles he plays that allows him to progress, play multiple roles simultaneously with clarity and then return to his personal life at the end of the day.

Not many of us know that the world cycle is very much similar to this drama in which all of us are actors with unique parts. Everyone is the protagonist in his life and can become a hero who draws applause. However, today we hardly find anyone cheering for the other person. Because, there is great dissatisfaction either with each other's performance or the script. As a result the drama appears to have become a tragedy. There is widespread chaos with actors criticizing each other's performances instead of theirs. The reason for this trouble is that most of us act without the knowledge that the earth is a stage and we have all come here to play our individual roles. Secondly, each actor's role is unique and pre-scripted and hence trying to match it with anybody else's



is futile. Thirdly, the biggest law of the world drama is that it is ever beneficial for everyone. In the absence of this understanding or its consciousness, we get attached to our roles, forget to change our costumes and make-up and lose the flexibility to adapt to each part. Take a simple example of a person who plays a son, a husband, a father, a friend and several other roles at the same time. If he is in the consciousness of being a male, he could dominate his wife at home or look down upon his female staff at office. At work, he would stick to his role of being a boss so much so that he forgets to become their colleague. On the other hand, if he is conscious that he is an actor and must like a hero win everyone's hearts, then he would understand the requirements of his role and become active, accurate and attractive at whatever he does.

Living the peaks and troughs of each character we play, we drain ourselves and are unable to muster enough strength to meet the demands of each role or take well the twists in the scenes, as a result of which there are emotional upheavals and sorrow becomes a regular visitor when the purpose of the drama is to help the actors experience joy and happiness. On the other hand, if we become detached to the roles we play and keep faith in the eternal law that the drama has been scripted for universal benefit, the feeling of loss and gain, comfort and pain would begin to dissolve and our mind would stop to question the developments in every scene. So, the moral of the story is that we should be detached and yet be involved in the part we are playing. That's the quality to be a superstar in this World Drama.

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

Water crisis in Delhi is entirely man-made



UTTAM GUPTA

The ruthless exploitation of natural endowments and that too when resources are being put to misuse is unconscionable

The gravity of water crisis facing Delhiites has forced the Delhi government to approach the Supreme Court (SC) seeking its intervention to direct neighboring states Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh (HP) to provide additional raw water supply to the national capital. Initially, the SC directed HP to release 137 cusecs of raw water which translates to 70 million gallons per day (MGD) of more water for the city. It also asked Haryana to make arrangements for ensuring its free flow to Delhi.

But, now with HP claiming that it can't release more than what it is already giving (70 MGD), the top court has directed 'the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) to convene a meeting with all parties and take a decision expeditiously'. The mandate of UYRB is to inter alia regulate the allocation of available water flows amongst the beneficiary States and also monitoring the return flows.

Is Delhi really short of water? According to Delhi's Economic Survey Report 2023, the overall water requirement of the city is 1,290 MGD, with an increase in the summer months. Against this, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) which has the mandate to manage the water supply in the city (including procurement of raw water from various sources, its processing in water treatment plants or WTPs and its distribution) had said on April 3, 2024 in a written statement that water production in the capital stood at around 990 MGD on average between March end and start of April. The DJB actually produced 1,002 MGD on June 7, 2024.

Further, the Economic Survey of Delhi, 2023-24, says, "As per Outcome Budget (Q2 of 2023-24) of DJB, the total distribution losses are at about 52.35 percent". Distribution losses is a sophisticated nomenclature for pilferage of water supplies by tanker mafia and industries.

The pilferage is happening at all stages of the water supply chain viz. the WTPs, conveyance systems and distribution systems. This couldn't have happened without the connivance of the authorities. Deduct 52 percent pilferage or 520 MGD from production of around 1000 MGD, the quantity available for consumption by households in Delhi would be 480 MGD. This is barely 37 percent of the demand estimated at 1290 MGD. It sounds bizarre! If, that were the case, nearly 2/3rd of Delhiites would have been without drinking water; a complete disaster. That hasn't happened even as we see people chasing water tankers in several parts of Delhi.

So, what are we missing? There is something fundamentally wrong with the way mandarins in the government estimate the requirement. Ideally, this should be done from the demand side which involves conducting household survey, collecting data on how much each unit needs, aggregating and so on. Instead, they look at the total supply in the past say 2023-24, presume that that much quantity was consumed and apply an incremental factor/percentage increase to arrive at the requirement for 2024-25.

In this process, they end up including even the pilfered quantity in the requirement. It means that 1290 MGD also includes 520 MGD of water plundered by dubious operators from the system



(assuming that 52 per cent pilferage has continued in the current year). Minus this, the requirement of households was 770 MGD. This being higher than the net availability of 480 MGD, Delhiites are feeling the stress.

Unambiguously, plunder of water by tanker mafia is at the root of Delhi's water woes (last year, Delhiites were spared as the HH demand being muted, the net supply after accounting for the greed of the tanker mafia was sufficient to meet it). But, for this, the entire production of 1000 MGD would have been available for HH consumption resulting in a surplus of 230 MGD (1000-770) forget any shortage that we are experiencing today.

A sustainable solution to Delhi water woes requires that the State government addresses pilferage on a war footing. Yet, its overwhelming focus has been on getting more raw water from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, HP etc. While, making the demand it is oblivious of the fact that all its nine WTPs are already operating above their installed capacities (yielding a total of around 1000 MGD which is around 47 MGD more than the combined capacity of all nine WTPs) and that the DJB won't be able to deliver more even if it gets more raw water from the neighboring states.

As for addition to the processing capacity, last year, the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had approved an action plan to increase water production by 131 MGD in the short-term and by 380 MGD in the long-term. It

involved construction of a new plant at Chandrawal, with a capacity of 105 MGD and completion of another plant at Dwarka, which has the potential to increase production by 50 MGD. That plan hasn't made much headway. While, work on Chandrawal plant is yet to start, even the Dwarka project which was to come up by March 2024 is running behind schedule. Unable to manage water supplies from the rivers viz. Yamuna, Ravi-Beas, Ganga and so on, the Delhi government is now increasing its dependence on groundwater which currently contributes a little more than 10 percent - almost 100 percent increase over the level five years ago. According to the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), over 41 percent of Delhi's total area is overexploited even as it has been drawing more groundwater than it recharges. The total annual groundwater recharge decreased from 0.41 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2022 to 0.38 bcm in 2023, while the annual extractable groundwater resource available decreased from 0.37 bcm to 0.34 bcm.

This is not a healthy trend. The ruthless exploitation of natural endowments and that too when resources are being put to misuse (read: diversion of water meant for HH consumption to industrial use) is unconscionable. Apart from the huge imbalance between the demand and supply, the gross mismanagement and irregularities in running Delhi's water supply systems is also pushing

DJB to the brink of financial bankruptcy. Pilferage of more than half of water supply means the Board doesn't get any revenue on that much quantity. Then, you have Kejriwal's free scheme that involves no payment for consumption up to 20,000 litres a month per household.

Even for HHs who get the bills and haven't paid for years, the Chief Minister has been trying to get a one time settlement package cleared by the Lieutenant Governor which will tantamount to the State exchequer foregoing thousands of crore. Finally, there are reports of payments having been made by the households albeit to private entities (authorized to collect the money) but never reached the revenue department.

All this has led to a pathetic situation whereby DJB which until a decade back was making profit today has an accumulated debt of over Rs 70,000 crore. The Board is able to run its operations solely because it can borrow money from banks and other financial institutions (FIs) backed by sovereign State guarantee. Left to fend for itself, it would have collapsed long ago. One shudders to think of what this would entail for water supply to the capital city. The water crisis as also seriousness of problems on other infrastructure fronts such as electricity etc and overall governance issues in Delhi calls for some drastic action by the Centre.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

“A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TO DELHI WATER WOES REQUIRES THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENT ADDRESSES PILFERAGE ON A WAR FOOTING. YET, ITS OVERWHELMING FOCUS HAS BEEN ON GETTING MORE RAW WATER FROM HARYANA, UTTAR PRADESH, HP ETC.”

Navigating the complexities of drug abuse and illicit trafficking

With a strong emphasis on prevention, awareness, and eliminating stigma, the UN champions a holistic approach to tackling drug abuse

Annually observed on June 26, 'The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking' was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1987 to combat drug abuse globally. The day serves to highlight the challenges posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking, stressing the need for international cooperation. The 2024 campaign, "The evidence is clear: invest in prevention", focuses on raising awareness about the importance of providing help and treatment to individuals struggling with drug use. It advocates for a compassionate approach, emphasizing empathy and care over punitive measures. This shift, aims to promote understanding of the negative impacts of drugs on



RAJDEEP PATHAK

personal, social, and spiritual well-being. The campaign also calls for treating people who use drugs with respect and without judgment, aiming to change societal attitudes. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) underscores the significance of eliminating stigma and adopting a people-centered approach based on human rights and evidence-based practices to effectively

combat drug abuse globally. Besides, the primary objective is to address the multifaceted issues of drug abuse and trafficking by raising public awareness, promoting preventive measures, and advocating for robust policies and programs. Educating communities about the severe dangers and consequences of drug abuse and illicit trafficking is essential. Fostering international cooperation is crucial for a comprehensive approach, emphasizing global partnerships and collaboration among law enforcement agencies to dismantle drug trafficking networks. Addressing these objectives will create a more informed, prepared, and united front against the global drug crisis. Going by the 2024 theme -

"The evidence is clear: invest in prevention", the message of the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres is pertinent in which he reiterated that drugs inflict profound suffering, deteriorating health and wellbeing, with overdoses claiming countless lives annually. To him, the rise of more lethal synthetic drugs and record-breaking illicit drug production fuels crime and violence globally, impacting the most vulnerable, especially youth. Those struggling with substance abuse face repeated victimization from the drugs, societal stigma, and harsh responses. To break this cycle, 'we must invest in evidence-based prevention programs that safeguard individuals and communities, disrupt illicit

economies, and prioritize rehabilitation, education, and harm reduction'. He cited the example of Portugal saying that prevention is effective. António Guterres said, "As this year's theme reminds us, breaking the cycle of suffering means starting at the beginning, before drugs take hold, by investing in prevention." But what does 'Drug Abuse' actually mean? Drug abuse can be defined as the improper or excessive consumption of illegal drugs or prescription medications for non-therapeutic purposes. Drug abuse severely impacts physical health, manifesting in serious conditions. Reports point that chronic cocaine or methamphetamine abuse leads to cardiovascular issues, including heart disease and

stroke. Smoking drugs like crack cocaine can cause lung cancer, while intravenous drug use increases HIV risk. Other risks, as medical reports point, include nasal damage from snorting, liver and kidney disease from prolonged substance use, and oral cancer from smokeless tobacco. Contaminants in illicit drugs are linked to leukemia, and severe weight loss is common among stimulant addicts. Besides, mental health issues include depression, anxiety, memory and learning problems, insomnia, violent behaviour, delusions, paranoia, confusion, extreme mood swings, and substance dependence. Some report also suggests that the relationships between drug-related crime, crimes that affect the environment,

and convergent crime are complex and evolving. Drug cultivation and trafficking and crimes that affect the environment are surging in the Amazon Basin. Also, the 'UNODC World Drug Report 2023' highlights social and economic inequalities driving drug problems and their environmental and human rights impacts and rising conflicts. Treatment coverage remains low, with only one in five affected receiving help, notably lacking in some regions. Recent data from the Government of India reveals alarming statistics: more than 10% of the population grapples with psychiatric disorders such as depression, neurosis, and psychosis. A substantial segment, comprising 15 individuals per 1000, engages in drug

use, while chronic alcohol addiction affects 25 per 1000 people. The availability of psychiatric and de-addiction beds starkly contrasts with demand, with only 20% of the required facilities accessible nationwide, leaving an alarming 80% shortfall in inpatient care capacity. Following a tailored treatment plan involving detoxification, counseling, and possibly medication is crucial. Lifestyle adjustments such as adopting healthy habits and avoiding triggers support recovery. The way out is, facing the problem, discussing and treating it with experts' guidance, but not being the escapist. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold rises Rs 70; silver plunges Rs 400

Gold prices rose Rs 70 to Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday in line with firm global trends, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,480 per 10 grams on Monday. However, silver prices plunged by Rs 400 to Rs 91,500 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 91,900 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams, slightly up by Rs 70 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,324 per ounce, up USD 6 from the previous close. Gold traded in a narrow range on Tuesday under gloomy market sentiment, Gandhi said. "...traders' focus is turning to macroeconomic data due at the end of this week, including US GDP and the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of consumer inflation, which could offer clues on when the central bank will pivot to monetary policy easing," he added.



Stanley Lifestyles IPO subscribed over 96 times

The initial public offer of luxury furniture brand Stanley Lifestyles got subscribed a whopping 96.25 times on the last day of subscription on Tuesday. The Rs 537 crore initial share-sale received bids for 98,56,97,520 shares against 1,02,41,507 shares on offer, according to NSE data. The portion for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) fetched 222.10 times subscription while the quota for non-institutional investors got subscribed 118.65 times. The quota for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 18.13 times subscription. The Initial Public Offer (IPO) has a fresh issue of up to Rs 200 crore and an offer for sale of up to 91,33,454 equity shares. The initial share-sale has a price range of Rs 351-369 per share. The IPO of Stanley Lifestyles got subscribed 1.43 times on the first day of subscription on Friday. Stanley Lifestyles on Thursday said it raised a little over Rs 161 crore from anchor investors.



Tech Mahindra to merge Helathnxt with TMA

Indian IT major Tech Mahindra on Tuesday announced the merger of its step-down arm Helathnxt with its wholly-owned subsidiary Tech Mahindra (Americas). The merger shall be effective from July 1, 2024, according to a regulatory filing. "Both the Transferor and Transferee companies are wholly-owned subsidiaries and hence there will be no cash consideration or issue of new shares involved under the Plan of Merger. The investment of TMA in Helathnxt will get cancelled on the merger becoming effective," the filing said. Helathnxt is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tech Mahindra (Americas) (TMA) and a step-down subsidiary of TechM. Helathnxt is a virtual healthcare company that offers fully integrated inpatient experience at home and outsourced services. The merger will result in synergy of business operations, optimise operational cost and reduce the compliance risk, TechM added.



Considering PLI scheme for garments sector: Textiles Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh on Tuesday said the government has approved over Rs 10,000 crore production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for textiles and now considering to extend it to the garments sector with a view to boosting domestic manufacturing and exports.



Addressing the India International Garment Fair (IGF) here, Singh said that huge opportunities are there to increase exports and the industry should target USD 50 billion worth of shipments in the coming years.

Addressing the India International Garment Fair (IGF) here, Singh said that huge opportunities are there to increase exports and the industry should target USD 50 billion worth of shipments in the coming years.

In 2021, the government approved the PLI scheme for textiles with an approved outlay of Rs 10,683 crore over a five year period to promote production of MMF (man-made fibre) Apparel, MMF Fabrics and Products of Technical Textiles in the country to enable textiles industry to achieve size and scale and to become competitive.

"We are considering to cover your (garments) sector also (under the scheme)," Singh said.

He added that the market size of the Indian textiles industry is about USD 165 billion and "we

have to take it to USD 350 billion".

He said that the ministry is framing a roadmap to move ahead of China in the sector.

The minister suggested the industry to follow 'hub and spoke' model to boost domestic manufacturing.

"I appeal to big industry players to engage with small

players in India," he said adding the ministry will hold meetings with big players to understand their issues.

Bangladesh and China are the biggest competitors of Indian industry in the sector. He also called for exploring opportunities to increase exports through e-commerce medium.

Last year, the cross-border e-commerce trade was about USD 800 billion and it is estimated to reach USD 2 trillion by 2030.

Further, the minister suggested the industry establish their own brands instead of becoming suppliers to global brands, besides focusing on green textiles and recycling.

The ministry is also looking at reviving Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP).

The scheme aims to create new parks of international standards. Under the scheme 54 textile parks were sanctioned.

Speaking at the fair, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said the global headwinds negatively affected Indian apparel exports, despite that Indian apparel export industry was able to hold its own and contain the damage to quite an extent.

AEPC Secretary General Mithileshwar Thakur said that the world economy is expected to register healthy growth and global inflation will also decline steadily, and this indicates that there is a greater chance for Indian apparel exporters to expand its footprint across developed countries in the coming years.

Industry pitches for tax reduction, rationalisation of duty structure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to boost the economy, representatives of various industries on Tuesday urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to reduce the incidence of indirect taxes and rationalise duty structure wherever required.

In a pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, FIEO president Ashwani Kumar made a case for an extension of the Interest Equalisation Scheme for the next five years.

"We request the scheme which is valid till 30th June, 2024 may be extended for a period of 5 years. Looking into the rise in interest rates consequent to the increase in Repo rate from 4.4



In a pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, FIEO president Ashwani Kumar made a case for an extension of the Interest Equalisation Scheme for the next five years.

per cent to 6.5 per cent in the last 2 years, the subvention rates may be restored back from 3 per cent to 5 per cent for manufacturers in MSMEs," Kumar said.

Kumar also urged for the establishment of an Indian shipping line of global repute to reduce foreign shipping line dependency and save foreign exchange.

Emerging from the nearly two-hour meeting, Ajay Sardana, President & Head of Petroleum Industry Affairs, at Reliance Industries, said there is a need for a review of tariffs on imported goods from China related to the petrochem industry.

"China has created a lot of overcapacity...they are putting a lot of products in India at a very

cheaper price and a lot of dumping is happening. So, what we requested is a review of the tariffs regime so that the domestic capacity can be increased," Sardana said. Shree Cement Chairman HM Bangur said the government should spend more on capital expenditure so that the cement industry benefits.

"We sought faster and simultaneous environmental clearances and no hindrance in capex," he added.

Representing the services sector, Nasscom Vice President and Head of Public Policy Ashish Aggarwal said, "From the Budget perspective, we are looking for easing the transfer pricing regime as a lot of our industry is not able to benefit from transfer pricing provision."

India's inflation also 'K-shaped'; rural folk more hurt by price-rise: HSBC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Just like the post-pandemic recovery, the Indian inflation story is also 'K-shaped' and is hurting certain sections more than others, a foreign brokerage said on Tuesday.

Rural consumers are more impacted by price-rise than their urban counterparts, economists at HSBC said, adding it out-



stripped the urban segment by 1.1 percentage point in May, mainly due to higher food inflation.

"The same developments, driving a K-shaped recovery, seem to be driving K-shaped inflation dynamics," they said in a report.

The report by its chief economist Pranjal Bhandari cited the ongoing heat waves, pointing out that higher food and lower

core inflation are coexisting because of crop damage and livestock mortality pushing up the former. The government lent a helping hand by cutting several fuel prices but many of the fuels like petrol, diesel and LPG are not commonly used in rural areas, like they are in urban centres, leading to rural inflation being much higher than urban, it said.

Sensex breaches 78,000 level for 1st time

Nifty at record high as private bank shares shine

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 78,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a new record high on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip bank stocks and Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,053.52. During the day, the benchmark soared 823.63 points or 1 per cent to hit a fresh lifetime high of 78,164.71.

The Sensex breached the 77,000 mark for the first time on June 10. The Nifty went up by 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at a fresh record high of 23,721.30. During the day, it climbed 216.3 points or 0.91 per cent to hit an intra-day lifetime high of 23,754.15.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finserv, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries and Infosys were the biggest gainers.

Power Grid, Asian Paints,



Tata Steel, Nestle, Maruti and JSW Steel were among the laggards.

"A rally in the banking stocks pushed Nifty to hit another record - 34th time this year though a host of other sectors ended in the negative," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.26 per cent while the smallcap index dipped 0.03 per cent.

"A positive news from the market perspective is the current account turning surplus in Q4 FY24. This will take away the pressure on the rupee and pave the way for FII inflows when clarity emerges on the Fed rate cuts," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Abundant opportunities for investors in Rajasthan: CM

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma expressed confidence in Rajasthan's investment potential, underscoring abundant opportunities for investors in the state.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to facilitate a conducive environment for both domestic and international investments.

Chairing a high-level meeting focused on preparations for the Rajasthan Investment Summit-2024, Sharma directed officials to ensure meticulous planning and rigorous oversight throughout the



event. He stressed that agreements signed during the summit must translate into tangible actions on the ground. Sharma emphasised on effective coordination between departments for the summit's successful execution, top-notch hospitality

for attending investors. He urged officers to craft a comprehensive action plan to enhance global visibility and discourse surrounding the summit.

Recognising the importance of a streamlined single-window system for investment services, Sharma instructed officials to expedite the resolution of investment cases using available resources efficiently.

He highlighted the global influence of Rajasthanis abroad and encouraged their active participation and investment in the state's growth.

Jute crisis deepens as prices fall below MSP amid reduced orders

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The jute industry is faced with a crisis following reduced orders from customers, as prices of the golden fibre plummeted below Rs 5,000 per quintal, while the Minimum Support Price (MSP) is Rs 5,335 per quintal for the 2024-25 season.

This alarming drop in prices has occurred despite projections of



reduced production by the Expert Committee on Jute (ECJ), primarily due to significantly reduced orders

for GBT (Gunny Burlap Textile) bags by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State Procuring Agencies (SPAs).

"The raw jute price has slumped. The price for the new raw jute season (June-July) ideally should have been Rs 5,800, but it has come down to Rs 5,000 per quintal," Om Prakash Soni of the Jute Balers Association said on Tuesday.

FMCG sector to have sustained growth rate of 7-9 pc in 2024: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The FMCG sector is expected to have a sustained growth rate of 7-9 per cent in 2024, supported by government initiatives to stimulate consumption and create job opportunities, a report said.

The FMCG sector's resilience and adaptability, coupled with robust government support and digital transformation initiatives, posi-

tion it favourably to navigate through uncertainties and emerge stronger.

"Looking ahead, the FMCG sector in India is poised for sustained growth, with forecasts indicating a 7 to 9 per cent expansion in 2024," a report from ICICI Lombard General Insurance said.

However, the sector faces challenges such as "inflationary pressures, subdued consumer

confidence, and prevailing unemployment rates".

Now, the FMCG industry has a "burgeoning economic footprint", which exceeds Rs 9.1 lakh crore and has a "pivotal role" in driving India's economic growth and employment generation, it added. Moreover, the online sales channel for FMCG is also increasing and has been valued at Rs 1.7 lakh crore. Segments such as D2C reflect a "rapid digital transformation and evolving consumer purchase behaviour".

SPECTRUM AUCTION DAY 1

Telcos place bids worth about Rs 11,000 cr in five rounds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operators placed bids worth about Rs 11,000 crore on the first day of the spectrum auction that saw five rounds of bidding, according to sources. The government has put over 10,500 Mhz spectrum valued at Rs 96,238 crore on the block. "Telecom operators have placed bids of around Rs 11,000 crore on Day 1. The auction will resume on Wednesday," a source aware of the development said.

According to the Day 1 spectrum auc-

tion report issued by the Department of Telecom, bidders took place mainly in the 900 and 1800 Mhz bands.

Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea are participating in the auction.

Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of Rs 3,000 crore for the spectrum auction, which provides the company with the firepower to bid for maximum radio waves among the three telcos.

Bharti Airtel has submitted an EMD of Rs 1,050 crore and Vodafone Idea (VIL) of Rs 300 crore.

Adani to invest Rs 1.3 lakh cr in FY25 across portfolio companies

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Adani group plans to invest about Rs 1.3 lakh crore across its portfolio companies this fiscal as it doubles down on its USD 100 billion investment guidance over the next 7-10 years to grow businesses, group CFO said on Tuesday.

The investment across portfolio companies that range from ports to energy, airports, commodities, cement and media will be 70 per cent met through internal cash generation and the remaining

through debt, Group CFO Jugeshinder 'Robbie' Singh told reporters here.

The group will look to refinance USD 3-4 billion of debt maturing in the year and raise an additional USD 1 billion in project financing, he said, adding the annual USD 2-2.5 billion of equity infusion by bringing in new investors is also likely to continue.

"This year will be more about asset completion," he said.

Renewable energy firm Adani Green will complete 6-7 GW

project, while the solar wafer manufacturing unit will attain scale. Also, the new airport at Mumbai will be completed, he said.

The projected capital expenditure or capex for 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal is 40 per cent higher than what the portfolio is estimated to have incurred in FY24.

The group had previously guided a USD 100 billion capex over the next 7-10 years. Most of this investment is going to go into the group's fast growing businesses -- renewable, green hydrogen and airports and infrastructure, he said.

Elastocalorics, carbon-capturing microbes among top-10 emerging technologies: WEF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Privacy-enhancing technologies, elastocalorics as sustainable cooling solutions and livestock feed sources from single-cell proteins were listed on Tuesday among the top 10 emerging technologies for addressing global challenges.

AI-powered scientific discovery, carbon-capturing microbes, reconfigurable intelligent surfaces and high-altitude platform stations were also featured in the annual list published by the World Economic Forum. The WEF said these top 10 emerging technologies focus



AI-powered scientific discovery, carbon-capturing microbes, reconfigurable intelligent surfaces and high-altitude platform stations were also featured in the annual list published by the World Economic Forum.

on applications in health, communication, infrastructure and sustainability.

The annual list, which identifies breakthroughs impacting societies and economies within 3-5 years, also included integrated sensing and communication,

immersive technology for the built world and genomics for transplants.

"Organizations make better choices when they understand the factors shaping the future. The report identifies technologies poised to significantly influ-

ence societies and economies," WEF Managing Director and Head of the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Jeremy Jurgens said.

"It also spotlights technologies with immense potential for revolutionizing connectivity,

addressing the urgent challenges of climate change and driving innovation across various fields," he added.

The technologies featured in the report, produced in collaboration with Frontiers, were identified through a rigorous selection process involving over 300 world-leading academics and experts, including from the Frontiers network worldwide.

The WEF said while artificial intelligence (AI) has been used in research for many years, advances in deep learning, generative AI and foundation models are revolutionizing the scientific discovery process.

what's brewing?

'MIRZAPUR TRANSFORMED US FROM MAIN CAST TO STARS'

One of India's most-awaited crime thriller series, *Mirzapur Season 3*, has left audiences in a frenzy with its power-packed trailer, which garnered a whopping 1.9 million views across various platforms over the weekend. Stirring up 'bhaukaal' across the country, the trailer showcased an intense game of chess amongst the *bahubalis*, each striving to prove their worth and claim the throne of Mirzapur. Filled with revenge, ambition, politics, betrayal, deceit and intricate family dynamics, the upcoming season promises to only get bigger and better. The spectacular preview of the series piqued the anticipation among fans worldwide, as it teased the return of the King of Mirzapur, AKA Kaleen Bhaiya. This iconic character is brought to life by none other than Pankaj Tripathi, who has time and again proved his mettle as a

highly versatile and gifted actor. Reflecting on the show that catapulted him to global stardom, Pankaj Tripathi expressed, "Mirzapur undeniably marked a stepping stone in my career. Notably, during interviews, journalists often refer to us as the 'star cast'. But before *Mirzapur* became a global phenomenon, we were simply the 'cast' of the show. It's *Mirzapur* that has transformed us into stars. After *season 1*, the reaction I received from fans, especially women, took me by surprise. It made me realise that Kaleen Bhaiya is unlike any other dons the Indian masses have ever seen on celluloid. As opposed to conventional mafias and dons, he effectively puts up a facade of being soft-spoken, ethical and trustworthy. Kaleen Bhaiya is not

your run-of-the-mill criminal, which makes him truly stand out among others. We, as humans, have multiple facets to ourselves, and Kaleen Bhaiya is a perfect depiction of the same." Produced by Excel Media & Entertainment, *Mirzapur Season 3* is directed by Gurmeet Singh and Anand Iyer. It boasts a stellar ensemble cast, including Ali Fazal, Shweta Tripathi Sharma, Rasika Dugal, Vijay Varma, Isha Talwar, Anjum Sharma, Priyanshu Painyuli, Harshita Shekhar Gaur, Rajesh Tailang, Sheeba Chadha, Meghna Malik and Manu Rishi Chadha. The ten-episode series will premiere exclusively on Prime Video on July 5.



Meryl Streep's daughter Louisa goes Insta official with her girlfriend

Louisa Jacobson Gummer, the daughter of Meryl Streep, is uniquely honouring Pride Month. The actor announced coming out as lesbian on Instagram, sharing a number of brand-new photos and introducing her girlfriend, Anna Blundell.

On June 22, Meryl's birthday, did Louisa come out? Louisa refuted the claim that the Academy Award-winning actor was not mentioned in the newly released series of photos. As an alternative, the updated images featured a few selfies and a screen grab of an article titled "We're Entering a Joyful New Era of Lesbian Fashion." She wrote, "Blessed to be entering the Joyful New Era, BB," in the caption. The duration of Louisa's relationship with Anna Blundell is unknown; however, for the past year, she has frequently appeared on her Instagram page. She had posted a series of photos with her in a June post with the message, "Life is so fun and cool and I'm the luckiest!!!"

Mindy Kaling reveals secretly having her third child!

Mindy Kaling, an actor and actress, reports that she secretly had her third child in February. *The Mindy Project* and *Never Have I Ever* creator, who is 45 years old, revealed the news on Monday in honour of her birthday. Kaling announced on Instagram that she gave birth to a baby girl earlier this year, naming her Anne. "My daughter Anne was born at the end of February. I could not have asked for a better birthday present than she is. My three children serve as such a wonderful reminder of the unadulterated joy in my life, especially at difficult times and when I start to lose hope."

"I'm so lucky I live in a place where I could do this by myself on my own timeline. Thanks for all the birthday wishes!" She wrote in a series of pictures with her children, one of which shows off her baby bump. Kaling has two other children: a six-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son. She has never revealed the identity of the father of her children.



Tamannaah Bhatia joins Shraddha-Rajkummar in *Stree 2*

The makers of *Stree* unveiled the much-anticipated teaser for their highly anticipated sequel, *Stree 2*, on Tuesday morning, and it is everything we had hoped for. The teaser, spanning a few seconds, shows actors Rajkummar Rao, Pankaj Tripathi, Aparshakti Khurana and Abhishek Banerjee reprise their roles as inhabitants of Chanderi, where a malevolent force named *Stree* terrifies men. Shraddha Kapoor, whose identity remained a mystery in *Stree*, also joins in the adventure in this sequel. Rajkummar Rao shared the teaser on his social handle. Rajkummar Rao wrote, "Iss baar Chanderi mein azaadi ke din hoga aatank! The legend returns this INDEPENDENCE DAY on 15th August! #Stree2 #ShelsBack #Stree2Teaser." The video opens with Rajkummar Rao and others pouring milk on the statue of *Stree*. There is chaos in the village as they keep saying, 'Stree wapas aa gaye' (*Stree* has returned). Glimpses of Shraddha Kapoor as *Stree* are also seen. Tamannaah Bhatia is also seen in the teaser. *Stree 2* is being directed by Amar Kaushik and produced by Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films. It is a part of the producer's horror-comedy universe, which includes films like *Stree*, *Roohi* and *Bhedhiya*. *Stree* was released in 2018. *Stree 2* is set to hit theaters on August 15, 2024.



PRODUCER VASHU BHAGNANI REVEALS POOJA ENTERTAINMENT'S OFFICE SPACE 'NOT SOLD'

Pooja Entertainment, owned by producers Vasu Bhagnani and Jacky Bhagnani, has been in the news for a few days. Several media reports stated that the Pooja Entertainment office premises in Juhu, Mumbai, were sold off to clear a debt of Rs 250 crore. The production house was also accused of non-payment of dues and laying off 80% of its staff. Now addressing all these rumours, Vasu Bhagnani says, "The building (office space) that people are talking about hasn't been sold to anyone; it belongs to me even now. We are only redeveloping it into a tower that will house luxury homes. This was planned 1.5 years ago. I was

waiting for *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* to release, after which we wanted to start the redevelopment." Dismissing reports of laying off his staff, he shared that they now function from the old office, which was a 'lucky' space for them. "We've had the same team working with us for 10 years; we haven't asked anyone to leave," he added. While a few news reports claim that *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, *Mission Raniganj* and *Bell Bottom*'s failures pushed Pooja Entertainment into this debt, the producer clears the air and says that hits and flops are part of this business. Vasu Bhagnani has also begun production for his next project, which is an animation series that is mounted on a large scale. He

adds, "I have been in the business for the past 30 years. If there are people who claim that we owe them money, they should come forward and talk to us. Do they have proper contracts with Pooja Entertainment? Have they filed a case regarding this? There are so many ways to sort this out, rather than ranting on social media. If there is an issue, we will resolve it. Nobody is running away. Please come to my office, talk to us, give us your documents, and give us 60 days to figure things out. I am not going to buckle under any pressure or blackmail. We also work with production companies in the UK. If they owe someone money, then people should reach out to them directly." In conclusion, he shared that he is also into other businesses but is most passionate about moviemaking, so he will continue to do that. He says, "I love Bollywood and films. Bollywood is my jaan; this is the most emotional industry, and people stick by you through thick and thin."



Gurmeet's 'fauji' background helped him ace RAW agent's role in *Commander Karan Saxena*

Actor Gurmeet Choudhary has shared how his father played a significant role in his preparations for a RAW agent's character in the upcoming action series *Commander Karan Saxena*, helping him with a few training sessions on how to hold a gun and other practical aspects. Gurmeet, who is known for playing Lord

Ram in the show *Ramayan* (2008), said: "As I have always mentioned, I come from a 'fauji' family, so I'm very much aware of the struggles and disciplined lifestyle that come with it. Playing a RAW agent, which is a strong character, I tend to get carried away and embody that form and energy."

"To bring authenticity to this character, I drew heavily on my background and personal experiences. Additionally, my dad played a significant role in my preparations, helping me with a few training sessions on how to hold a gun and other practical aspects," Gurmeet added. The series is centered around a RAW agent unravelling a

high-stakes mystery amid political intrigue and betrayal. Also starring Iqbal Khan and Hruta Durgule in key roles, *Commander Karan Saxena* will stream on Disney+ Hotstar on July 8. On the personal front, Gurmeet is married to actress Debina Bonnerjee. The couple has two daughters.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



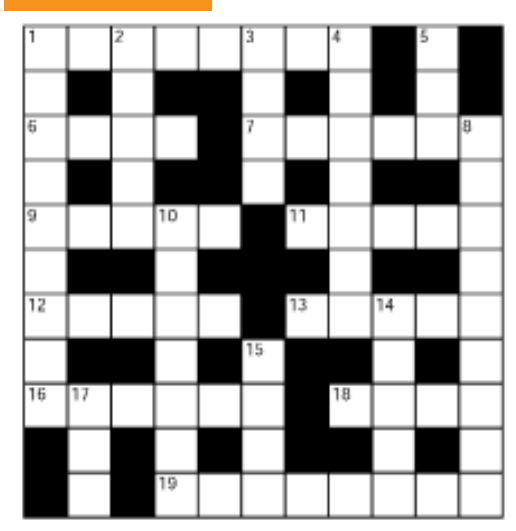
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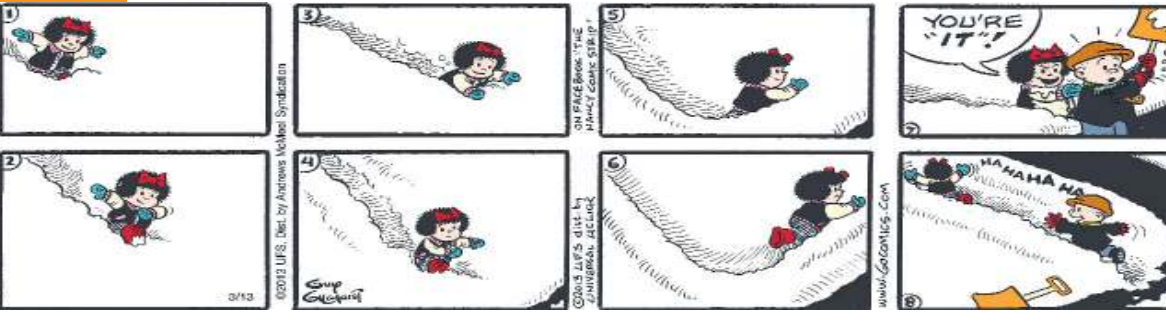
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



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

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

ACROSS
 1 Squashes completely
 6 A red gemstone
 7 Make tea in this
 9 Words by which people or places are known
 11 A striped animal
 12 Donates
 13 Defeats
 16 A red fruit for sandwiches
 18 A song performed by one
 19 Sick or injured people are cared for in this place

DOWN
 1 Two weeks
 2 A book for photographs
 3 Has a meal

4 A breed of cat with blue eyes and pale fur
5 Animals are on show here
8 This looks like a mushroom but might be poisonous
10 A hair near your eye
14 Approximately
15 Things to play with
17 This bird hunts at night

SOLUTION
 W I T H E R S C
 H I L T C O P T E R
 U L T R A M A G I C
 O U T F I T T M A G I C
 P A R T I D O
 S W I T Z E R L A N D
 C R I T E R I O I
 O R G A N A W F U L
 T R E C A F E
 C H I O P S T I C K S
 H W I T D E

GINGER MEGGS



'I had to perform martial arts sequence on top of a HANGING CLIFF FOR DEVRA O NEAL'

TEJAL SINHA

Not just as an actor but also as a voice artist, Kathak and Bhangra dancer, Anushree Shukla has developed a great sense of love for the arts. Also, as the lead organiser for *Myna Speaks*, an initiative of the Myna Mahila Foundation supported by the Megan Duchess of Sussex and Prince Harry, she has also worked towards discussing women's menstruation issues in India.

She also participated at the Cannes Film Festival this year. As an actor, she has played a gamut of roles, from being a handmaiden to a landowner to a school-going teenager to supernatural characters and characters with mental illnesses in Hindi. She's given so much to her art that one of her roles required learning and rehearsing in Marathi! Meanwhile, as a voice artist, her diversity really just increases. "For an upcoming Netflix film, I've replaced the actor's voice to be British English," reveals Anushree. In *Strange Destiny*, her character required an Arabic accent, which was extremely interesting to perform. She's also voiced an American accent in *Masaba Masaba* and a French accent in *Aranyak*. Speaking of some unique skills she has picked up for her characters, she shares, "The most interesting skill was learning martial arts for my character Devra O Neal, a warrior princess for Paul Hacker's book adaptation, *The Gathering: A Quest for Steel*. We shot the film in Manasa Valley Hills, Hyderabad, the same famous location where *Baahubali* and *KGF* were shot. It was a medieval epic fantasy action, so I had to climb and hike steep rocks, sword fight in large barren lands and perform a martial arts sequence on top of a hanging cliff. Luckily, I love the outdoors and have been hiking, rock climbing for many years, so that experience played to my advantage."

Hosting events across the globe offers unique cultural insights. And for her, it's always interesting travelling to host different events. She recalls, "I was in Assam to host the 4-day Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival and the most important cultural insight a host can adopt is pronunciation and language. Apart from ensuring that the event was running on time, that everyone's bios were correct, humouring the filmy audience and asking insightful Q&A questions, it was very important to learn the correct Assamese pronunciation of films and filmmakers' names." Likewise, at Cannes, she hosted *Tasveer Matchmaking: Find Your Funds*, where they had about 180 filmmakers meet 18 funders, many of whom were from all parts of the world. It's important to ensure that while a lot of the crowd is South Asian and 'Hinglish' comes naturally to her, many might feel excluded, so she was asked to speak only in English. "The same goes for when I hosted the *Tasveer Film Festival* in Seattle. But one commonality amongst all the events is crafting the message in a fun and digestible way for the audience. Also, people love *josh* and dancing."

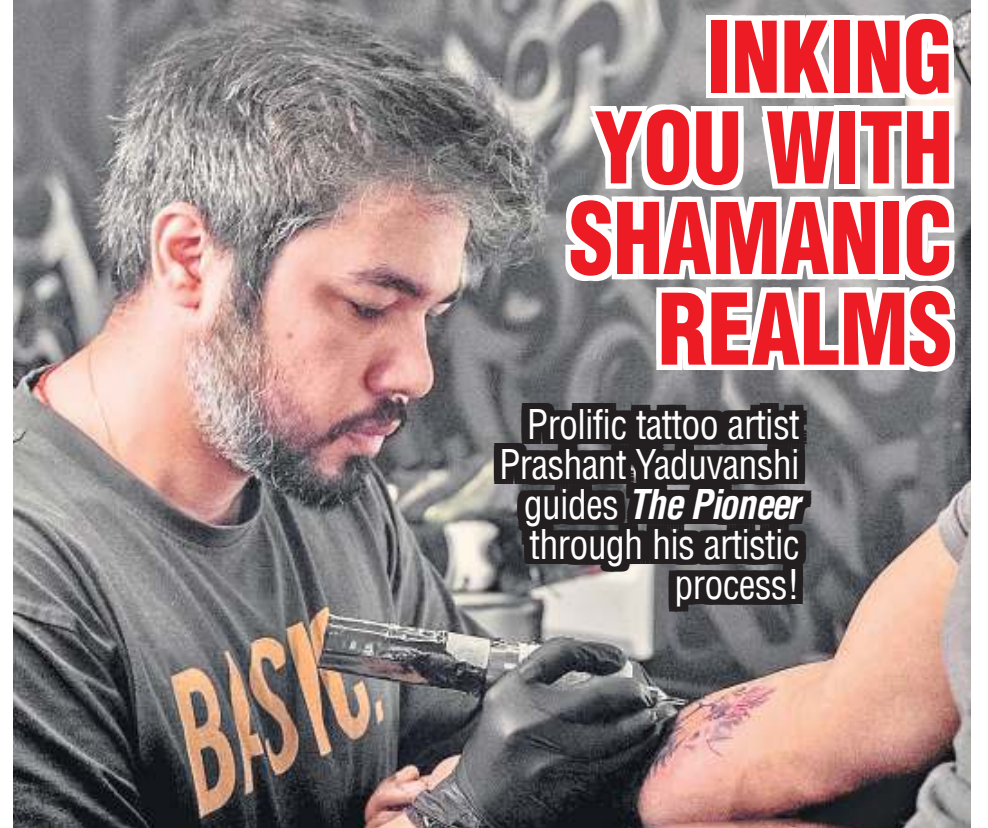
Well, in this interview, we also mentioned her collaboration with the Myna Mahila Foundation. So we further spoke about the same and she shares, "Well, back in 2019, I worked with Myna's founder, Suhani Jalota, to create *Myna Speaks 2019*. It was a one-of-a-kind event where we spoke about the challenges of menstruation in the urban slums. Brought

Anushree Shukla, the multidimensional personality, talks about wearing several hats, organising events all around the world and some fascinating facts about her podcast, *The Nush Corners*, in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*.



together panelists, industry leaders, advocates and young girls to discuss the health and sanitation issues, social taboos of periods and tangible education-cum-employment opportunities for women in slums. Apart from organising the event, I also hosted it and kept the tone informational and the decorum formal but urgent." In 2023, she started her podcast called *The Nush Corner*, where she interviews actors, directors and film professionals about life, habits and movies. Basically, it is a way for her to showcase her fun personality while doing what she loves best—meeting new people and learning about how they became who they are today. But the challenge she faced was "being my own crew, writer, director, interviewer, coordinator and editor. Luckily, I have the support of the best co-producers and we received immense love and support from our friends, family and audience. But if I were to do it all over again, I wouldn't be so hard on myself every time I was behind schedule or did not edit and post on time. I speculated that every beat and instance would transition perfectly. Sometimes setting unrealistic goals restricts you from completing the very task that gives you joy. *Season 1* features the strongest women I know: Malvika Nair, Salonie Patel, Sonia Rahee, Mona Shetty, Pranati Rai Prakash, Anushree Mehta, Yogita Bihani and Rita Meher. *Season 2*, while in its nascent stages, will now include some of the coolest men I know too."

On the work front, she has played the lead antagonist in a horror short which is in post-production right now and there are talks about developing it into a series! Then there is *Prison*; the film in which she played the lead which was screened at the Kolkata Literary Carnival on a 70-mm screen, it was surreal. "I also directed my first short film, which is in post-production right now and have another project I'm signed onto in the pipeline but can't speak much about," shares the rising star, adding, "Every stage gives you a new sense of ease in your speech, and I've definitely evolved in the way I ask and answer questions. And of course, speaking about what you know and keeping silent when you have nothing to add is always a great approach." She cites the example of one of her favourite films, *Lapataa Ladies*, as the perfect prime example of social change as she says, "Without preaching to the audience, it showcased multiple scenarios where women found strength in their independence—financially, physically and educationally."



INKING YOU WITH SHAMANIC REALMS

Prolific tattoo artist Prashant Yaduvanshi guides *The Pioneer* through his artistic process!

SHRADDHA NEWARE

In many different contexts, tattoos represent self-expression, identity, perseverance and confidence. Prashant Yaduvanshi, an accomplished tattoo artist, took up the art form and quickly gained notoriety. Through his art, he conveys his profound connection to the spiritual and shamanic realms.

"At first, I worked under the name Ayahuasca Ink, symbolising the consumption of knowledge and artistic inspiration akin to the transformative experience of Ayahuasca," the tattoo artist says, describing a highly personal quest for meaning and expression. "I accepted tattooing as my identity as I developed, emphasising my responsibility to pass on the knowledge and abilities I have gained along the way." His intense love of art led him to make the crucial decision to leave his engineering college. He sees tattoos as a significant way to establish a spiritual connection. The founder of Shaman Ink states, "I want to capture the essence of spirituality and transformation, assisting people in healing and discovering a deeper connection with themselves." His upbringing in India also gave him a deep love for narrative and symbolism. The renowned cover-up tattoo artist tells us that symbolism and storytelling are fundamental to his designs, which enable him to produce tattoos that are not only aesthetically striking but also culturally relevant and significant. He discusses how his cultural background has influenced his artistic style! Regarding his abilities to cover up tattoos and blend old ink into fresh, he is apparently a recipient of numerous international awards. He says that integrating technical prowess with creative vision is a complex process. After having a thorough consultation with people, he grasps their goals and narrative. "I study the old tattoo, considering factors like its size, colour and placement," the artist reveals. "I create a design that not only covers the existing tattoo but also enhances it, transforming it into a work of art that people can wear with pride using my proficiency in colour and black-and-grey realism. He claims that the seamless appearance of the cover-up stems from his special ability to conceal darker parts with lighter shades of grey." Instead of being a correction, he continues, "It almost seems like the client's first choice!" The artist continues, "Every element I incorporate holds a significant meaning, transforming the tattoo into a narrative that resonates with the people's life experiences and aspirations," further elaborating on how symbolism forms the foundation of his creations, particularly for cover-ups. In addition to making the designs aesthetically pleasing, he makes sure they offer a sense of completion and fresh starts that are full of meaning for the individual.

The tattoo artist goes on to say, "Through thorough consultations, I build a rapport with people, ensuring their stories and preferences are reflected in the final piece." This further explains the importance of consultations and active listening in his approach to creating individualised tattoo designs. "By actively listening, I am able to distill their ideas into artwork that accurately reflects them."

He must take a very collaborative approach in order to strike a balance between the people's requests and his artistic vision. The artist further shares, "I think it's important to involve people throughout the design process, incorporating their inputs while subtly guiding them towards choices that align with my artistic integrity establishing a synergy that guarantees the people's individuality and creative abilities are harmoniously blended."

He also tells a moving tale about one of his creations: "It's about a person who came to me with a tattoo that symbolised a painful chapter in their life. During our talks, I gained knowledge about their process of recovery and development. We changed the previous tattoo to represent rebirth and tenacity—a phoenix emerging from the ashes. Rewarded with a tearful response from the person, which served as a reminder of the transformational potential of art!"

It's assumed that obstacles are a part of the process for all artists and tattoo artists are no exception. The seasoned tattoo artist tells us of one major obstacle he encounters: "Balancing artistic vision with people's expectations is a significant challenge. To overcome this, it is necessary to ensure that people are aware of the nuances of tattoo art through education and clear communication."

He goes on to say that in order to provide a range of styles and patterns, it is important for him to stay current with emerging techniques. He often attends conferences, workshops and international seminars in order to do this. The winner of the Belgium Tattoo Convention's "Best Cover-up Artist" title also enthuses, "Networking with other artists and engaging in continuous learning through online platforms and courses keeps me at the forefront of the industry." For a tattoo artist, maintaining personal cleanliness and safety are essential. He said that using disposable needles and tubing for every session, together with strict sterilisation methods, are crucial. "I use premium inks that are safe for skin and my studio is always well-sanitised. In addition, I teach people on how to take care of themselves in order to avoid infections and guarantee healthy healing," the tattoo artist adds.

We now learn about his future goals as our conversation draws to a close. With the words, "I want people in India to know that they can receive world-class tattoo artistry right here in their own country," he expresses his desire to mentor up-and-coming artists and encourage others.

UNDERSTANDING SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), also known as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), represent a significant global health challenge primarily transmitted through unprotected sexual contact. This comprehensive article delves into various common STDs, their symptoms, diagnostic methods, prevention strategies and management options.

STDs encompass a broad spectrum of infections, each with distinct characteristics and health implications:

- Gonorrhoea:** Caused by *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, it commonly manifests with urethral discharge and painful urination.
- Syphilis:** Caused by *Treponema Pallidum*, syphilis progresses through primary (painless ulcer), secondary (skin rash, mucous membrane lesions) and potentially devastating tertiary stages affecting various organs.
- Lymphogranuloma Venereum:** Caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis* serotypes L1, L2, and L3, it presents with painless genital ulcers and enlargement of groin lymph nodes.
- Chancroid:** Caused by *Haemophilus ducreyi*, it presents with painful genital ulcers and can cause enlargement of groin lymph nodes.
- AIDS (HIV infection):** Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) weakens the immune system, leading to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), characterised by opportunistic infections and malignancies.
- Genital Herpes:** Caused by Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV), it results in painful genital ulcers and recurrent outbreaks.
- Condyloma Acuminata (Genital warts):** Caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), it presents as cauliflower-like growths on genitalia and may lead to various cancers.
- Molluscum Contagiosum:** A viral infection causing small, raised lesions with central dimpling.
- Viral Hepatitis:** Hepatitis B and C viruses can be sexually transmitted, leading to liver inflammation and long-term complications.
- Bacterial Vaginosis (BV):** Characterised by a shift in vaginal flora, leading to discharge and odour.
- Trichomonas Vaginitis:** Caused by *Trichomonas vaginalis*, it results in vaginal discharge and irritation.
- Fungal Vaginitis:** Often caused by *Candida* species, leading to vaginal itching and discharge.
- Scabies:** A skin infestation caused by *Sarcoptes Scabiei* mites, causing intense itching and skin lesions.
- Pediculosis pubis (Pubic lice):** Parasitic infestation causing itching in the genital area.

These infections can present with local symptoms such as ulcers, discharge, and pain, and may lead to systemic complications like pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility and in severe cases, septicemia.

Diagnosis and testing

Diagnosing STDs involves a combination of clinical evaluation and specific laboratory tests:

- Clinical examination:** Helps identify visible symptoms like ulcers, rashes, or discharge.
- Laboratory tests:** Including cultures of vaginal secretions, serological tests like VDRL for syphilis, and nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) for HIV and other infections, are crucial for accurate diagnosis.

Prevention strategies

Preventing the transmission of STDs is essential and involves:

- Safe sexual practices:** Including consistent condom use, reducing the number of sexual partners, and avoiding high-risk behaviors.
- Aseptic procedures:** During medical interventions and childbirth to prevent infections.
- Vaccination:** Vaccines are available for hepatitis B and HPV, reducing the risk of liver cancer and cervical cancer, respectively.



Treatment and management

Treatment approaches vary based on the type of infection:

- Viral STIs** like HIV, HSV, and HPV have limited treatment options; management focuses on antiviral therapy to control symptoms and reduce transmission.
- Bacterial infections** such as syphilis and gonorrhoea are treated effectively with antibiotics.
- Treatments** like topical creams or procedures to remove the genital warts are used.

Specific STDs in focus

- Syphilis:** Progresses through distinct stages with varied clinical manifestations and can lead to severe organ damage if untreated.
- Genital herpes (HSV):** Causes recurrent painful lesions and remains incurable, managed with antiviral medications to alleviate symptoms.
- HPV (Human Papillomavirus):** Causes genital warts and increases the risk of cervical, anal, and other cancers; management includes topical treatments and HPV vaccination.
- Pubic lice (Pediculosis pubis):** Requires direct physical contact for transmission and is managed with topical insecticides.

HIV/AIDS: A global challenge

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) remains a significant global health concern due to its profound impact on individuals and communities worldwide. HIV weakens the immune system, making infected individuals susceptible to opportunistic infections and cancers, ultimately progressing to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), despite advancements in antiretroviral therapy (ART) that can control the virus and improve quality of life, HIV/AIDS continues to pose challenges due to ongoing transmission, stigma associated with the infection and the socioeconomic disparities affecting access to healthcare and prevention services. Efforts to combat HIV include prevention through education, widespread testing, and ensuring access to treatment and support services for all affected populations.

- Transmission modes:** Include sexual intercourse, sharing needles and perinatal transmission from mother to child.
- Diagnostic tests:** Like ELISA, Western blot and HIV RNA PCR are crucial for early detection and management.
- Preventive measures:** Include promoting safer sex practices, routine HIV testing and avoiding breastfeeding for HIV-positive mothers.

In conclusion, understanding and managing STDs require comprehensive strategies encompassing prevention through education, widespread vaccination, prompt diagnosis and effective treatment. While bacterial infections like syphilis and gonorrhoea are treatable with antibiotics, viral STIs such as HIV and HSV present ongoing challenges due to their lifelong nature and limited treatment options. Public health initiatives must emphasise education, access to testing and early intervention to reduce the prevalence and impact of these infections globally. By promoting safer sexual practices and expanding vaccination programs, we can strive towards mitigating the burden of STDs and improving overall public health outcomes worldwide.

(The author, Dr Nirmala Chandrashekar, is a senior consultant in Obstetrics & Gynecology, of Gleneagles BGS Hospital.)

A lot of credit for my wickets goes to Bumrah: Arshdeep

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

The pinpoint accuracy of Jasprit Bumrah allows other bowlers in the Indian team to go for wickets even in extreme pressure situations, said pacer Arshdeep Singh. The 25-year-old left-arm pacer is among the leading wicket-takers in the T20 World Cup with 15 scalps in six games at an average of 11.86 and economy rate of 7.41 runs per over. Bumrah, on the other hand, has taken 11 wickets in the same number of games, conceding just 4.08 runs per over, a rarity in the shortest format. "I guess a lot of credit goes to Jasprit because he puts a lot of pressure on the batters. He gives what, three or four runs

in and over," Arshdeep said after the 24-run win over Australia in Saint Lucia on Monday. "So, batsmen are coming hard against me and when they are trying, I just have to try and bowl my best ball and there are a lot of chances of getting wickets there because on the other hand they see the runs are not coming and the asking rate is going high. "So, they take more risk against me and there's a chance always of getting a wicket there. So there's a lot of credit of my wickets that goes to Jasprit," he said. Spinner Kuldeep Yadav once again provided the wickets when the team was in need and only three games into the tournament, he has taken his tally to seven scalps. "Kuldeep is a champion



spinner. Whenever he gets a chance, he delivers and he's always been in the wickets and today as well he was bowling from the tough end and even against the wind, he managed to bowl at around 6 an over and took crucial wickets. "He is a really important player in our team and we are looking forward to take all from him and we hope he takes a lot of wickets," said Arshdeep, who had David Warner caught in the slips on Monday. India face England in the second semi-final here on Thursday and they will have last edition's crushing semifinal loss to the defending champions in mind before taking the field at the Providence Stadium. Asked about his plans for the

semifinals, Arshdeep added: "Right now, I'm not expecting anything out of that game, just we'll have a little celebration after this game and a long travel day ahead. And then we'll see what conditions there are and how we can do our best there." Australia's best bowler on the day, Josh Hazlewood, also gave due credit to Kuldeep and Bumrah, saying they made the difference. "I thought the wicket was - a pretty good wicket it was probably a 190-par score and they got the other side of it and we went underneath. "I thought the chase was well on target for quite a lot of the time there and probably till Kuldeep and Jasprit, their eight overs, probably proved the difference again as they usually," said Hazlewood.



We let down all our fans, I apologise on behalf of team: Shanto

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto has apologised to the cricket-loving fans of his nation for their shambolic performance in the T20 World Cup and blamed his batting unit for the disappointing run that ended with a defeat against a gritty Afghanistan here. After India beat Australia on Sunday, both Afghanistan and Bangladesh had realistic chance of making the semifinals but it was the Rashid Khan-led team that defended a below par 115 to make the last-four stage. Bangladesh needed to knock off the target in 12.1 overs but there were all out for 105 in rain-marred Super Eight contest. "First of all, I would like to say that as a team, we let down all the fans of Bangladesh who follow us and support us. So, I apologise on behalf of the team. As a batting group, we couldn't give the best to the people of the country," Shanto said at the post-match press conference. "We feel sorry for that. We will try to come out of this situation in the future." Crestfallen he may be, but Shanto drew some positives from the campaign. "The positive side is that the bowlers have bowled very well.

Rishad (Hossain) has bowled very well in almost all matches in a big tournament like this. There were a lot of positives, but as a batting unit, we let down the fans and the people of our country. "We gave them a hard time. But there was no lacking in our efforts. Everyone tried their best. Everyone was honest in their place. But at the end of the day, we couldn't make it. So, on behalf of the team, I apologise," he reiterated. Shanto admitted that they had control of the proceedings against Afghanistan at one stage and should have won. "As a whole bowling unit doing a great job especially, I mentioned Rishad whole tournament he bowled really well, Tanzim Sakib bowled well. I felt all the bowlers did a great job that is we can take forward and as a fielding group I think we felt really well in all the matches, so there are some lot of positive things that we can take going forward. "It's a matter of a lot of frustration and a lot of pain too. Because before coming to play this match, everyone's plan was that we would win the match first. But if such a situation arises, then we will definitely take the chance that we had. But we couldn't take it. And the whole batting line-up made very bad decisions."

Fifties and hundreds do not matter, I want to bat with tempo: Rohit

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

He fell short of a potentially record-shattering hundred, but milestones "don't matter" to India skipper Rohit Sharma, whose sole aim while batting is to "put bowlers under pressure" by hitting them all over the field. Rohit's 92-run knock that came off 41 deliveries steered India to a 24-run win over former champions Australia in their final Super 8 outing of the ongoing T20 World Cup on Monday. The record for the fastest T20 World Cup hundred belongs to West Indian swashbuckler Chris Gayle, who pulled it off in 47 deliveries in the 2016 edition. Expectedly adjudged player of the match for the memorable effort, which was punctuated by eight sixes and seven fours, the 37-year-old said his focus was only on maintaining the "tempo" of the match. India will take on England in the second semifinal on June 27.

"It was a good wicket, and you want to try and back yourself to play those kinds of shots. I've been trying to do that for a few years now, and I'm glad it came off today. The fifties and hundreds don't matter, I wanted to bat with the same tempo and carry on. "You want to make big scores, yes, but at the same time you want to make the bowlers think where the next shot is coming, and I think I managed to do that today," he added. "You need to put the bowlers under pressure, and you need big scores for that. I tried to access all sides of the field, not just one side." Winning was not a 'breeze' for India and Rohit said he had to tweak his batting style to take the wind out of the 2021 champions' sails. Rohit played some delectable strokes on the off side after his opening partner Virat Kohli departed for a duck. With wind a perpetual hindrance, Rohit said he had



to play more strokes on the off side to negate the impact. "I thought right from over number one, there was a strong breeze blowing across. They (Australia) changed their plan, bowling against the breeze, so I realised I had to open up the off side as well," he said. "You've got to factor in the breeze and understand that the bowlers are smart as well

and open up all sides of the field. When you keep an open mind and not just think of one shot, you can access all areas of the field," said the India skipper after the match. "...When you're playing on grounds like this where wind is a factor, anything is possible, but I thought we used the conditions very well. It was very pleasing to see

how we were getting through those overs and getting the wickets at the same time." Rohit also said he knew wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav would be at his potent best in the West Indies after encountering seamer-friendly conditions in the US. Kuldeep repaid his faith with excellent figures of 2/24 in his four overs on Monday. "Kuldeep, we understand the strengths he has, but you have to use it when you need it. The pitches in New York were seamer-friendly, but we knew he would play a big role later." The skipper added that he would like India to continue playing the same way in the knockouts as well. "We don't want to do anything different (in the knockouts). We want to play the same way, understand what the individuals need to do in a given situation, and play freely. "So far we've been doing that consistently, and semifinals, we have to try and do the

same thing. It'll be nice (to play England in the semifinal). Nothing changes for us, we want to focus on what we can do as a team, and take the game on." **MARSH RUES MISSED CHANCES** Australian skipper Mitchell Marsh, who was guilty of grassing a sitter and also failing to build on his good start with the bat, conceded that India were better on the day. "It's disappointing... Today India got the better of us. I think over the course of 40 overs there's a lot of small margins, but honestly, India were the better team," he admitted. "We've seen for 15 years what Rohit Sharma can do in that kind of mood, and he got off to an absolute flier. In a run chase like that, you're in it if you can keep it at tens (10 runs per over) for as long as possible, but India were too good for us."

Warner makes low-key exit from cricket after Afghans beat Bangladesh

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Australia batting great David Warner's 15-year-long international career, dotted with glorious achievements and controversies in equal measure, has come to an anticlimactic end after Afghanistan beat Bangladesh, eliminating the former champions from the T20 World Cup at the Super Eight phase. Australia, the 2021 champions, finished at third place in the Super 8s Group 1 table with just two points - from the win against Bangladesh. They had suffered a shocking loss to Afghanistan and a humbling defeat to India. The 37-year-old Warner, who made his international debut in January 2009 in a T20I

match, thus made a low-key exit from international cricket with Australia's 24-run loss to India on June 24 at Gros Islet being his last match. There was no guard of honour or standing ovation, befitting one of Australia's all-time great batters. He made six runs off five balls in the match, edging Arshdeep Singh as Suryakumar Yadav took a low catch. He walked off the pitch with his head down, not knowing whether that was his last game. Warner's retirement has been gradual. He played his final ODI match in the World Cup final win over India in November 2023 and his last Test against Pakistan in January. He has long signalled that this T20 World Cup would be his final tournament. He retires as Australia's highest



scorer and seventh-most prolific batter in the world in T20 format with 3,277 runs from 110 matches, at an average of 33.43 and strike rate of 142.47. He scored one hundred and 28 fifties in the shortest format. From 112 Tests, he has scored 8,786 runs at an average of 44.59 with 26 hundreds and 37

fifties between 2011 and 2024. He also scored 6,932 runs from 161 ODI matches at an average of 45.30 with the help of 22 centuries and 33 half centuries. Warner, who has 49 centuries across formats and close to 19,000 runs in international cricket, had acknowledged that his name will forever be linked to the sandpaper gate scandal that took place at Newlands, Cape Town during a Test match against South Africa in 2018. Warner's involvement in the scandal in the Newlands Test, when Cameron Bancroft used sandpaper to scuff the ball earned him a one-year ban, the same punishment as that of the then skipper Steven Smith. Warner was also banned for life from taking any leadership role in the Australian cricket setup.

Test cricket at very low point in West Indies: Sarwan

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Ramnaresh Sarwan, one of the most prolific batters to have played for the West Indies, is leading a comfortable life after retirement but when one talks him to him about the health of Test cricket in the region, he paints a grim picture, fearful of a talent exodus to the USA. The unexpected growth of T20 cricket and players' preference for the shortest format has put red-ball cricket on the backburner. First-class teams play as little as five games per season, which Sarwan thinks should be increased to at least 10. Speaking to PTI, the 44-year-old also lamented the lack of cricket facilities in the region. He featured in 87 Tests and 181 ODIs aggregating more than 10,000 runs across formats and played alongside fellow Guyanese Shivnarine Chanderpaul and the great Brian Lara for the better part of his career. "Yeah well Test cricket is at a very low point to be honest. Among the games that we are playing again in the Caribbean, I don't think it's sufficient to develop our players but I also think there is this major threat of T20 cricket where a lot of people are showing interest in the shortest format," he said. "I think one of the biggest challenges we've had is facilities in the region. I think the cricket board has been working on it. So we'll see what happens," he added. I see lot of Caribbean players moving to USA Sarwan has nothing against players making money from the plethora of franchise leagues but the lure is impacting the format he loves and took great pride playing. With the way the game is going, Sarwan foresees a mass exodus of the Caribbean players to mainland America where the game has got a major push with hosting of the T20 World Cup and inclusion of the sport in the 2028 LA Olympics programme. "I think having T20 format in the US which is so close to the Caribbean with so many players of course they would have the opportunity now to participate in the short format of the game in the US.



"So you might find a lot of people jumping ship in terms of coming to the US and start participating in T20 and of course try and see if they could find a way in terms of becoming legal in the US and then start hopefully pushing the play in the US," said Sarwan, who also spends a lot of time in the US. The former West Indies captain has lot on his plate. He runs a couple of restaurants in Georgetown, one being an Italian-American joint and the other serves Thai and Indian fusion food. Talking more about Tests, Sarwan, who was known for his sound technique and wrist work, said an immediate solution is not in sight. "I don't think it's something that can be done only in the Caribbean. I think the ICC probably would have to intervene to put a limit in terms of how many T20 tournaments are being played around the world. "Of course you want to have the best players available for all those leagues and of course you also want to be able to represent the countries. So I think it's a major challenge in terms of saying what is the ideal scenario. At some point in time, the ICC probably would have to intervene which I really don't see happening in the near future," said Sarwan. Has the pride of playing for West Indies diminished in the era of T20 leagues? "I don't want to say it's diminished. But probably because of the shorter format of the game, it has taken a lot of players' attention. So, they probably would have worked more in the shorter format rather than the longer format.

Afghanistan's run to semifinals will inspire youth back home, says Rashid

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Skipper Rashid Khan believes that Afghanistan's maiden T20 World Cup semifinal qualification, following spectacular wins over New Zealand and Australia along the way, is a momentous feat that will inspire the youth of the strife-torn nation. Afghanistan, who became a full ICC member only in 2017, scripted history by qualifying for their maiden T20 World Cup semifinal with a win over Bangladesh here. "I think the semi-final is going to be a massive, massive like inspiration for the youngsters back home in Afghanistan. That Afghanistan team get into the semis for the first time," Rashid said at the post match press conference. "And we have done it under 19 level, but this level we haven't done that. Even Super Eight was first time for us and then in semis," he added. Moments after the win, visuals of jubilant fans back home celebrating Afghanistan's historic achievement started doing the rounds on social

media. With the feat, Afghanistan have showed how much they have progressed in the white ball formats. At last year's ODI World Cup, they upset defending champions England and former winners Sri Lanka and Pakistan. They are continuing their giant slaying run at the T20 World Cup having beaten heavyweights New Zealand and Australia. "The cricket we have played in the whole tournament so far - I think we deserve to be in the semis. The way everyone took the responsibility of getting into the game and performing best for the team," said Rashid. "So, I don't know how I can describe my feeling but it's a massive achievement for us as a team and as a nation to be in the semis and now looking forward to the semis." The Afghanistan cricket team is a group of individuals who have honed their skills by playing their trade in T20 leagues around the world. But when they come together to play for their country, it's hard to find a more passionate bunch. Afghanistan have found the



perfect head coach in former England cricketer Jonathan Trott, who balances things out with his calm and composed demeanour. The result is a side high on self belief. "To me, there is no good team and bad team. Every team is equal to each other. As long on a day, we took the right decision the right time, and that's where the difference comes when you're a loser. So

other than that, skill-wise, everyone is equal, I think," Rashid said. An unbeaten South African team awaits them in the semifinal. But the Proteas were stretched a few times in the tournament, especially by minnows Nepal, who stumbled at the final juncture, losing by a run. "Well, it's always you get that kind of inspiration for any team you watch on TV and

those small totals when team defend that it gives you lots of things to learn from and definitely the way Nepal performed in the whole competition was something pleasing to see." "They have played great cricket against all the sides they have played. And that's how T20 is all about. You need to have that kind of self-belief that we are capable of beating any side as long we do the right thing in

the right time and we're making sure we keep the thing simple." There was a moment during the game against Bangladesh when Gulbadin Naib dramatically fell on his back, clutching his thigh after Trott signalled his players to slow things down. But minutes later, not only was the all-rounder back on the field but he also went on to take Tanzim Hasan's wicket, causing several former players and commentators to question the genuineness of his discomfort. But Rashid thought to play down the incident. "Well, he had some cramp, I don't know what happened to him and I don't know what's going on in social media but that doesn't matter - it's just the end field injury which comes and then we haven't lost any overs, the rain came and we just went off, it's not something like brought a massive difference in the game. "We came back on field after five minutes and there was no massive difference. For me, it's just like a small injury comes in, then you have to take some time."

AAY releasing on August 15

RANA BACKS NIVETHA THOMAS, PRIYADARSHI

Rana Daggubati presents Nivetha Thomas and Priyadarshi's upcoming film, marking the return of Suresh Productions after a two-year hiatus from the big screen. Known for their 60 years of successful legacy, Suresh Productions collaborates with S Originals and Waltair Productions for this new-age family drama, promising a wholesome entertainment experience. Starring Nivetha Thomas, Priyadarshi, Vishwadev, Gautami and Bhagyaraj in pivotal roles, the film is produced by Rana Daggubati, Srujan Yarabolu and Siddharth Rallapalli. Directed and written by Nanda Kishore Emani, the movie titled *35 - Chinna Katha Kaadu* was unveiled through an artistically designed poster depicting a family seated on temple stairs. Scheduled for a theatrical release on August 15,

coinciding with Independence Day, the film aims to captivate diverse audiences with its refreshing storyline, featuring nostalgic school episodes as a special highlight. With Vivek Sagar composing music and Niketh Bommi handling cinematography, known for their work in acclaimed films like *Pelli Choopulu* and *Aakasam Nee Haddhu Raa*, respectively, the visual and auditory aspects promise to elevate the viewing experience. *35 - Chinna Katha Kaadu* will be released simultaneously in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam, anticipated to become a blockbuster with its blend of clean entertainment and engaging narrative.



Featuring young actors Narne Nithiin and Nayan Sarika in lead roles, *AAY* marks the next successful production from GA2 Pictures. Directed by debutant filmmaker Anji K Maniputhra and produced by Bunny Vas and Vidya Koppineedi, this film has been generating buzz with its captivating promotional content. Already making waves, the film's songs have become chart-toppers and are trending across social media platforms through reels and shorts. With excitement mounting, the makers have officially announced the release date. *AAY*, touted as the ultimate fun entertainer of the season, will hit theatres worldwide on Independence Day, August 15. The decision to release the film on Independence Day is strategic, taking advantage of the extended weekend, with Thursday being a holiday followed by the weekend and Raksha Bandhan on Monday.



The makers, who have been teasing audiences with character teasers and song releases, promise regular updates leading up to the release. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Godavari, *AAY* guarantees a delightful family entertainer that will showcase Narne Nithiin's charm. This ambitious project brings together top-notch acting and technical talents, with ace producer Allu Aravind presenting the film. Art direction by Kiran Kumar Manne, cinematography by Sameer Kalyani and music composed by Ram Miryala add to the film's appeal. Stay tuned for more exciting details about this eagerly anticipated project.

Raashii Khanna wants to work with MB, Prabhas

Raashii Khanna expresses her desire to collaborate with top stars in Tollywood, highlighting her interest in working with Prabhas and Mahesh Babu. Celebrating a decade in Tollywood, Raashii Khanna revealed her wish list of actors she hopes to work with. "I really want to work with Mahesh Babu," she emphasised, citing her admiration for him and their potential on-screen chemistry. She also expressed enthusiasm about collaborating with Prabhas, praising his recent work and eagerly anticipating his upcoming film, *Kalki 2898 AD*. Reflecting on her journey in the Telugu film industry, Raashii Khanna recalled starting without knowing Telugu but having since delivered numerous blockbusters, solidifying her reputation as a versatile actress. Her recent Tamil film, *Aranmanai 4*, not only broke records at the box office but also affirmed her status as a leading figure in Tamil cinema, earning her the title of the 'Golden Girl' of the industry. Looking ahead, Raashii Khanna is poised for the release of her upcoming Hindi film *The Sabarmati Report*, co-starring Vikrant Massey, and *Talaakhon Mein Ek*. She also has a Telugu film titled *Telusu Kada* in the pipeline, showcasing her diverse range and continuing success across multiple film industries.



BARKHA SINGH EYES TOLLYWOOD INDUSTRY

Barkha Singh, a prominent star from the digital realm, recently shared her enthusiasm for the Telugu film industry during an interactive "Ask me anything" session on Instagram. Responding to a fan query about her interest in Tollywood, Barkha enthusiastically replied, "OMG YAAAAA! That would be a dream!" Known for her compelling performances across web series and films, Barkha Singh has amassed a dedicated fan base drawn to her charisma and acting prowess. Her expressed desire to explore Tollywood has sparked excitement among her followers, who eagerly anticipate seeing her make her mark in Telugu cinema! Given Barkha Singh's versatility and screen presence, she is poised to make a seamless transition to Tollywood, captivating audiences with her talent. Fans are optimistic that her interest will lead to exciting collaborations and projects in the near future. Her statement has generated considerable interest, leaving many eager to witness her potential journey into the vibrant world of Telugu cinema. On the professional front, Barkha Singh has already impressed audiences with notable roles. Her work in *Maja Ma*, alongside the Madhuri Dixit Nene, received acclaim. She has also announced her upcoming project *Lafangey* with Amazon miniTV and has several projects slated for release this year, promising further success in her career.



Yes Boss shooting completed

Prominent producer, educationalist, and chairman of KL University, Koneru Satyanarayana, known for producing blockbuster films like *Rakshasudu* and *Khiladi*, is currently busy with his next project, *Yes Boss*, produced under K Studios. Kanchana Koneru is presenting this entertainer. This upcoming film stars the dynamic actor Havish, who was last seen in the mystery thriller *Seven*. Havish made his debut with *Muvvila* and has since delivered notable films such as *Ram Leela* and *Genius*. *Yes Boss*, directed by Ashok of *Bhaagamathie* fame, is a commercial entertainer that marks the first collaboration between actor Havish and filmmaker Ashok. On the occasion of Havish's birthday, the makers unveiled a captivating poster showcasing the actor in a stylish look. The film is expected to be high on entertainment and content, with a release date to be announced soon. Prominent writer Akula Shiva is penning the story and dialogue. Renowned Tollywood comedian Brahmanandam is playing a crucial role, adding a touch of humor to the film. The technical crew includes ace cinematographer Kabir Lal and talented music director Anup Rubens as composers.



Allu Sirish starrer Buddy's trailer is out now

Allu Sirish has joined hands with Tamil director Sam Anton for the upcoming film, *Buddy*. The first look and first single have received a positive response from the audience. Now the team has come up with an exciting trailer. It reveals that a teddy bear is in trouble and asks for help from Aditya Ram (Allu Sirish). The trailer shows how both of them join forces to solve the problem. Allu Sirish plays a pilot in the film, and the core point of the story seems pretty interesting. The trailer is well-edited with exciting elements and from a technical perspective, it looks very good. Gayatri Bhardwaj plays the leading lady in this film, which also stars Prisha Singh, Ajmal Amir, Mukesh Rishi, Mohammed Ali and others in significant roles. Hip-hop Tamizha is composing the music. Renowned production house Studio Green is producing the film. *Buddy* is all set to hit the screens on July 26, 2024.

Shanmukha wraps up shoot, gets ready for post-production

Sapbro Productions has announced the completion of filming for their highly anticipated movie, *Shanmukha*, which stars Aadi Sai Kumar and Avika Gor. Directed by Shanmugam Sappani, the film promises to be a visual spectacle featuring grand sets, striking CGI and a formidable score by the renowned Ravi Basur. The movie was shot on some of the largest sets ever built near Hyderabad, providing the perfect backdrop for its epic story. Director Shanmugam Sappani said, "We have crafted a story that we believe will resonate with audiences, thanks to our talented cast and crew, led by Aadi Sai Kumar and Avika Gor. The film is now moving into post-production, where the focus will be on fine-tuning the visual effects and ensuring the highest quality in every frame." The music for the film is composed by the super-talented Ravi Basur, known for his work on *KGF* and *Salaar*. His compositions are the mainstay of this emotional roller-coaster ride. The film is produced by Thulasiram Sappani, Shanmugam Sappani, and Ramesh Yadav.



PIC TALK

Telangana State Roads, Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy was the special guest at Kalavedika, Raghavi Media - NTR Film Awards programme. On the name of Viswa Vikhyata, Nata Sarwabhawma, Dr. Nandamuri Tarakarama Rao, Kalavedika (R. V. Ramana Murthy) and Raghavi Media organised NTR Film Awards 2024 for famous film actresses and actors in the field of cinema. The NTR Film Awards ceremony was held at Hotel Dasapalla in Hyderabad in the presence of many celebrities. "On this occasion, we would like to express our gratitude Komati Reddy Venkata Reddy, for accepting our invitation to be the special guest for the function. He agreed to come to this program because of his admiration for NTR. Therefore, on June 29, film celebrities and NTR fans are requested to participate and make this event a success."



Deepika Padukone praises Kalki 2898 AD for its blend of technology, emotional depth

With anticipation soaring for *Kalki 2898 AD*, touted for its cutting-edge CGI and stunning cinematography, expectations are at an all-time high among fans eagerly awaiting its release. The film promises to elevate Indian cinema to global standards, as showcased by its recent trailer release and accompanying series, *The Kalki Chronicles*, which offers exclusive insights into the making of the film. Deepika Padukone, part of the film's esteemed cast, recently discussed the delicate balance achieved between advanced technology and the heartfelt performances in *Kalki 2898 AD*. She lauded the film's technological prowess, highlighting, "For all of us to be part of a movie where I think every kind of technology that is available in the world today is probably at our disposal." Despite the extensive use of cutting-edge technologies like AI, Deepika emphasised the importance of retaining the emotional essence of performances. "With AI and similar advancements, there is a risk of losing the soul of the performances," she observed, while commending director Nag Ashwin for his adept management of this equilibrium. "The fact that we have a director who has used it so intelligently," she added, speaks volumes about the film's approach. *Kalki 2898 AD* features a stellar ensemble cast including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone and Disha Patani. Directed by Nag Ashwin and produced by Vyjayanthi Movies, the film is scheduled for release on June 27, promising a cinematic experience that seamlessly merges technological innovation with profound storytelling.

