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IMEC will prove to be one of 'biggest game-changers'

ASSIGN HIGHEST PRIORITY TO GOVERNANCE: SHAKTIKANTA

VD's cameo in Kalki 2898 AD makes FANS GO GAGA

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer
KCR's intellectual bankruptcy is evident as he wants to topple a government elected by the people. They are now saying it is a people's mistake. KCR should rub his nose at the Gunpark till it shrinks by three inches for engineering defections and other crimes. He is calling MLAs and hosting lunches. He might be closing doors and touching the feet just like he did with Modi
- A. Revanth Reddy, CM, Telangana P4

DON'T MISS...
Ramoji's statue to be installed in...
 Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan announced that a statue of media baron and chairman of the Ramoji Group of companies, Ch. Ramoji Rao will be installed in Amaravati. This decision honours Ramoji Rao's uncompromising dedication to addressing public issues. Speaking at a memorial service organized by the State Government in Vijayawada on Thursday, the Deputy CM emphasized Ramoji Rao's contributions. He said, "Ramoji Rao fought tirelessly for the public's interests..."

RAMOJI FOUGHT ON PEOPLE'S SIDE: CM

■ Ramoji Vigyan Kendra & Ramoji Rao Marg to be established in Amaravati; ■ Ramoji Rao Chitranagari to be set up in port city of Vizag

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The inspiration of media baron Ch Ramoji Rao should be carried forward to future generations, said Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu.

Addressing a large gathering at the memorial service of Padma Vibhushan awardee Ramoji Rao, organised by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in Vijayawada on Thursday, the CM praised Rao for his decades of service to society. Many journalists, film, and political personalities attended the memorial service for Ramoji Rao, the chairman of Ramoji Group of Companies. Chief Minister Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Ramoji Rao's family mem-



AP Chief Minister N.Chandrababu Naidu Dy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan and others attended Eenadu founder Ch.Ramoji Rao memorial meeting in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar

- A memorial service for Padma Vibhushan awardee Ramoji Rao was held in Vijayawada.
- CM emphasised the need to carry forward the inspiration of media baron Ch Ramoji Rao to future generations.
- Ramoji Rao's role in the development of Hyderabad and support during the COVID-19 pandemic praised.

bers, prominent journalists, state ministers, and film celebrities were present at the ceremony.

On this occasion, the CM announced, "In line with Vigyan Bhavan in Delhi, we will set up Ramoji Vigyan Kendra in Amaravati. A road in Amaravati will be named Ramoji Rao Marg. We will also establish Ramoji Rao Chitranagari in Visakhapatnam. He should receive due recognition for his services to the Telugu people. It is our responsibility to secure the Bharat Ratna for NTR and Ramoji Rao."

Eenadu MD Kiran donates Rs 10 cr for Amaravati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a poignant ceremony organised by the State government, Kiran, MD of Eenadu and son of media baron Ramoji Rao, pledged to uphold his father's enduring principles. Emphasising Ramoji Rao's dedication to democratic values and public welfare, Kiran assured attendees that their family would steadfastly continue his legacy.

"Whenever the State government encroaches upon people's rights, we stand with the victims," Kiran affirmed during the memorial service. "My father devoted his life to serving the people and supporting those in need across the nation. We commit to perpetuating the values cherished and practised by Ramoji Rao."

Highlighting their commitment to Amaravati, Kiran announced a donation of Rs 10 crore towards the capital city's development. "Amaravati, envisioned by my father and named after the ancient capital of Naryandhra, holds the potential to be India's foremost city," Kiran declared, expressing optimism about the future.

He expressed his gratitude to the government for organising the memorial service, stating, "This gathering will carry forward my father's aspirations and ideals, ensuring his legacy continues to inspire generations."

RS privileges panel holds 12...

The Privileges Committee of the Rajya Sabha on Thursday held 12 opposition MPs, including the AAP's Sanjay Singh, guilty of misconduct for disrupting House proceedings last August and cautioned them to desist from such behaviour in future. In the report tabled in the Upper House of Parliament on Thursday, the privileges panel held AAP MP Sanjay Singh guilty of disregarding the directions of the Chairman. It has accepted Singh's unconditional apology in the matter and recommended...

Pension disbursement in one go on July 1: CS

● CS holds virtual conference to coordinate with district Collectors.

● Each Village/Ward Secretariat employee is to handle 50 households; additional staff if needed.

● Rs 7000 total distributed to 11 pensioner sub-categories: Rs 4000 for July, Rs 1000 monthly for April-June.

● Adjustments in pension amounts as per current govt directives.



NEERABH'S TENURE EXTENDED

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On Thursday, the NDA government at the Centre approved a proposal of the State government led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu seeking an extension of service of chief secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad by another six months.

In a communication to the state government, Bhupinder Pal Singh, under-secretary in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), said the Centre had considered the state government's proposal for the extension of service of Neerabh Kumar Prasad. As such, Neerabh Kumar Prasad, retiring by June 30 on attaining the age of superannuation, would continue in the service from July 1 to December 31.

It may be mentioned that Neerabh Kumar Prasad took over as the chief secretary in the first week of June, after his predecessor Dr KS Jawahar Reddy went on a long leave, following the defeat of the YSR Congress party in

Murmu: Emergency darkest chapter

Says poll results showed people's faith in govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday stressed the government's unwavering faith in the Constitution and efforts to make it a part of "public consciousness", while slamming the Emergency as the "biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack" on the Constitution.

In her first address to a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha after Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his third term, she described the poll result as an endorsement of his government's policies while ruing attempts to hurt people's faith in electoral process, including EVMs- an apparent swipe at opposition parties. It is like cutting the very branch on which "we all are sitting", she said.

Amid cancellation and deferment of some competitive exams due to suspicion of paper leaks, which have drawn protests from students and the opposition's attack on the government, Murmu said her government is committed to a fair probe and ensuring punishment to culprits.

Govt's script, full of lies: Oppn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Thursday dubbed the President's address to the joint sitting of both houses of Parliament as a "script given by the government" that was "full of lies" and castigated the government over the repeated mention of the 1975 Emergency.

They alleged there is an "undeclared emergency" in the country and the Constitution is being attacked under the Modi government. Congress president and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said after listening to the President's address it seems Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in a state of perpetual denial, claiming that people of India have rejected him in this election by not giving the BJP a majority.

Majority of Indian employers plans...

The Indian employment market is likely to see an incremental expansion of more than 6 per cent in the first half this fiscal, supported by an upbeat economic climate across 23 industries, TeamLease Services said on Thursday. According to TeamLease's Employment Outlook Report for H1 FY25 (April 2024 to September 2024), which covered 1,417 employers in 20 cities, 56 per cent said their workforce will likely grow in the coming months. Around 23 per cent of employers anticipate maintaining...

COASTAL REGULATION ZONE VIOLATIONS

EAS Sarma for demolition of Rushikonda 'palace'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Former Union energy secretary EAS Sarma has called for immediate action from the Central government regarding the controversial structures on Rushikonda Hill, which he asserts violate Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules. In a strongly-worded letter, Sarma urged the demolition of these illegal constructions and the recovery of demolition costs from responsible government officials.

Sarma referenced his previous

the assembly elections on June 4. Meanwhile, the Centre has also obliged the request of the Chandrababu government for repatriation of senior IPS officer Mahesh Chandra Ladda from his central deputation back to the Andhra Pradesh cadre. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) approved for repatriation of Ladda, a 1998 batch officer to his parent cadre Andhra Pradesh with immediate effect. An order to this effect was issued on June 26, according to Sanjeev Kumar, Under Secretary to the Government of India.

Ladda, who is presently the inspector general of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is likely to be appointed as Andhra Pradesh Intelligence chief. At present Kumar Vishwajeet, a 1994 batch IPS officer is presently working as the DG of Intelligence as the ECI has appointed him as the Intelligence DG ahead of the general elections.

ing unauthorized construction in CRZ areas and improper disposal of construction waste along the coastline.

Drawing parallels with recent Supreme Court observations and directives on similar violations in Kerala, Sarma emphasized the necessity for the Ministry to adopt a similar stance towards the Rushikonda complex. He called for the demolition of any structures erected in violation of CRZ regulations and court-mandated construction limits.



Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC). He highlighted numerous violations, including unauthorized construction in CRZ areas and improper disposal of construction waste along the coastline.

DEMOLITION OF YSRCP OFFICES

HC orders status quo

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has moved the Andhra Pradesh High Court to challenge the notices issued by civic bodies for the demolition of party office buildings across the state.

After hearing a series of petitions, the High Court issued an interim order directing the civic authorities to maintain the status quo on the demolition plans. Meanwhile, the party has filed another fresh lunch motion petition in the court against notices served to additional party

offices in the state.

Following the civic bodies' notices to YSRCP party offices in various locations across the state, district YSRCP presidents filed 11 separate petitions in the form of a lunch petition.

Recently, the civic authorities demolished YSRCP's under-construction central office in Tadepalli, Guntur district, claiming unauthorized construction. The demolition drew a strong reaction from the party chief, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who accused the TDP regime of resorting to 'political vendetta.'

Bumrah is 1000 times better than...

Iconic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than what he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the ongoing T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an outstanding economy of 4.08 in the 23 overs he has bowled so far. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil told 'PTI Videos'. Bumrah, who is widely regarded as the best pacer in international cricket...

ChatGPT answers went 'undetected'; secured better grades than students, finds study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exam graders could have trouble spotting answers generated by AI-based chatbots, researchers said after their study found that these answers not only went undetected but were also graded better than those written by students.

On behalf of 33 'fake students', the researchers at the University of Reading, UK, submitted answers generated by ChatGPT to the examinations system of the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences of the same university.

The team found that 94 per cent of the AI-written answers went undetected. Further, about 83 per cent of the chatbot's answers secured better scores than real students' submissions.



"We found that within this system, 100 per cent AI-written submissions were virtually undetectable and very consistently gained grades better than real student submissions," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal PLOS ONE.

The researchers said their findings should be a "wake up call" for educators across the world and called for the global education sector to evolve in the face of artificial intelligence.

"Many institutions have moved away from traditional exams to

NEET-UG CASE

SC issues notice to NTA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to apprise it whether there is any time limit for raising grievances regarding the OMR sheets provided to the candidates who appeared in NEET-UG 2024.

A vacation bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti, which issued notice to the NTA on a fresh plea filed by a private coaching centre and few NEET candidates, tagged the petition with the pending matters and listed it for hearing on July 8.

Rs 5,367 cr industrial corridor projects for AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Centre has finalised two major projects for the development of the Orvakal Industrial Area in Kurnool district and the Kopparthi Industrial Area in YSR Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh, with a total investment of Rs 5,367 crore, the Commerce and Industry Ministry announced on Thursday.

These projects, undertaken by the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), aim to create advanced infrastructure to attract industries. They are strategically located near major highways, railway lines, and seaports, ensuring excellent connectivity.

The projects are also expected to stimulate socio-economic progress and generate significant employment opportunities in the region. The decisions were made during a meeting chaired by the Additional Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIT), Rajeev Singh Thakur, on June 21.

During the meeting, all projects were evaluated for their integrated planning and alignment with the PM Gati Shakti principles. The Ministry highlighted the focus on socio-economic benefits, improved connectivity, reduced transit costs, and enhanced efficiency.

On behalf of 33 'fake students', the researchers at the University of Reading, UK, submitted answers generated by ChatGPT to the examinations system of the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences of the same university.

make assessment more inclusive. Our research shows it is of international importance to understand how AI will affect the integrity of educational assessments," lead researcher Peter Scarfe, an associate professor at the University of Reading, said.

Probe into quarry leases amid charges of violations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The current administration has intensified its scrutiny of quarry leases and excavation practices following rising concerns about potential violations. The primary focus of the investigation is to determine whether any permitted excavation limits have been breached. In response to a series of complaints, the government has mandated a comprehensive investigation into four specific quarries within the district. This probe, spearheaded by the Mines Department, covers several key areas.



The investigation targets the CBCNC lands at Siripuram Junction in Visakhapatnam, a quarry linked to the son of former minister Budi Muthyala Naidu in Paravada mandal, another quarry in Tadi village, and a hill excavation near plots allocated to industrialists in Gurrampalem, Pendurthi mandal. The Mines Department aims to ascertain whether the land leased for quarrying was used within legal limits and if temporary

permits were issued and adhered to. At the CBCNC site in Siripuram Junction, extensive excavation of stone and soil was required for the deep foundations of multi-storied buildings. A company affiliated with former MP MVV Satyanarayana secured a temporary permit to excavate one lakh cubic meters, paying a royalty of two crores. However, amidst the governmental transition, numerous complaints surfaced, prompting a survey by Mines Department officials. This ongoing survey seeks to verify if the excava-

tions adhered to the temporary permits or if they exceeded them. The results are expected within two days. Similarly, the plots at the APIIC Industrial Estate in Gurrampalem, Pendurthi mandal, required levelling, which involved unauthorized soil removal from nearby hills. Allegations suggest that APIIC officials and staff facilitated these unauthorized excavations. The spotlight also falls on two quarries in Paravada mandal, one leased to the son of former minister Budi Muthyala Naidu and another in Tadi vil-

lage. Complaints have surfaced that both sites exceeded their permitted excavation limits. Mines Department officials have confirmed that an investigation into these allegations is imminent. Moreover, the government has received additional complaints about other quarries within the joint district. Although detailed information is pending, the Mines Department's comprehensive survey will address these concerns, ensuring that all operations comply with established excavation regulations.

Minister calls for steps to support farmers

PNS ■ PARVATI PURAM

Minister for Women & Child Welfare and Tribal Welfare Gummadi Sandhya Rani has underscored the urgent need to address farmers' seed requests and enhance district development efforts. Following a detailed review meeting with district officials upon assuming office, Minister Rani has swiftly mandated immediate actions. These include the timely provision of seeds and fertilizers to farmers, alongside stringent measures to combat the distribution of counterfeit agricultural products.

Highlighting transparency and accountability, Minister Rani has called for comprehensive records on crop loss compensation over the past five years, emphasizing the prompt resolution of pending cases. Moreover, she has directed the District Agriculture Officer to issue guidelines for subsidizing agricultural equipment and filling vacancies in Rythu Bharosa Kendras.

In parallel efforts to support farming communities, Minister Rani has emphasized the necessity of prompt payments at crop purchase centres, echoing the Chief Minister's commitment to agricultural welfare. Additionally, she has prioritized



the distribution of government-issued graduate passbooks and ensured a consistent water supply to farmers, essential for sustainable agricultural practices. Turning her attention to healthcare, Minister Rani has ordered urgent repairs for ambulances and stressed the importance of tackling prevalent health issues such as malaria. She has also emphasized the need for vigilant road maintenance and ensured the availability of essential medicines and regular medical check-ups. The Minister has proposed the introduction of feeder ambulances for tribal villages and the organization of blood donation camps under district hospitals to enhance medical accessibility.

Furthering her agenda, Minister Rani has tasked APEPDCL engineers with ensuring uninterrupted power supply in hospitals, crucial for uninterrupted healthcare services. She has also outlined plans to improve the quality of food and milk supplies to Anganwadi, including initiatives to restart the Gorumudda program and accelerate Anganwadi worker recruitment. Measures to combat child marriages and child labour have been reinforced, with Anganwadi meetings streamlined to enhance effectiveness. Addressing the welfare of tribal communities, Minister Rani has directed provisions for essential items in tribal welfare

ashram dormitories, emphasizing nutritional standards through random inspections. She has also stressed the importance of maintaining academic excellence and ensuring safety in girls' schools to prevent incidents.

In her comprehensive approach to rural development, Minister Rani has emphasized the crucial need for every village, particularly remote villages, to receive drinking water through a dedicated initiative to prevent waterborne diseases. She has called for detailed reports on the construction, quality, and layout of houses to ensure sustainable living conditions.

District Collector Nishant Kumar has collaborated closely with Minister Rani, providing insights into ongoing district activities and identifying key priorities within Rythu Bharosa Kendras. He has mandated urgent ambulance repairs, proposed the establishment of five primary health centres, and advocated for malaria testing kits in primary health centres (PHCs). Additionally, initiatives to construct Anganwadi buildings, alongside sanitation drives and water quality tests, have been prioritized to enhance community welfare.

THREE NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

Translation into Telugu unlikely by July 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is not likely to complete the translation process of the three new criminal laws before it comes into force on July 1 across the country. Law secretary V Sunita said only half of the translation work of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 into Telugu has been completed.

"Translation work of the three laws into the Telugu language is in progress. Only half of the work is completed," Sunita said and added that the task is huge.

She noted that retired employees who are familiar with the job have been entrusted with the translation. However, she pointed to the shortage of staff. The three new laws are meant to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc) and the Indian Evidence Act.

SC issues...

Continued from Page 1

Senior advocate R Basant, appearing for the coaching institute and the candidates, submitted that a few students, who have appeared for the examination, have not got the OMR sheets.

The bench at the outset pointed out to Basant as how can a private coaching institute file an Article 32 petition in the Supreme Court and what kind of fundamental rights of the institution are affected.

Counsel appearing for the NTA submitted that the OMR sheets have been uploaded on the website and given to the candidates.

The bench asked him whether there is any time limit for raising the grievance of OMR sheets.

GITAM signs MoU with HSL for capacity building

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Deemed to be University (GITAM) and Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to focus on various initiatives in the technical and management domains. The MoU will facilitate collaboration on action-research projects, summer internships, project works, capacity-building programs, consultancy services, and guest lectures.

The MoU signing ceremony was held at GITAM and witnessed the exchange of documents between GITAM Registrar Prof. D Gunasekaran and HSL Business Development & IT Wing General Manager



Commander JP Gupta. GITAM officials including Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof. Gowtham Rao, GITAM R&D Cell Director Dr. N. Satyanarayana, and GITAM School of Business Dean Prof. Raja P Pappu were present at the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Gowtham Rao highlighted GITAM's commitment to applied research and

its pool of highly qualified faculty. He elaborated on the university's consultancy services in various domains like wealth management, waste management, and engineering. He further mentioned GITAM's expertise in conducting capacity-building programs for industries.

Commander J.P. Gupta from HSL provided an overview of the shipyard's

achievements and ongoing endeavours. He highlighted HSL's track record of constructing and repairing a significant number of vessels. Commander Gupta emphasized HSL's focus on innovation and efficiency. He expressed his optimism that the collaboration with GITAM would contribute to enhancing human resources in the future.

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by faculty members from both GITAM School of Business and GITAM School of Technology, symbolizing the collaborative spirit between the two institutions. This partnership is expected to be mutually beneficial for both GITAM and HSL in the coming years.

Auto workers seek support amid new free ride scheme for women

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh government's imminent rollout of a free bus ride program for women on RTC buses has sparked proactive measures from the Road Transport Workers Federation (RTWF). While commending the government's women's empowerment initiative, the RTWF seeks to address the potential impact on the livelihoods of auto-rickshaw drivers.

Sivaji Rao, state president of the RTWF, voiced his support for the initiative but raised concerns about its potential repercussions. "Our members fear a significant reduction in their earnings when women start availing free travel on state buses," Rao explained. The federation's concern stems from the anticipated shift in commuter preferences, which could dent the daily income of auto rickshaw operators.

In a proactive move, a delegation from the federation

recently visited Karnataka and Telangana, where similar schemes have been implemented. "Initial problems were noted in both states, but the systems were eventually streamlined," Rao noted, suggesting that while challenges are expected, they are not insurmountable.

To mitigate the impact, the federation's proposals to the government include critical subsidies for statutory payments like insurance, road tax, and life tax. "Annual insurance costs have increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 8,000 under the previous government. Additionally, the amended MV Act has introduced higher penalties," Rao highlighted, underscoring the financial burdens that auto-rickshaw drivers currently face.

Among the key proposals is the creation of a welfare board for auto rickshaw workers. This board would provide life insurance up to Rs 10 lakh, free medical treatment, and other

essential incentives, aiming to offer a safety net for the drivers who form the backbone of the state's transport system. Andhra Pradesh is home to over 1.2 million auto-rickshaws, with major cities like Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Guntur, Tirupati, and Nellore each boasting around 50,000. Auto rickshaws handle 70% of road traffic, maintaining their status as the most affordable mode of transport in the state.

"The free ride scheme's impact will be less severe in rural and agency areas due to the limited presence of RTC buses," Rao acknowledged. "However, it will significantly affect auto rickshaws in major cities." As the government gears up to fulfil its electoral promise, the Road Transport Workers Federation is poised to ensure that the voices of auto rickshaw workers are heard, advocating for measures that will help them navigate the impending changes and continue to thrive.

YSRCP complains to DGP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Leaders of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) have complained to the Director General of Police (DGP) regarding a series of attacks allegedly carried out by members of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena Party (JSP) at various locations.

They have requested protection in response to these incidents.

The complaint was submitted by prominent YSRCP leaders, including MLC Lella Appireddy, former Minister Ambati Rambabu, former MLA Gopireddy Srinivasa Reddy, and Mayor K

Manohar Naidu, to DGP Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao.

In their letter, the YSRCP leaders claimed that attacks on their members and activists have been ongoing for the past 15 days across the state.

They reported that TDP and JSP activists forcibly entered YSRCP offices at 14 different locations, acted violently, and intimidated their leaders and activists.

"The police did not prevent the TDP and JSP activists from behaving violently and attacking the offices. There is no protection for the YSRCP offices and leaders in the state.

The law and order situation has deteriorated," the YSRCP leaders stated in their complaint. They urged the DGP to take measures to provide protection.

The YSRCP leaders also demanded action against police officials who they claimed were indifferent in protecting YSRCP offices.

Meanwhile, Ambati Rambabu condemned the attack on former MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy by a TDP leader while he was being taken to prison.

He emphasized that such attacks would not intimidate them.

Ramoji fought on people's...

Continued from Page 1

Chandrababu Naidu further stated, "Ramoji Rao is not just a person but a system. Everything he did was in the public interest. Ramoji Rao epitomized ethics and honesty. Born in the remote village of Pedaparupudi in Krishna district, he rose to prominence through perseverance, becoming number one in every chosen field. On August 10, 1974, the 'Eenadu' newspaper was started in Visakhapatnam. For five decades, 'Eenadu' has been raising public awareness of current issues. Ramoji Rao, through the press, constantly fought on public issues. District editions were introduced, addressing issues at the grassroots level. The Ramoji Group has nurtured the careers of many actors, artists, and journalists. Ramoji Rao has received numerous awards for his work in journalism. He is a prime example of unwavering faith and dedication. There will be only one NTR, only one Ramoji in history."

The CM pointed out that many governments have tried to undermine Margadarsi Chits, but despite their efforts, they could not damage the trust

and reputation of the organisation. He added, "Priya's pickles are popular and exported to 150 countries. Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad is the world's biggest film city and is beautifully designed. The Ramoji Group stood by the people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most people serve only when they hold positions, but Ramoji Rao proved that good administration and services can be provided to people with public consciousness. Ramoji Rao's role was crucial when NTR floated the TDP in 1982; he came to power in 9 months. He was fearless and faced challenges bravely. Ramoji Rao's contribution to the development of Hyderabad is significant."

The CM further remarked, "Ramoji Rao lived by his values and fought for the people. After the State's bifurcation, Ramoji Rao researched and suggested the name 'Amaravati' as the capital of Andhra Pradesh. After facing difficulties for five years, Amaravati will be transformed into an iconic capital, securing a bright future for the Telugu nation. For Ramoji, the Telugu language and the Telugu race meant immense affection. He wanted to work until his last breath, and that is exactly what happened."

Pension...

Continued from Page 1

Pension amounts totalling Rs 7,000 will be distributed among 11 sub-categories of pensioners, including Rs 4000 for July and Rs 1000 per month for April, May, and June. The CS instructed for adjustments in pension amounts for other categories as per current government guidelines.

Rashtra Griha Nirman, Special CS of Village/Ward Secretariats Ajay Jain, Principal Secretary of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department Shashi Bhushan, Secretaries of Finance Department Saurabh Gaur and Satyanarayana, Director of Village/Ward Secretariats Department Siva Prasad, along with district Collectors, participated virtually.

EAS Sarma..

Continued from Page 1

Sarma also criticised the Andhra Pradesh Coastal Zone Management Authority (AP CZMA) for its passive stance, accusing it of overlooking widespread CRZ violations along the state's coastline. He demanded accountability from the AP CZMA for these statutory breaches and the resulting environmental damage. The construction of the 'palace' on Rushikonda, associated with former Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, has ignited significant public debate, further fueled by recent revelations about the mansion's extravagant interiors. With public opinion divided, there is mounting pressure on the Ministry to take decisive action.

Stakeholders warn that failure to address these concerns promptly could imply tacit acceptance of legal violations, eroding public trust and undermining environmental conservation efforts. Urgent and resolute action from the Ministry is therefore urged to uphold legal standards and protect the coastal environment from further harm.

AP Secretariat staff to have 5-day week for one more year

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The employees of the State Secretariat, various offices, and department heads in the Amaravati capital region will continue to enjoy a five-day work week for another year. Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad issued the relevant orders on Thursday.

The government has decided to maintain the five-day work week for employees working in the state secretariat, offices, department heads, corporations, and government organizations within the capital region for another year. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu approved the decision by signing the file that endorsed the five-day week system. The General

Administration Department has subsequently issued orders to this effect. Chief Secretary Prasad stated that employees are required to perform their duties from 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM, with the order taking immediate effect.

K. Sampath Kumar, a senior employee and section officer in the AP Secretariat, expressed his delight and thanked the Chief Minister for extending the five-day week. He noted that although the working hours have been adjusted from 10:30 AM - 5:30 PM to 10:00 AM - 5:30 PM, it remains a favourable decision. Both the secretariat employees and the department heads have expressed their happiness with the state government's decision.

Murmu: Emergency darkest chapter...

Continued from Page 1

She said, "My government is working towards major reforms in examination related bodies. This process requires complete transparency and probity."

In her 50-minute address, the President highlighted the government's measures in a range of sectors, from economy, defence and farming to the empowerment of different sections of society, and laid down its priorities in its third term, amid sporadic protests from opposition benches when she referred to issues such as paper leaks and matters related to the North East region.

The President's speech to Parliament is essentially a government-approved document which outlines its agenda. Her address kept the heat on the Congress, which is buoyed by its best tally in the last three polls, over the issue of Emergency imposed by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
No. 01 to 14/TOI&M/2024-25 Date: 25-06-2024
Online tenders are being invited for execution of 14 works under the limits of Eluru circle with Rs. 1422.00 Lakhs of O & M funds. Date for submission of tenders: From 01-07-2024 to 18-07-2024 till 3.00 pm. For details, contact: www.tender.eprocurement.gov.in or call Phone: 8019962389.
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Circle, Eluru
R.O.No: 1388/CLADVT/12621-22, Dt. 27.06.2024

NRIs invited to establish units

Minister assures young industrialists and NRIs of providing infra facilities and bank loans

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for MSME, SERP, and NRI Empowerment and Relations, Kondapalli Srinivas, has emphasised the importance of involving NRIs in the establishment of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). He assured NRIs that the government will provide infrastructure facilities and necessary approvals as quickly as possible.

The Federation of Andhra Pradesh Small and Medium Industries Association organised MSME Day observance at Murali Fortune in Vijayawada on Thursday. Minister Kondapalli Srinivas, Industries and Commerce Department Secretary N Yuva Raj, RERA Chairman V Ramnath, Ramesh Group Hospital Chairman Dr MN Rammohana Rao, MD Dr P Ramesh and others were present on the occasion. The minister inaugurated the MSME Day programme.

Addressing the gathering, Srinivas said that many countries around the world have



MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas handing over the bank loaning cheques to industrialists during the MSME Day observance organised in Vijayawada on Thursday

been actively promoting MSMEs for their financial development. He urged banks to support young industrialists by providing them with loaning facilities to start their MSMEs. He announced that based on the availability of local resources, the 'One District - One Product' scheme would be launched in the State through the Andhra

Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC).

"Young industrialists need to produce things as per the requirements of the world. For that, they should study the needs of the world and then start their units. Youths withdraw from getting government jobs and go to foreign countries for employment.

They should start small units locally and get involved in the country's financial development. DWCRAs units have achieved more growth in the State. So, MSMEs should utilise DWCRAs members' services and provide employment to them in their MSME units," Minister Srinivas said. He announced that the government will launch

'Grievance Day' at the district-level, especially for the young industrialists, to address MSMEs' issues. The unsolved issues will be reviewed by the minister every three months. Furthermore, he asked the NRIs to come back to their hometowns either to start small industries or put in an investment to provide employment opportunities for the unemployed youths.

Industries and Commerce Department Secretary N Yuva Raj thanked the government for appointing a special ministry for MSME. Andhra Pradesh is in 10th place in the MSME category in the country, he said. However, full details about MSMEs are not available and he urged the union government to conduct a survey on MSMEs and address their issues. Later, Srinivas handed over Rs.9.39 crore in loaning cheques to 12 industries.

FAPSIA State president V Muralikrishna, general secretary E Purnachandra Rao, N Venkateswara Rao, and others were present.



Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham and Tenant Farmers Association leaders submitting a representation to Vijayawada Rural Deputy Tahsildar Salim in Vijayawada on Thursday

APRS demands investment aid of Rs 20,000 for farmers

Protest staged in Vijayawada city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The general secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham (APRS), KVV Prasad, has urged the State government to promptly release investment assistance of Rs.20,000 to farmers and tenant farmers to facilitate the commencement of Kharif activities. Despite the onset of the Kharif season in the State, the government has yet to decide on the approval of the investment assistance.

APRS has called for submissions of representations to all

tahsildars, requesting the immediate approval of investment assistance of Rs.20,000. APRS leaders and farmers rallied, demanding financial assistance for the farmers. Later, the leaders met with Vijayawada Rural Deputy Tahsildar Pathan Salim at his office on Thursday. During the meeting, KVV Prasad emphasised that, in light of the rising production costs, the State government should increase the scale of finance and approve crop loans for farmers of Rs.3 lakh without any interest and Rs.5 lakh

at 25 paise interest. He called for the repair of all canals and drains in the State. He also demanded the removal of smart electricity meters that were installed by the previous government.

Andhra Pradesh Tenant Farmers Association general secretary P Jamaiah and NTR district president Buddi Ramesh, along with leaders P Venkateswara Rao, Paidurapadu Venkateswara Rao, L Govindaraju, Deva Raju, and Satyanarayana were also present at the event.

Ramoji's statue to be installed in Amaravati: Pawan



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan announced that a statue of media baron and chairman of the Ramoji Group of companies, Ch. Ramoji Rao will be installed in Amaravati. This decision honours Ramoji Rao's uncompromising dedication to addressing public issues.

Speaking at a memorial service organized by the State Government in Vijayawada on Thursday, the Deputy CM emphasized Ramoji Rao's contributions. He said, "Ramoji Rao fought tirelessly for the public's interests. His work in journalism exemplified the values of press freedom and public welfare."

Reflecting on his personal interactions with Ramoji Rao, Pawan Kalyan recounted, "I met Ramoji Rao for the first time in 2008. His manner of speaking deeply impressed me. He always spoke about public welfare and the importance of press freedom. He believed that the media serves as a bridge between the government and the people. Regardless of which party was in power, his newspaper consistently addressed public issues without bias."

He faced numerous challenges but remained steadfast in upholding the values of journalism.

The ceremony in Vijayawada was attended by prominent journalists, state ministers, and film celebrities.

Ramoji is the epitome of credibility: Nara Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For those who want to achieve something in life, no business school or university in the world can have any lesson beyond the life of this media tycoon, the Late Ramoji Rao, said Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, here on Thursday.

Paying glowing tributes to the departed soul, Lokesh, in a press note released here said that Ramoji is a synonym for hard work and he is the epitome of credibility. Ramoji had all the qualities which a normal human being should have, he said.

Observing that once the media had a lot of credibility which is slowly fading now, Lokesh said that even during this period too the media organisations being maintained by Ramoji stood by values and ethics. This reflects the amount of credibility Ramoji



had maintained, he added. Anything can be bought with money in this world except credibility, the IT Minister said and added that this kind of integrity should be built brick by brick. One in crores of people can maintain such kind of eminence. Ramoji, like some individuals, never had made any kind of request for any position either in government or outside, Lokesh said.

From the days of Emergency

till the rule of the YSRCP chief, Jagan Mohan Reddy, Ramoji thoroughly and fearlessly exposed if the persons holding the power either in the State or at the Centre committed any kind of mistakes, Lokesh said. That is his great quality who always stood by the people, he added.

Lokesh said that though Ramoji Rao is not physically with the people, he is still amidst the people of the State in the shape of the media.

Cancel GOs 107, 108: CPI State secretary

Says govt is 'selling' MBBS seats in government medical colleges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna, on Thursday, wrote a letter to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu requesting to allocate self-financed medical seats in government medical colleges to deserving students from underprivileged backgrounds. He pointed out that all State governments, except for Andhra Pradesh, have been allocating medical seats to poor students based on merit. He alleged that Andhra

Pradesh is selling MBBS seats in government medical colleges under the guise of self-financed seats by issuing GOs.No.107 and 108. He also noted that this action of carving out 'profit-motive' categorisation in medical Seats, especially in government colleges fully owned and run by the State, is unprecedented in the country and is contrary to the public spirit. He emphasised that such 'profit-motive' actions should not be permitted in any welfare State.

Anitha for internal intelligence system in police

Says govt focusing on curbing ganja; will ensure women's safety, police welfare

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Home Affairs and Disaster Management Vangalapati Anitha has opined that it would be better to implement an internal intelligence system within the police force. "If the police system works properly, it will be easy to bring many reforms. The government aims to curb the ganja menace, and ensure women's protection, police welfare and police recruitment," she added.

Anitha visited the Director General of Police (DGP) headquarters at Mangalagiri on Thursday, for the first time after taking charge as Home Minister. DGP Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao accorded a warm welcome to the minister. She received the police guard of honour and later, planted a sapling on the premises of the DGP office.

Minister Anitha held a review meeting with all police officials and discussed the government priorities such as a 100-day plan of action, curbing the ganja menace, friendly policing, and more.

While addressing the media later, Anitha said that the police



should intervene whenever people face problems. Also, if they come to the police station, the cops should assure them of justice, she said.

Further, Anitha directed the police officers to bring a police-friendly atmosphere in the State. "Everyone should feel secure in the State and for that, the police should work dedicatedly," she added. Also, she promised that the government will provide all facilities to the police. The department is using

vehicles which were purchased in 2014.

Meanwhile, higher police officials should take steps to introduce a unique toll-free number across the State. Also, prepare a plan of action to find out missing women, ganja and road accident cases as per the National Crime Records Bureau, she said.

Curbing ganja was discussed during the review meeting and she suggested the officials prepare a 100-day special plan for

the purpose. The State government has constituted a cabinet sub-committee comprising Home, Education, Excise and Health departments to create awareness on ganja, she added.

Answering a question, she clarified that the Red Book is not meant for revenge actions against the opposition YSRCP. However, she made it clear that the State government will take action as per law against those officers who worked against the name.

"If the government takes revenge against the YSRCP leaders, can we wait for this long," she asked. "There is no thought of revenge. As per the directions of leader and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, we are all working for the development of the State," she explained.

Furthermore, she alleged that the previous YSRCP government destroyed the police system in the State. Even a single constable post was not filled in the five-year rule of YSRCP. The entire police force was used for bandobast. There is no Police Academy and Greyhounds for the State, she said.

"The Central government released funds for the Police Academy, and YSRCP did nothing for it. One of the police stations in Visakhapatnam district still functions in a shed and escort vehicles are not working properly," she added.

Referring to Disha Police Stations, she said that there was no Act of Disha. Also, she stated that the State government is thinking of changing the name.

Stringent action if diarrhoea is neglected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Health and Family Welfare Commissioner Dr Venkateswar has warned all District Medical and Health Officers (DM&HOs) that stringent action will be taken against those who neglect cases of diarrhoea. He emphasised the importance of preventing the spread of diarrhoea in the State, while attending a video conference from his office at Mangalagiri on Thursday.

Dr Venkateswar stated that a State-level committee, led by the Public Health and Family Welfare Director, has been established to closely monitor diarrhoea cases. He urged all officials to be vigilant and take preventive measures to contain the spread of diarrhoea across all districts.

Furthermore, he stressed that DM&HOs need to actively monitor all control rooms, inspect private hospitals, and submit detailed reports on cases. He warned that any private hospital failing to provide accurate information will face consequences.

Work together to implement developmental plans: DC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has urged the officials concerned to work together to implement development plans in Ibrahimpatnam and Penuganchiprolu mandals, which have been selected under the Central government's Aspirational Block Programme (ABP). She emphasised that officials should adhere to the prescribed index during the implementation of these plans.



NITI Aayog Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Subrahmanyam conducted a video conference from New Delhi with all district

collectors on the ABP scheme on Thursday. Collector Dr. Srijana attended the meeting along with the district officials. NITI Aayog

CEO gave suggestions regarding the progress of six indexes.

Later, Dr Srijana held a review meeting on the ABP scheme with

the officials. To achieve targets, the officials should work coordinately and should focus on developmental plans in the Ibrahimpatnam and Penuganchiprolu mandals. She instructed the officials to work to enhance the living standards of the people and provide qualitative services. NTR District Chief Planning Officer (CEO) Y. Sri Latha, MPDOs Sai Harsha, P. Uma Devi, ABP Block Coordinator Moha Sandeep, and others were present.

Collector outlines for growth priorities

PNS ■ PADURU

Newly appointed District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has wasted no time in articulating his vision for the district, emphasising education, healthcare, and infrastructure as top priorities. Addressing the media shortly after assuming office, Kumar highlighted his extensive experience across various administrative roles, underscoring his familiarity with tribal issues.

"I am committed to addressing the challenges faced by our tribal communities," Kumar stated, pledging a focused approach towards enhancing education facilities, improving healthcare access, and bolstering infrastructure development. He emphasised tackling issues such as public health, mobile connectivity, and road access, promising continued efforts in these areas. Acknowledging the significance of government directives, Kumar announced regular

reviews of educational initiatives and plans to resolve infrastructure gaps, including water supply and road connectivity. He also assured prompt action on grievances through the newly launched "You for Me" public grievance redressal system, operational round-the-clock.

In response to queries from local media, Kumar addressed concerns over school admissions and ITDA meetings, affirming swift government intervention where necessary.

TG CM's vision for integrating education and employability

In a diverse yet unified country like India, the concept of an integrated residential educational hub represents a forward-thinking approach. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy, the Congress government in Telangana has taken a decision that is set to revolutionize the education landscape. Many view this initiative as a contemporary solution to the challenges facing our education system today.

Currently, work is underway on pilot projects planned at Kodangal and Madhira. Administrative approvals have already been granted for these educational hubs. These institutions will consolidate schools catering to children from SC, ST, BC, and Minority communities into a single campus. This innovative approach eliminates the need for separate school buildings across different locations.

Each hub will feature shared facilities for sports, recreation, skill development, alongside exclusive classrooms and dormitories for respective groups. This integration not only optimizes government spending on maintenance but also enhances oversight of educational and extracurricular activities.

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Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is dedicated to enhancing basic education throughout the state and his primary goal is to lay a strong academic foundation and hone practical skills among young learners. He emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive

improvements across government-run educational institutions.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy envisions Telangana becoming a role model for fostering unity in diversity. This initiative aims to cultivate a sense of belonging among



BOREDDY AYODHYA REDDY

development and educational opportunities for all communities. Though currently in its pilot phase, this initiative is anticipated to yield significant benefits in the future.

Recently, the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister reviewed architectural models for the proposed educational hub structures in a meeting. The project is designed for swift completion, promising to transform the campus into a dynamic learning environment that offers students a fresh educational experience. These campuses will be developed across all constituencies in a phased approach.

Each integrated residential school complex will occupy 20-25 acres of land, consolidated into 'mini education hubs' at centralized locations. Government sources indicate

that this strategy aims to enhance student talent and foster a competitive spirit while eradicating discrimination on caste and religious lines.

ITIs to boost employability
The efforts and initiatives aimed at skill development among the youth are poised to be the cornerstone for job creation and employability in the state. In a significant move, the Chief Minister has decided to transform ITIs into Advanced Training Centres (ATCs). The goal is to train young people in advanced technologies that meet current industry requirements, enhancing their employability and enabling them to contribute to the state's economic growth.

This significant initiative, estimated to cost Rs 2,324

crore in all, encompasses 29 modern courses. An agreement with Tata Technologies Limited (TTL) has been formalized to support this endeavor. Approximately 4.70 lakh youth are expected to be trained in these ATCs over the next 10 years. These initiatives are set to transform the landscape of education, learning, and employment in next-generation Telangana.

The government is simultaneously focusing on enhancing academic standards and improving skill development among the youth. This comprehensive approach aligns with global standards and aims to elevate the capabilities of the youth, positioning them to compete and succeed on an international level.

(The writer is CPRO to Telangana Chief Minister)

State govt gearing up for pension disbursal: Anam

PNS ■ NELLORE

Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy has made it clear that all arrangements are being made to disburse the enhanced social security pensions on July 1. Addressing a press conference in his camp office here on Thursday, the Minister said that Rs 3000 pension was disbursed to the beneficiaries in the previous YSRCP regime. As per the assurance given by the TDP, Rs 4000 pension would be disbursed under the NTR social security pension scheme to the beneficiaries. "A total amount of Rs 7000 will be disbursed to each of the beneficiary adding the arrears of last month," he stated.

There are over 65 lakh pensioners in the state for which the incumbent government has earmarked Rs 4,400 crore for disbursement.

"There are 3,19,961 beneficiaries of the NTR pension scheme in Nellore district and Rs 218.87 crore will be disbursed to them on July 1. This time we are not using the 'Volunteers' for the disbursal of pension. However, the social



security pensions will be extended to the beneficiaries at their homes through the village and ward secretariat employees," Ramanarayana Reddy made it clear.

An action plan is being executed to restart 203 Anna canteens in the state, he informed, stating that 183 canteens will be opened soon at once and the remaining 20 canteens will be reopened later. The

Chandrababu Naidu-headed government is committed to the revocation of AP Land Titling Act 2022. The Land Titling Act caused concern to the land owners in the state, the Endowment Minister claimed.

"The revamping of major temples in the state will be given from Tirumala temple. The opinions and advice of seers of various mutts, priests

of temples and religious heads will be taken in this regard," the minister asserted.

Minister Ramanarayana Reddy said that there are 27,000 temples in the state of which 7000 are major temples. The government has enhanced the money being paid to perform daily pooja and other rituals in the temples from Rs 5000 to Rs 10,000, he announced.

4 Maoists surrender in ASR district

PNS ■ PADERU

Four members of the banned CPI (Maoist) party surrendered before the police in Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district on Thursday.

ASR district superintendent of police (SP) Tuhin Sinha said T Sairam, V Kiran, T Ramesh and K Baburoo, belonged to the Galikonda dalam (wing).

"Today, four militia members of Galikonda dalam of the banned CPI (Maoist) party voluntarily surrendered," Sinha said adding that it was due to a lack of leadership and widespread campaigning through community policing.

According to the SP, lack of leadership in the Galikonda area came to the fore as the banned party lost many leaders due to surrenders and arrests.

Developmental activities in remote villages across the district and amnesty schemes by the state government also played a role.

Realtors asked to take prior permissions for new layouts

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development P Narayana said that the realtors take prior approvals from the Municipal Corporation and NUDA authorities concerned for their new layouts and are directed to strictly follow the rules.

The Minister, flanked by district Collector M Hari Narayanan, held a meeting with the officials of Housing, Revenue, Mines and Excise here on Thursday and reviewed various issues.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister recalled that permissions were used to be approved online during the previous TDP-led government to expedite the procedure.

The Minister said that the realtors under the limits of the Nellore Urban Development Authority should take prior approvals for their new layouts and made it clear that the realtors would not face any trou-



ble in the alliance-led government. He directed the officials to provide good and efficient governance to the people of the state.

Minister Narayana ordered the officials concerned to provide the required basic amenities in the housing colonies. If basic amenities were provided, people would come forward to construct their houses in the colonies, he felt.

The Minister stated that he

would review the steps being taken to complete the houses which were in various stages in the housing colonies. The officials explained to the Minister about the licensing system for Bars. The Minister said that he would focus on the mining department. Joint Collector Sedu Madhavan, Deputy Mayor Roop Kumar Yadav, DRO O Lavanna RDO Malola and other officials were present.

Tameem Ansaria takes charge as Praksam DC



PNS ■ ONGOLE

A Tameem Ansaria here on Thursday took charge as Collector of Praksam district.

District Superintendent of Police Garud Sumit Sunil, Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna, Sub-Collector Rahul Meena and a host of officials including DRO and RDOs were among those who met her and conveyed best wishes.

Later talking to the media, Tameem Ansaria said that she would strive hard to complete the Veligonda project works expeditiously.

The Collector said that they should take steps to resolve the drinking water scarcity that prevailed in some areas permanently. She said that a special focus would be laid on the development of education, medical and health sectors, and skill development, adding that all development works in the district will be expedited.

She stated steps would also be taken for women's empowerment. She made it clear that she would be accessible to the public at any time to address their grievances.

Leopard falls into well, rescued

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A leopard that accidentally fell into a waterless well was finally rescued by forest officials after a 24-hour-long operation in Devanagaram village near Giddalur on Thursday.

Forest officials reported that the leopard strayed into Devanagaram village in search of water and fell into a dried well on Wednesday. Shepherds noticed the leopard in the abandoned well and informed the forest officials.

The forest officials immediately initiated a rescue opera-



tion. They lowered a cage with a goat to capture the leopard, but it did not enter initially. After several attempts, the leopard was successfully captured.

Deputy Range Officer Vamsi Krishna stated that the leopard was healthy and would be released into the Nallamalla forest.

Field Director B.N.S. Murthy, Giddalur Tiger Project Deputy Director Narasimha Rao, and Sub-DFO Srikanth Reddy monitored the operation. The forest officials heaved a sigh of relief with the successful capture of the leopard.

Rs 1.65 cr worth of liquor destroyed

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The police destroyed a large number of liquor bottles worth over Rs 1.65 crore at the NTR beach near here on Thursday.

The police destroyed 94,737 bottles of liquor and 12,533 litres of illicit liquor worth Rs 1,65,69,000. The liquor bottles and illicit liquor were seized by the Special Enforcement Bureau officials during the election while enforcing the model code of conduct.

The liquor bottles were spread on the road and were crushed with a road roller near the R&B guest house area. District Superintendent of Police Satish Kumar and SEB SP Ravi Kumar monitored the destruction of liquor bottles. The Special Enforcement Bureau stations and law and order police stations seized these liquor bottles and registered 1406 cases. The total quantity of liquor and arrack seized was 32040.475 litres.



Couple electrocuted



PNS ■ ELURU

A couple was electrocuted when they came into contact with a live electric wire when trying to switch on a motor in their house in Tadepalligudem town on Thursday.

Police said that the deceased Gattam Annapuram (55) tried to switch on a motor. In the melee, she came into contact with live electric wire and was electrocuted. Her husband Gettem Venkanna (60) went to her rescue and he too was electrocuted. Both the husband and wife died instantaneously.

The wire of the motor was faulty and electricity was passing in it, police said. Tadepalligudem MLA Bolishetti Srinivas visited the house and inquired about the reasons for the electrocution. He consoled the death and consoled the bereaved family members.

A pall of gloom descended on the colony with the death of the couple.

KCR has no moral right to criticise defections: CM

Says BRS chief laid foundation for switching parties

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has no moral right to criticise 'defections,' Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that it is KCR who laid the foundation for defections.

The CM said that KCR had engineered the defection of 61 MLAs, MLCs and MPs. Doesn't he remember that? he asked. The CM asked KCR to apologise for engineering defections.

"KTR and Harish Rao have been saying again and again that the Congress government will fall within a month. The BJP repeated it. The BRS and the BJP exceeded limits by saying that they would topple the Congress government. KCR's emotional poverty makes him think that he can topple the Congress government. He has not opened his eyes to reality. The BRS's vote share declined to just 16 per cent in the LS polls. KCR ensured the BJP's victory to defeat the Congress. The BRS



came third in Medak which they claimed was their fortress. What does it indicate when the BJP got most of the votes in Sircilla and Siddipet?" the CM said.

He said that KCR who did not allow MLAs to meet him has opened the gates of his farmhouse now. The government invited KCR to State Formation Day celebrations. However, BRS leaders are now saying that the government did not give KCR a chance to speak on Formation Day.

"Is there any convention of the Leader of the Opposition speaking at Formation Day celebrations? There was no invitation for us when we were in the opposition," the CM said.

Making it clear that it was former Power Minister G. Jagdish Reddy who had sought a probe into power purchasing agreements, the CM said that the same Jagdish is now asking why a probe was ordered when the inquiry commission sent a letter to KCR.

"Our mission is the state's development. We are going to waive farm loans as per the word given by Rahul Gandhi to the people of Telangana. Sonia Gandhi fulfilled her word to create a Telangana state. Elections were held without any incident. The BRS has no right to criticise the government. We are moving forward upholding law and order. We have no issues with Andhra Pradesh. We have already resolved the Andhra Pradesh Bhavan issue

with former CM Jagan Mohan Reddy. Now we will solve the remaining issues with the AP Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. If not we will approach the appellate authority and the Centre or the courts," the CM said.

He said that the opposition had tried to make the Jeevan Reddy issue political. "They don't understand the commitment Jeevan has towards the Congress. The party will make use of Jeevan Reddy as he is a senior leader," the CM said.

He said that his tenure as TPCC president ended on Thursday. "I have already told the high command to appoint a new TPCC President. Opposition parties are campaigning about cabinet expansion. However, there are efficient Ministers for every department. Education is with me. We conducted all exams well. We are moving forward with a specific plan. The media didn't question KCR when he didn't appoint ministers and took oath alone," the CM said.

Notebooks distributed to govt school students

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Notebooks were distributed to the students studying at government schools in Kottapatnam and Pallapalem villages. The notebooks were distributed to the students with the cooperation of Dr. Vamsi Krishna and with the association of Sri Ram Multi Super Specialty Hospital.

The significance of the notebooks is that they carried the images of meritorious students on the cover page.

The required number of notebooks were given to the students, studying at three government



schools, for the academic year 2024-25. To encourage the students, the images of students, who exhibited talent and excelled in studies last year, were printed on the cover page of the books distributed to the students.

Dr. Vamsi Krishna exhorted students to excel in their studies as education would help to overcome poverty. DEO Anita Rani attended the programme as chief guest.

High-Risk Pregnancy Specialist De Chappala Santha Kumari and high school headmistress Sridevi were among those who were present.

INDIA CORNER

Himachal to rope in entrepreneurs for developing tourism: Bali

Himachal Pradesh government is taking effective steps to develop sustainable tourism infrastructure in the state in association with the private sector on public-private partnership (PPP) mode...



'Indian airports need to review their pricing strategies'

Indian airports need to review their pricing strategies and can substantially increase their profitability by garnering more non-aeronautical revenues...



Aamir Khan buys apartment in Pali Hill in Mumbai for nearly Rs 10 cr

Bollywood actor Aamir Khan has bought an apartment in an upscale residential building at Pali Hills in Bandra West, Mumbai for nearly Rs 10 crore...



IMEC will prove to be one of 'biggest game-changers'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) will prove to be one of the 'biggest game-changers' of the 21st century...



connectivity. "Be it East Asia or Middle-East and Europe, my government is giving great emphasis on connectivity. It is India's vision that has given shape to the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor," she said.

European Union, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the US and some other G20 partners for the corridor. "Today's India is known not for adding to the challenges the world is facing, but for providing solutions to the world..."

Section of people creating disturbances in Assam: CM

PNS ■ NALBARI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday accused a section of people of creating disturbances in the state following the recent Lok Sabha election results...

Let us all work towards blossoming of democracy: Dhankhar in RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday welcomed the 61 newly-elected and nominated members of the House and urged them to exploit their potential to contribute towards fulfilling the aspirations of people.



Upper House has got re-constituted partially after its recent biennial elections. "Congratulations to all the 61 newly elected/nominated Members of the House..."

CID files charge sheet against Yediyurappa in POCSO case

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Crime Investigation Department probing molestation charges against former Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday filed a charge sheet in the special court dealing with POCSO cases.

her daughter during a meeting on February two this year, at his residence in Dollars Colony here. Yediyurappa has denied the charge, and said "people would teach a lesson to those indulging in conspiracies against me."

CBI makes its first arrests in NEET-UG case, nabs 2 from Patna

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday made its first arrests in the NEET-UG paper leak case, taking two people in custody in Patna, officials said. Manish Kumar and Ashutosh Kumar allegedly provided safe accommodation to the medical entrance exam aspirants before the examination where they were given leaked question papers and answer keys, the officials said.



(Undergraduate), they said. The CBI has found that Ashutosh Kumar knew that the premises was being used for providing question papers to NEET aspirants, they said.

the hostel where they were provided with the paper and the answer key, they said. The aspirants remained in the hostel till the examination and prepared for the paper held on May 5, they said. The CBI has registered six FIRs in the NEET paper leak case.

NEET aspirant hangs self in Kota, 12th suicide by coaching student since Jan

PNS ■ KOTA

A 17-year-old medical aspirant allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan in his rented accommodation here, police said on Thursday. This is the twelfth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in Kota stood at 26 in 2023.

Dadabari ASI Shambhu Dayal said. He lived in a rented room in a building in Chota Chaurahin Dadabari area where some other coaching students also resided, he said. At around 1 pm on Thursday, the other students informed police after Agrawal did not open his door when they knocked, he said.

PM lauds Indian universities for making strides on global stage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday lauded Indian universities for making strides on the global stage and said the government's commitment to quality education is yielding encouraging results.

'No rule of law left in UP in 7 years of BJP regime'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Thursday that in the past seven years, there is no rule of law left in Uttar Pradesh in the BJP regime. "The Chief Minister may claim to modernise the police force, but in reality it is nothing more than a sham. How can the BJP government, which destroyed the state-of-the-art police response system setup during the Samajwadi government out of vengeance, be expected to make the police force technically smart, efficient and capable?"

UP-112 from his official residence here. Yadav said the law and order situation in the state is in shambles, criminals are running amok, bullets are being fired in broad daylight and murders are being committed. "Anarchy is at its peak. The BJP government has failed to maintain law and order. The BJP workers and leaders are hell bent on anarchy. Recently, bullets were fired openly between two factions in Bareilly. "The public is troubled by the injustice and atrocities of the BJP government. There is anger among the people," the Lok Sabha MP said.

Bengal Governor has no right to disallow oath-taking of MLAs: Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid the row over the venue for the swearing in ceremony of the two newly elected TMC MLAs, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said Governor CV Ananda Bose has no right to prevent the process. Banerjee alleged that she has received complaints from women who claimed that they felt unsafe going to the Raj Bhavan after reports of certain activities were reported from there.



Nearly a month has passed but my MLAs — Savantika Bandyopadhyay and Rayat Hossain Sarkar — are unable to take oath. The Governor is obstructing them from doing so. It is the people who have elected them, not the Governor. He cannot deny them the right to take oath," Banerjee said at the state secretariat. "Why must everyone go to Raj Bhavan? The Governor can authorise the Speaker or Deputy Speaker, or attend the Assembly himself. Women have informed me they are afraid to visit Raj Bhavan due to recent incidents reported there," she added.

Shivakumar mocks demand for 3 more DCMs in K'taka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Congress chief D K Shivakumar on Thursday mocked demand from some Ministers to create three more posts of Deputy Chief Minister, saying they will get no "solution" by discussing it before the media. Some of the Ministers have been pitching for leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities to be given the post of Deputy Chief Minister. Currently, Shivakumar, a member of the Vokkaliga community, is only the Deputy Chief Minister in the Siddaramaiah-led government. "Let those speaking to papers (newspaper or media) go and speak to high command, get a solution and come. Let them go and get whatever solution they want. There is no need to discuss before the media. I will also not discuss anything before the media," Shivakumar said, making no secret of his displeasure.

mission of contempt of the Council of States. "The committee, accordingly, recommends that no action is warranted against Kumar Ketkar, Naranbhai J Rathwa and L Hanumanthaiah who have since retired from membership of the council. "That Sanjay Singh, their performance in the House," the panel said in its report. The committee's report also stated that in view of the motion adopted by the Council on August 11 last year, "the suspension suffered by Sanjay Singh be treated as sufficient punishment and his suspension may be revoked with immediate effect with the hope and expectation that there will be scrupulous adherence to the accepted conduct regime in the House by him in future." "The Committee requests the Chairman of Rajya Sabha to consider discontinuance of the suspension of Sanjay Singh without waiting for the Council to re-assemble for the ensuing Session."

RS privileges panel holds 12 MPs guilty of misconduct

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Privileges Committee of the Rajya Sabha on Thursday held 12 opposition MPs, including the AAP's Sanjay Singh, guilty of misconduct for disrupting House proceedings last August and cautioned them to desist from such behaviour in future. In the report tabled in the Upper House of Parliament on Thursday, the privileges panel held AAP MP Sanjay Singh guilty of disregarding the directions of the Chairman. It has accepted Singh's unconditional apology in the matter and recommended revocation of his suspension after considering that the punishment suffered by him was sufficient.

The AAP MP was suspended from the Rajya Sabha on July 24, 2023, through a motion, for the breach of privilege on account of wilfully disregarding the directions of the chair, repeatedly violating rules of the house and casting aspersions on the leader of the House. "The committee concludes that the 12 members, namely Sanjay Singh, Shaktisinh Gohil, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sandeep Kumar Pathak, Naranbhai J. Rathwa, L. Hanumanthaiah, Syed Nasir Hussain, Kumar Ketkar, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi are held guilty of serious transgression of privileges and com-



mission of contempt of the Council of States. "The committee, accordingly, recommends that no action is warranted against Kumar Ketkar, Naranbhai J Rathwa and L Hanumanthaiah who have since retired from membership of the council. "That Sanjay Singh,



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Steady leadership

Om Birla's re-election as Speaker of Lok Sabha reveals his calibre and his faith in democracy

Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. This marks a significant chapter in parliamentary history. Birla's leadership has been characterised by impartiality, a deep commitment to democratic principles, and a steady hand in navigating the complexities of parliamentary proceedings. "Parliament is the temple of democracy. It is our duty to ensure that it functions efficiently and reflects the aspirations of the people," Birla stated. "I am committed to working with all members to ensure that the Lok Sabha continues to be a vibrant and effective forum for democratic deliberation."



Om Birla, a seasoned politician from Rajasthan and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), first assumed the role of Lok Sabha Speaker in June 2019. His re-election signifies a continuity of leadership essential for maintaining the stability and decorum of the lower house. It was indeed heartening to observe that his election was met with widespread support, not only from his party but also from various opposition factions.

This cross-party endorsement reflects Birla's ability to maintain neutrality and manage the house with a balanced approach, fostering an environment where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and debated constructively.

Om Birla's political journey began in the early 1990s, rooted in a commitment to public service and grassroots development. Representing the Kota-Bundi constituency in Rajasthan, Birla has held various significant roles in both state and central politics. As Speaker, Birla has championed initiatives to improve the transparency and efficiency of parliamentary procedures. He has been instrumental in modernising the Lok Sabha's functioning, introducing digital tools and processes to streamline legislative activities and enhance accessibility for the public. Birla's tenure as Speaker has not been without challenges. Birla has had his fair share of controversies. Om Birla has faced allegations of bias, with critics accusing him of partiality in parliamentary proceedings, favouring the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by selectively allowing or disallowing debates on critical issues. Controversies have also arisen from his suspension of opposition MPs for disruptions, which critics argue is a harsh and selectively enforced tactic to suppress dissent. Additionally, Birla has been accused of adopting a high-handed approach toward opposition leaders, often curtailing their speaking time and limiting their opportunities to present viewpoints. Birla has also encouraged greater participation of women and young MPs, fostering a more inclusive and representative parliamentary process. Birla's re-election as Speaker of the Lok Sabha is a reflection of the trust and confidence that the members of the house have in his leadership. His ability to maintain neutrality, coupled with his dedication to upholding the dignity and decorum of the house, has earned him respect across party lines.

PICTALK



Tourists enjoy during rains, at the Taj Mahal, in Agra

Will British Indians back Rishi Sunak?

With the July 4 general election approaching, the key question is whether British Indians will rally behind Sunak and the Conservative Party



VIVEK SHUKLA

Will Rishi Sunak, Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister, remain in office after the upcoming general election on July 4th? Will Sunak's Conservative Party receive the votes of British Indians? Will the Labour Party also receive votes from the Indian diaspora? These are important questions indeed. According to the 2011 British census, there are approximately 1.5 million people of Indian origin in Britain, representing 2.5% of the country's total population. Indians are the largest immigrant group in Britain. They are relatively well-educated compared to other immigrant groups and are considered to be among the wealthiest in Britain.

Hinduja, Lakshmi Mittal, and Swaraj Paul are some prominent Indian-origin individuals who feature in the list of Britain's richest people. Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murthy, daughter of Infosys founder N.R. Narayan Murthy, were ranked 245th in the Sunday Times list of Britain's wealthiest individuals released in May. Historically, Indian immigrants in Britain have leaned towards the Labour Party. It was during the Labour government that India gained independence from British rule. However, recent surveys suggest a growing inclination towards the Conservative Party, the main rival to the Labour Party.

Vinod Chavan, a writer residing in London since the 1970s, believes that Hindu voters in Britain may vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming elections.

This news could be a relief for Sunak and his Conservative Party. It's important to understand that when we talk about Indians in Britain, we also include those who have settled in the country from East Africa, the Caribbean Islands, and other places. Sunak's family settled in Britain from Kenya in the 1960s, although his ancestors originally hailed from Punjab. There is also a belief that a large number of Indian residents in Britain became supporters of the Conservative Party after



Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in 2014. Hindus comprise the majority of these supporters. The total Hindu population among Indians in Britain is over a million. Modi addressed over 60,000 people of Indian origin at a packed Wembley Stadium in London during his 2015 visit to Britain. Gujarati and Punjabi people were in the majority at that time. Boris Johnson, the then British Prime Minister, was known to proudly call himself 'India's son-in-law'. He was a unique son-in-law. His (second divorced) wife Marina Wheeler's mother, Deep Singh Kaur, was previously married to Sardar Daljit Singh, son of renowned contractor Sir Sobha Singh from New Delhi. Now, let's understand another subtle point. Not all Indian immigrants in Britain think alike politically or support any specific party. It is believed that most Indian Muslims and Sikhs may vote for the Labour Party. They are not fond of the close ties between the Conservative Party and Modi. From the 1960s to the 1980s, a significant number of Indian immigrants settled in Britain from Uganda, Kenya, and the Caribbean Islands. These communities viewed Labour as sympathetic to immigrants.



IN THE PAST 20-25 YEARS, A NEW WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS FROM INDIA HAS ARRIVED IN BRITAIN. THESE ARE DOCTORS, ENGINEERS, IT PROFESSIONALS, ETC. THEY ALL IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS CONSERVATIVE PARTY VOTERS

They were particularly attracted to Labour's commitment to immigrants' rights, especially following the introduction of the Race Relations Act in 1965 by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Thousands of Indian immigrants came to Britain from Uganda after Uganda's cannibalistic president Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of all Indians from his country within 90 days in August 1972. A deeper analysis reveals that British Hindus have been leaning towards the Conservative Party since 2010. This trend includes wealthy and educated second and third-generation Hindus. In the past 20-25 years, a new wave of immigrants from India has arrived in Britain. These are doctors, engineers, IT professionals, etc. They all identify themselves as Conservative Party voters. The Indian diaspora's disaffection with the Labour Party did not happen overnight. It was triggered by Labour's 2019 resolution calling for "the right of self-determination" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This resolution led a large section of the Indian diaspora in Britain to distance themselves from the Labour Party. They saw it as direct interference in India's internal affairs. Meanwhile, Rishi Sunak

became Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister in 2022. This development deepened the bond between Hindus and the Conservative Party. It is still too early to say whether Hindus will vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming British general election.

However, for the first time, British Hindus have released a manifesto outlining their aspirations and expectations from the next government. They say they will only support those who endorse their demands. Hindus are the third-largest religious group in Britain. 29 Hindu organizations have so far endorsed this manifesto.

According to the manifesto, "Hindus are the backbone of the British economy. Our contribution to the country's economy is disproportionately high. We are one of the most law-abiding communities. Yet, anti-Hindu hate is on the rise in the country." One of their key demands is for their safety. Will the Hindu votes be split or go to the Conservative Party? Will the Labour and Conservative parties consider the manifesto of the Hindu organizations?

(The writer is Columnist and ex-Information Officer, UAE Embassy, New Delhi; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OM BIRLA RE-ELECTED AS LS SPEAKER

Madam — The re-election of NDA nominee Om Birla as Lok Sabha Speaker, following a voice vote, comes as no surprise. Unlike his first term in 2019, where he was elected unopposed, this time, elections were necessary. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to retain familiar faces in key ministries during his third term underscores his administration's commitment to continuity.

Om Birla's reappointment makes him the first leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party to be re-elected as Lok Sabha Speaker twice in over two decades. In a democracy, elections are essential and should be welcomed. The position of Lok Sabha Speaker traditionally requires broad support to ensure the smooth functioning of the House. When a Speaker is elected with bipartisan support, it significantly enhances the role's prestige. Opposition in an election does not necessarily indicate a lack of trust. As Om Birla embarks on his second term, he faces the challenge of surpassing his previous performance, which saw a record number of MP suspensions. While no single party can be blamed, it is evident that all parties will need to exhibit greater maturity and understanding this time.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

AFGHANISTAN REACH SEMIFINALS!

Madam — Giant Australia is out of the T20 World Cup 2024 semifinals, while Afghanistan has secured a place, demonstrating the unpredictable nature of cricket and sports. No one can foresee the winner or loser; sometimes, luck plays a significant role. If Bangladesh had won, Australia might have advanced to the semifinals. We often hear quotes like 'well-coordinated team effort'; 'try and try again, you will win at last'; 'rise from the ashes like a phoenix' and 'focus on the issue and proceed in an organized and scientific manner.'

Today, we witnessed these principles in action by Afghanistan's well-coordinated

Dynamic Opposition in Parliament



The swearing-in ceremony for Members of Parliament at the 18th Lok Sabha was noteworthy, with the opposition members prominently holding mini copies of the Constitution while taking their oaths.

Leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Avadesh Prasad, and Rakibul Hussain were seen holding these mini constitutions as they swore in as elected MPs. This gesture underscores the opposition's commitment to active governance and to reminding the government of its constitutional responsibilities.

By swearing with the Constitution in hand, the opposition members are enhancing their personal commitment to the nation. Their duty is now twofold: to fulfill their roles as MPs and to safeguard constitutional values, reminding the government of its duties. Time will tell who upholds these values. Meanwhile, it is encouraging to see a dynamic opposition in the Indian Parliament to provide a robust counterbalance to those in power. Kirti Wadhawan, Kanpur

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

cricket team. Their success is a beacon of hope in a world often characterized by substandard and duplicitous behaviors such as wars, violence, and negative activities. The world can learn about peaceful coexistence from two sources: Mahatma Gandhi's India and friendly, cooperative sports teams like Afghanistan's. Yes, indeed!

PVS Sreelekha | Secundrabad

SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

Madam — Almost 50 per cent of adults in India engaged in insufficient levels of physical activity in 2022, according to a study published in the Lancet Global Health journal.

Far more women in India (57 per cent) were found to be insufficiently physically active, compared to men (42 per cent), in line with trends across the South Asian region, the study found. The insufficient levels of physical activity in women in the region were, on average, 14 per cent higher than those in men, it said. The South Asian region also ranked the second high-

est in terms of adults being insufficiently physically active after high-income Asia Pacific region, an international team of researchers, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO), said.

This was up by 5 per cent, from 26.4 per cent of adults worldwide insufficiently engaged in physical activity in 2010. In India, a little over 22 per cent of the adults engaged in insufficient physical activity in the year 2000, while in 2010, close to 34 per cent of the adults were insufficiently physically active, the researchers found. They projected that in 2030, 60 per cent of the adults could be insufficiently engaging in physical activity, should current trends continue. This is indeed a cause of concern.

India had 101 million diabetics, 315 million people with hypertension, 254 million with obesity, and 185 million with high levels of LDL cholesterol.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

India's assertive foreign policy and global aspirations

From bolstering defence capabilities to fostering regional cooperation, India under Modi's leadership navigates a complex geopolitical landscape

Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy initiatives have consistently underscored India's assertiveness and strategic clarity from his first term in 2014 to his current third term in 2024. This period has seen India take decisive actions such as the Balakot Airstrike in 2019 and the banning of TikTok, aimed at countering China and safeguarding national interests. These measures have not been welcomed by neighboring states like China and Pakistan, particularly in light of incidents such as the Galwan clash in 2020, which resulted in the loss of Indian soldiers and prompted a bolstering of border security and a significant increase in the defense budget from approximately Rs 4,73,378 crores in 2020 to Rs 6,21,540 crores presently. This heightened defense spending underscores India's unwavering commitment to national development and security. Underpinning Modi's governance is the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat 2047' (Developed India), with ambitions to elevate India to the rank of the world's third-largest economy. Since 2014,



India has advanced from being the 10th largest economy to the 5th largest, showcasing potential for further growth. The Viksit Bharat agenda prioritizes boosting manufacturing industries, evidenced by substantial subsidies totaling \$28 billion across 14 sectors and an additional \$10 billion allocated to the semiconductor industry. This economic expansion surpasses historical parallels, outstripping even Britain's colonial economic hegemony. India's aspirations extend to securing a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a move contested primarily by China. Despite these challenges, India is forging independent diplomatic pathways, exemplified by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. While debates on the Quad's efficacy persist, its role in ensuring Indo-Pacific security and countering Chinese influence remains pivotal. Additionally, India is strengthening regional ties through initiatives like BIM-STEC and expanding BRICS to include UAE and Saudi Arabia, key oil suppliers, thereby enhancing its global stature and influence. Modi's foreign policy approach is characterized by a nuanced engagement in global politics, leveraging soft power to augment India's international standing. The 'Neighbourhood First'

policy, emphasized during Modi's third term inauguration, exemplifies India's commitment to fostering regional cooperation. High-profile visits and agreements, such as those with Bangladesh, underscore the policy's success in enhancing regional connectivity and economic collaboration. Beyond tangible policy actions, Modi's government champions India as a 'Vishwaguru' (World Teacher), invoking the country's ancient heritage and cultural legacy. This narrative not only promotes India's soft power but also influences global discourse on geopolitics, art, culture, and values originating from India's ancient civilization. India's advocacy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family) at international forums like the G20 reinforces its role as a leading soft power and positions it closer to superpower status. Modi's third term inauguration signifies a continued assertiveness in foreign policy, aimed at securing India's strategic interests while fostering global partnerships.

(The writer is a researcher; views are personal)



PUSHKAR PRIYADARSHI





FIRST COLUMN TOWARDS BETTER TIES WITH BANGLADESH

Sheikh Hasina's visit highlights Bangladesh's pivotal role as a strategic partner for India



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The new Indian Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is back to its foreign policy agenda, which it has carefully curated in the past decade. Mr Modi was in Italy to attend the G7 meetings as a special invitee, within days of his swearing-in. His swearing-in ceremony was in itself a statement of the stated policy focus of Neighbourhood First.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by leaders from almost all Southeast Asian countries and, some from the Indian Ocean region. Significantly Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was back in India, within a month of her attending the swearing-in ceremony, to further strengthen the bilateral relations. The focus of the meeting as highlighted by Prime Minister Modi during the joint briefing with Sheikh Hasina was "Today we have prepared a futuristic vision for cooperation in new areas. Youth of both countries will benefit from the agreement reached on cooperation in a lot of areas such as Green Partnership, Digital Partnership, Blue Economy, Space, India Bangladesh "Matri Satellite" will give new heights to our partnership. We have kept in our focus-Connectivity, Commerce and Collaboration." Bangladesh is an important strategic partner for India, not just due to the intimate geographical boundaries, and the shared culture and language, but also as an important corridor connecting India's Northeast to the Bay of Bengal. Prime Ministers of both countries Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi have been at the top job for more than a decade now.

They have developed a working relationship, that is hard to match, underscored by the ten meetings these leaders had in the last five years. Both Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline on 18 March in a virtual format. PM Sheikh Hasina also participated in the Inaugural Session of the Voice of the Global South Summit on 11 January 2023 and the second Virtual Voice of the Global South Summit on 17 November 2023. Bangladesh and India share nearly 4000 km of the international border, security of which is an important pillar of the relationship for keeping a check on the drug trade, smuggling, fake currency, human trafficking, and movement of criminals or terrorists.



As an upgrade to the security partnership, India and Bangladesh have over the years worked on a defence cooperation framework. The recent visit of Bangladesh's PM saw both countries put a special focus on enhancing the defence partnership. In his statement PM Modi highlighted "...on further strengthening our defence cooperation, from defence production to modernisation of armed forces. In the Indian Ocean region, we have a common perspective. We welcome Bangladesh's decision to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. We will continue our cooperation in other regional and international forums, including BIMSTEC."

The strongest pillar of the India-Bangladesh relationship is economics. Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia and India is the biggest trade partner for Bangladesh in Asia. The bilateral trade between the two countries is nearly \$16bn. Besides the much sought-after Ilish fish from Padma River, Bangladesh exports nearly \$2 billion in goods to India, which is the highest in Asia. In the past few years, an aggressive China has tried to take over some of the traditional space, reserved for India in bilateral relationships, through its opaque infrastructure projects. This has been resisted by India by upping the infrastructure partnership and bringing Bangladesh closer towards the Indo-Pacific geopolitical worldview, than a South East Asian outlook. It helps to align Bangladesh with India's multilateral partners such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and beyond in the Middle East. PM Sheikh Hasina's visit as the first state guest of India, under Modi 3.0 is an important reinforcement of the strong bonds between the two neighbours.

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

Macron's calls for snap polls to thwart ultra right



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

This strategic manoeuvre aims to disrupt the growing momentum of the far-right National Rally and prevent further erosion of his political standing

Macron's Election Gambitby Nilantha Ilangamuwa Emmanuel Macron, the youngest president in French history, is known for taking risks, as evidenced by his recent call for snap elections to avoid further humiliation after a significant defeat in the European Union Parliamentary Elections, where his main contender garnered over 50% of the votes. This move, the first since 1997, invokes Article 12 of the French Constitution, allowing the president to end the Assemblée Nationale's term early, thus advancing the end of the current five-year term from 2027 to 2024. The new parliamentary elections are set for June 30 and July 7, catching many of Macron's allies off guard. France is at a crossroads. As former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin once mentioned, "Politics is not about morality, it's about efficiency." Throughout French history, there have been five notable instances of snap elections.

In 1962 and 1968, Charles de Gaulle dissolved the Assemblée Nationale following a motion of no confidence and widespread protests, respectively, securing significant victories both times. François Mitterrand used snap elections in 1981 to secure a Socialist majority and again in 1988 to address political "cohabitation." Jacques Chirac's 1997 snap election gamble backfired, leading to a left-wing coalition victory. Currently, Macron faces low approval ratings and a paralyzed parliament, with the National Rally (Rassemblement National or RN) capitalizing on the situation. By calling for snap elections, Macron aims to confront the populist movement and disrupt their momentum, leveraging the more challenging two-round system of French national elections compared to the single-round European elections. Marine Le Pen and RN president Jordan Bardella, the party's candidate for PM, are gearing up for the snap elections, which will have higher stakes compared to the European elections. Macron, aiming to dramatize the choice facing the French, challenged voters in a televised address, asking if they truly want to be governed by the far right.

What exactly is the 'far right,' a term frequently echoed in European politics? Often, it's a convenient label used to obscure the significant failures of so-called neo-liberals. When individuals dare to address real societal issues on the ground, rather than fabricating crises to vilify "designated enemies" like Vladimir Putin, they are often hastily labelled as "far-right" or conservative. Instead of accurate representation, this knee-jerk reaction by warmongers, fueled by Western media, reflects bias. Recent events in France, where President Macron's centrist coalition faced electoral setbacks, highlight this skewed narrative. The term "far right" is wielded without nuance, disregarding the diverse ideological spectrum and legitimate concerns championed by these movements. The shifting landscape of French politics challenges outdated perceptions. Parties like Marine Le Pen's National Rally are not accurately depicted as "far-right"; instead, they signify a redefinition of mainstream conservatism. Their platforms, focusing on issues such as controlled migration and national defence, resonate with many voters disenchanted with traditional leadership. Understanding these complexities demands a departure from simplistic labels and a recognition of Europe's evolving political dynamics. While Marine Le Pen may not



mirror Trump's trajectory in France, it's crucial to acknowledge the significant support they garner from the public, despite mainstream media's continued misrepresentation. Blaming perceived evils is often easier than confronting one's own side's failures.



MACRON'S LEADERSHIP IN THIS MATTER HIGHLIGHTS HIS DEDICATION TO UPHOLDING NATO'S FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND PRESERVING ITS STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN THE FACE OF EVOLVING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

In this context, polarized politics in France are teaching a new lesson about the deceptive nature of labelling certain movements as "far right" to deflect attention from the failures of neoliberalism. Unlike the European elections with a 50% turnout, local watchdogs asserted that the national elections could see 70% voter participation, potentially mobilizing moderates and reviving the anti-populist front. Macron's team believes voters will scrutinize RN's policy proposals, particularly as the autumn session promised censure motions likely to collapse Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's government. As per the London Guardian, Macron's gamble may yield three outcomes. First, he might recover his majority, although this seems unlikely given his unpopularity and the normalization of the "far right" across Europe. Second, the National Rally could win a majority, leading to an unprecedented cohabitation with a populist right-wing parliament, which Macron might see as a chance to highlight their governance shortcomings. This scenario poses significant risks as an RN-controlled parliament would handle crucial domestic policies, potentially clashing with Macron on issues like immigration and national security, while creating tensions with Brussels due to RN's nation-first policies. The third scenario, considered most probable by analysts, is that RN increases its seats but fails to gain an absolute majority, resulting in a splintered parliament and potential deadlock. Macron may seek alliances with the mainstream centre-right or centre-left, but success is uncertain. This fragmented parliament could lead to increased political instability.

However, one cannot forget that it was Macron who stood firm against NATO's proposal to establish a liaison office in Japan, marking a significant division within the alliance on the eve of a crucial summit. Macron's decisive opposition reflects his insistence that NATO should not stray from its original North Atlantic focus, particularly amid escalating tensions with China.

His resolute stance accentuates France's commitment to maintaining the alliance's core principles, despite pressure to expand its reach into Asia.

Macron's leadership in this matter highlights his dedication to upholding NATO's foundational principles and preserving its strategic direction in the face of evolving global challenges. Macron's recent interview with Le Parisien sheds light on evolving European attitudes towards Ukraine, acknowledging the potential necessity for ground operations in the future. This represents a significant policy shift amidst rising tensions between NATO and Russia. Macron's acknowledgement of the need to prepare for all scenarios, including ground interventions, signals a departure from previous official denials and underscores the increasing seriousness of the situation in Ukraine. Additionally, France's plan to send Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets adds a tangible dimension to the discussion, indicating a more assertive stance from France and its European allies in response to the ongoing conflict.

This regional tension exacerbated France's already unstable domestic political situation, leading to a humiliating defeat for Macron and bolstering Le Pen's populist narrative. According to local media outlets, the political parties in France held emergency talks to explore potential alliances at the beginning of this week following the announcement of a snap legislative election. The unexpected and risky decision to hold elections soon could potentially shift major political

power, undermining Macron's presidency three years before its scheduled end. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire emphasized the high stakes, calling it the most consequential parliamentary election in decades.

This could potentially impact on warmongering President of the European Commission, and France would sooner lose its interest in involving in the Ukraine War, while more focus on domestic issues. RN leaders, including Jordan Bardella, the party's candidate for prime minister, and Marine Le Pen, the party's parliamentary leader, are strategizing to capitalize on their recent success. Bardella expressed his readiness to build a large majority, while the divided French left, comprising hard-left LFI, Communists, Socialists, and Greens, also held talks to forge a united front against the populist right.

Despite the populist right's strong performance in the European elections, analysts suggest that an outright RN majority in the parliamentary elections is unlikely, as voters often use European elections to express dissatisfaction with the incumbent government. The president aims to rally these voters in response to the populist right surge, despite concerns from within his party and criticisms from other political figures. Macron described his decision as an act of confidence in the French people's ability to make the best choice for the country, emphasizing the need for a clear majority to govern effectively.

His previous successes in presidential elections were aided by a "Republican front" that unified various political groups against the populist right, a strategy that was not extended to parliamentary elections, costing him a majority. The upcoming elections will test whether he can restore this principle and rally other political groups to prevent the Le Pen clan from gaining control.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist and author; Views are personal)

India-Arab green strategic partnership: Pioneering sustainable development

This initiative highlights the shared commitment of the two countries to foster a greener and more resilient future

The India-Arab Green Strategic Partnership represents a collaborative initiative aimed at enhancing sustainable development and combating climate change. In today's world, where environmental concerns hold significant global importance, the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Arab countries stands out as a beacon of collaboration and innovation.

Historical and Cultural Context: India's historical ties with Arab countries stretch back centuries, rooted in cultural exchanges, ancient trade routes, and shared values. Today, this relationship goes beyond cultural affinity to encompass strategic economic partnerships and mutual geopolitical interests. The



PADMALOCHAN DASH

Green Strategic Partnership builds on this foundation by integrating environmental sustainability into the bilateral agenda, reflecting a modern approach to diplomacy in our changing world. **Objectives and Strategic Imperatives:** At its core, the partnership seeks to harness the strengths of both India and Arab countries in advancing green technologies, renewable energy solutions, water man-

agement practices, and climate resilience strategies. India, as a rising global player in renewable energy deployment and innovation, offers practical solutions to the challenges faced:

Renewable Energy Leadership: India excels in renewable energy technologies like solar photovoltaic and wind power. This aligns well with Arab countries' goals to diversify their energy mix away from fossil fuels. For example, India's collaboration with the UAE has seen investments in solar parks and wind energy projects, demonstrating tangible outcomes of this partnership. **Water Security and Management:** Water scarcity poses a critical challenge for both regions, exacerbated by

climate change and rapid urbanisation. India contributes practical solutions through its expertise in sustainable water management practices. Initiatives like community-driven water conservation and wastewater treatment can be adapted and shared with Arab countries facing similar challenges.

Climate Change Mitigation: The impacts of climate change require urgent mitigation efforts. India has committed to ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement, focusing on renewable energy deployment and emissions reduction. Collaborative projects with Arab countries aim to implement climate-resilient infrastructure.

Sustainable Urbanisation and Biodiversity Conservation:

As urban populations grow, sustainable urban planning becomes crucial to reduce environmental footprints and improve quality of life. India promotes green building standards, urban green spaces, and effective waste management practices through initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission. Collaborative projects with the UAE in sustainable urban development integrate renewable energy solutions and eco-friendly infrastructure.

Energy Efficiency: Improving energy efficiency is key to reducing carbon footprints and enhancing energy security. India's initiatives like the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) scheme for industrial energy efficiency offer practical models for collaboration.

Through knowledge exchange and technology transfer, India supports efforts to optimise energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Green Finance and Investment: India's experience in issuing green bonds and establishing green funds, alongside initiatives like the National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF), provides pathways for financing renewable energy, energy storage, and sustainable infrastructure projects.

Technological Innovation: Collaboration in research and development (R&D) is crucial for advancing green technologies. India's vibrant start-up ecosystem and research institutions contribute to innovations in areas such as green hydrogen production and bat-

tery storage technologies. Joint innovation hubs and technology parks facilitate technology transfer and accelerate the adoption of sustainable innovations. Despite its potential, the Green Strategic Partnership faces several challenges:

Geopolitical Dynamics: Diverse geopolitical interests and regional conflicts among Arab countries and India may impact the partnership's cohesion and operational effectiveness. India's role as a neutral mediator and advocate for collaborative solutions helps navigate geopolitical complexities and build trust among partner countries.

Technological and Financial Barriers: Scaling up renewable energy projects and adopting advanced environmental tech-

nologies demand substantial investments and technological advancements.

Policy Alignment: Harmonising national policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacities is crucial for seamless collaboration and effective implementation of joint initiatives across borders.

India advocates for policy coherence through dialogue platforms such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and bilateral strategic dialogues, facilitating alignment on climate goals and regulatory standards.

(The author is an ICSSR-Post Doctoral Fellow, School of National Security Studies, Central University of Gujarat. The views expressed are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Rupee rises 13 paise to close at 83.44 against US dollar

The rupee appreciated 13 paise to settle at 83.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by a positive trend in equity markets and favourable domestic macroeconomic profile. Forex traders said the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and US dollar demand from oil marketing companies capped sharp gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.56 and hit the intraday high of 83.43 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.44 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 13 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 14 paise against the US dollar and settled at 83.57. The Indian rupee appreciated on bond-related foreign inflows ahead of their inclusion in the JP Morgan debt index, said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Domestic markets touched fresh record highs with the Nifty breaching the 24,000-mark for the first time, supporting the domestic currency.



Sebi amends FPIs' registration rules

Sebi has tweaked the guidelines for registration of Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) pertaining to non-resident Indians, overseas citizens of India and resident Indians as participant of such foreign investors. Under the new rule, FPIs applying for registration need to ensure that the contribution of a single NRI or overseas citizen of India (OCI) or resident Indian in its corpus is below 25 per cent, according to a notification. Further, at an aggregate level, the applicant FPI needs to ensure that their contribution in its corpus is below 50 per cent. The new rule requires that NRIs, overseas citizens of India and resident Indians should not be in control of the applicant FPI. "The contribution of resident Indian individuals shall be made through the Liberalised Remittance Scheme notified by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and shall be in global funds whose Indian exposure is less than 50 per cent," Sebi said.



Gold falls Rs 120; silver remains flat at Rs 90,600 per kg

Gold prices fell Rs 120 to Rs 72,180 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday in line with weak trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had settled at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 90,600 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) quoted at Rs 72,180 per 10 grams, down by Rs 120 from the previous close," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,305 per ounce, down USD 11 from the previous close. Gold traded lower in the early trade due to stronger rupee and risk-on sentiments, Parmar said. However, silver remained flat at USD 28.94 per ounce. "Commodities remain in a corrective mode, weighed by a stronger US dollar and elevated Treasury yields as recent comments from a couple of the Fed officials suggests that rate cuts are unlikely to come anytime soon," Pranav Mer, VP - Research (Commodity & Currency) at BlinkX and JM Financial, said.



FINANCIAL STABILITY MATRIX AT BEST

Assign highest priority to governance: Shaktikanta

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With studies showing gains in asset quality and resilience to withstand stress scenarios, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday asked financial system stakeholders to assign "highest priority" to governance.

"The highest priority must be assigned to governance - strong governance is at the core of resilience of stakeholders in the financial system," the governor said in his foreword to the half-yearly Financial Stability Report published by the central bank.

The report highlights the strengthening of balance sheets of financial institutions with low levels of impairments, robust earnings and strong buffers, he said, adding that RBI stress tests show that even under severe stress scenarios, banks' and non-banks' buffers will remain above minimum regulatory capital levels. "Today, the matrix of financial stability is perhaps at its best, but the real challenge is to maintain it and improve upon it further," he noted.

In the "stable environment", the RBI is watchful of emerging risks from cyber hazards, climate change and global spillovers, Das said. He also asked banks to



"The highest priority must be assigned to governance - strong governance is at the core of resilience of stakeholders in the financial system," the governor said in his foreword to the half-yearly Financial Stability Report published by the central bank.

invest adequately on the technology front and affirmed the central bank's commitment to promote innovation.

"New technologies offer gains in efficiency and customer experience, but they can also bring with them sudden and widespread disruptions to the financial system. This requires that all stakeholders not only invest adequately to take full advantage of technological advancements but

also take steps to safeguard the security and soundness of their systems," he said. He also asked for customers' interests to be put at the forefront, pointing out that preserving the trust of the customer is the cornerstone of safeguarding global stability.

Amid global headwinds, the Indian economy is exhibiting strength and resilience with strong macroeconomic fundamentals and buffers, Das noted.

He said economic activity is expanding at a steady pace with the financial system being stronger and more vibrant than what it was before the onset of the recent period of crises.

The RBI's approach of balancing growth and stability with a willingness to take proactive and prudent actions to prevent the accumulation of risks is promoting "long-term resilience and stability of the financial system", the governor added.

"It is vital that we consolidate these gains and nurture a financial system that is future-ready and supports the needs of India's growing economy," Das said, adding that with India's contribution to global growth rising, there is a need for the financial system to deepen and modernise. He said the risks of a hard landing for the global economy have abated, even though progress in disinflation has been slow.

In the foreword, the governor reiterated some of his concerns, stating that the "alarming levels" of public debt pose a major risk to the global financial system, along with frequent geopolitical conflicts, climate change and risks emanating from the adoption of financial technologies.

Telecom spectrum auctions done, all eyes now on imminent tariff hikes: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telcos' payout in the muted spectrum auction is expected to be manageable, and with bidding process wrapped-up, all eyes are now on tariff hikes which seem to be imminent, a cross-section of analysts said on Thursday.

Multiple analyst reports expressed surprise at Vodafone Idea (VIL's) purchase of Rs 3,510.4 crore worth of spectrum, and highlighted in equal measure that Jio's "muted" spends (Rs 973.62 crore) was in contrast to its earnest money deposit (EMD) that was highest among operators.



IIFL Securities, JP Morgan, and Kotak Institutional Equities, in their reports on Thursday, spoke of how the focus will likely shift to tariff hikes, now that the spectrum auction has concluded.

"With spectrum auctions behind, all eyes are now on tariff hikes which appear to be imminent," IIFL said.

Kotak too believes that focus will now likely shift to tariff hikes. "With the spectrum auction behind us, we believe the focus will now shift toward tariff hikes in the coming days," Kotak said.

JP Morgan said the runway to tariff actions is cleared. "With the conclusion of the auctions (delayed from June 6) without any surprises, ability to take tariff actions should resume. We believe this is likely to have contributed to the sharp stock reactions yesterday. We have baked in tariff hikes of 25 per cent spread over 2Q/3QFY25,"

according to JP Morgan. IIFL Securities went on to say that VIL's spend was "surprisingly high" as it went after small chunks in the 900 MHz band.

Based on the most-relaxed payment option, the government will see annual receipts of Rs 1,100 crore for 20 years, starting from FY25.

Crunching the numbers on the estimated payout by companies, it said that if all telcos opt for the most relaxed payment option (20 equal annual instalments), the annual payout works to 10 per cent of total bid value for NPV preservation at 8.65 per cent interest rate.

Mcap of BSE-listed firms hit all-time high of Rs 438.41 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms hit an all-time high of Rs 438.41 lakh crore on Thursday fuelled by a record-breaking rally in equities where the Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark for the first time.

Rallying for the fourth day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 568.93 points or 0.72 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 79,243.18 on Thursday.

During the day, it zoomed 721.78 points or 0.91 per cent to

hit the new lifetime peak of 79,396.03. In the past four trading days, the BSE benchmark jumped 2,033.28 points or 2.63 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit a lifetime high of Rs 4,38,41,960.73 crore (USD 5.25 trillion). Investors' wealth has gone up by Rs 3.93 lakh crore in four trading sessions.

Remarkably, the BSE benchmark took just two trading sessions to cover the journey from the 78,000 level hit on June 25 to breach the 79,000 mark on June 27.



Network Planning Group evaluates eight infra projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Network Planning Group (NPG) met on June 21 and evaluated eight infrastructure projects from railways and National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), an official statement said on Thursday.

The railways project, from Manmad to Jalgaon, involved an estimated investment of Rs 2,594 crore. The other project (from Bhusawal to Burhanpur) involve investments of Rs 3,285 crore. Both projects are part of the Energy Mineral Cement Corridor (EMCC) programme, the commerce and industry ministry said. It added that the four projects from NICDC pertain to development of integrated manufacturing clusters in Agra and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Hisar in Haryana and Gaya in Bihar with an estimated investment of Rs 8,175 crore.

Sensex breaches 79,000 level, Nifty 24,000 peak for 1st time



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark while Nifty scaled the 24,000 peak for the first time on Thursday as buying in blue-chip stocks like Infosys, Reliance and TCS helped markets extend gains to the fourth straight day and close at lifetime high levels.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 568.93 points or 0.72 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 79,243.18 amid the expiry of monthly contracts in the derivatives segment. During the day, it zoomed 721.78 points or 0.91 per cent to hit the new lifetime peak of 79,396.03.

The Nifty ended at a fresh record high of 24,044.50, rising 175.70 points or 0.74 per cent. Intra-day, it soared 218.65 points or 0.91 per cent to hit the all-

time peak of 24,087.45.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, UltraTech Cement jumped over 5 per cent after the country's leading cement maker said it will acquire a 23 per cent stake in its Chennai-based rival India Cements Ltd for over Rs 1,900 crore in two tranches.

"The benchmark indices exhibited bullish momentum, buoyed by expected revival in the IT sector and consolidation in the cement industry. However, the broader market remained sideways due to valuation concerns and FII selling owing to rising US bond yields," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

UltraTech Cement to acquire 23 pc stake in India Cements

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's leading cement maker UltraTech on Thursday said it will acquire a 23 per cent stake in its Chennai-based rival India Cements Ltd for over Rs 1,900 crore in two tranches.

As part of the transaction, UltraTech Cement has acquired 6,02,48,983 equity shares of India Cements, aggregating to 19.44 per cent stake at a price of up to Rs 267 per share, the Aditya Birla Group flagship firm said in a regulatory filing.

The value of the first transaction at the share price of Rs 267 per share is pegged at Rs 1,608.64 crore.

The board of directors at a separate meeting approved acquiring up to 3.4 per cent equity shares at a price up to Rs 285 per share, it added. The value of the second transaction is Rs 295 crore at a price of up to Rs 285 per share.

Sebi proposes to ease disclosure requirement for listed firms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Thursday proposed providing additional time for disclosure of litigations or disputes involving claims against the listed firms and allowing companies to conduct virtual or hybrid shareholder meetings on a permanent basis.

The markets watchdog has also suggested additional time for disclosure of the outcome of the board meeting that concludes after trading hours.

Additionally, the securities markets regulator has recommended combining pre-issue advertisement and price band advertisement as a single advertisement, proposed disclosing certain information with a quick response (QR) code link and proposed disclosure of pre-issue shareholding and post-issue shareholding for promoter, promoter group and additional top 10 shareholders.

The proposals, based on the recommendations of an expert committee chaired by SK Mohanty, former Whole-Time Member of Sebi, aimed at facilitating ease of doing business,



bringing in clarity and reducing the overall compliance burden, including the cost of compliance while effectively balancing investor protection.

The committee has submitted its recommendations on the LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) rule and ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirement) norms and on harmonisation of the provisions of the ICDR and LODR norms.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought comments from the public till July 17 on the recommendations made by the committee.

In its consultation paper, Sebi proposed that the filing done on one stock exchange be automatically disseminated to other stock exchanges using an API-based integration that is being jointly developed by stock exchanges.

Banks' gross NPAs at 12-yr low, may fall further to 2.5 pc: RBI report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The bad assets or gross NPAs of commercial banks fell to a 12-year low of 2.8 per cent in March 2024 and may go down further to 2.5 per cent by the end of the current fiscal, said the RBI's Financial Stability Report (FSR) released on Thursday.

Scheduled Commercial Banks' (SCBs) gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio fell to 2.8 per cent, and the net non-performing assets (NNPA) ratio to 0.6 per cent at the end of March 2024.

The asset quality of SCBs recorded sustained improve-



ment, and their GNPA ratio moderated to a 12-year low in March 2024. Their NNPA ratio too improved to a record low, said the June FSR.

Among bank groups, public sector banks (PSBs) recorded a substantial reduction (76 bps) in their GNPA ratio dur-

ing H2 2023-24. While the GNPA stock decreased across all bank groups, active and deep provisioning by PSBs and foreign banks (FBs) resulted in an improved provisioning coverage ratio (PCR) in March 2024, the report said.

The half-yearly slippage ratio (viz, new NPA accretions as a share of standard advances) decreased across bank groups.

Though the amount of write-offs declined during the year, the write-off ratio remained almost at the same level a year ago due to a reduction in GNPA stock, the FSR said.

Majority of Indian employers plans to add staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian employment market is likely to see an incremental expansion of more than 6 per cent in the first half this fiscal, supported by an upbeat economic climate across 23 industries, TeamLease Services said on Thursday.

According to TeamLease's Employment Outlook Report for H1 FY25 (April 2024 to September 2024), which covered 1,417 employers in 20 cities, 56 per cent said their workforce will likely grow in the coming months.

Around 23 per cent of employers anticipate maintaining their current workforce levels. In comparison, 21 per cent foresee declining staff numbers.



The positive employment outlook was largely supported by prevalent economic conditions, including the near 7 per cent GDP growth forecast for India in 2024 by most global rating agencies, which would make it the

fastest-growing G-20 nation. Additionally, strong investment demand and peaking out of headline inflation, coupled with the greater emphasis employers place on technology and skills, make for a resilient job

market in the face of hostile geopolitical conditions.

"With India forecasted to be the fastest-growing G-20 economy in 2024, coupled with strong investment demand and easing inflation, the job market remains resilient in the face of global headwinds.

"Nearly two out of five organisations are prioritising skills development, equipping their workforce for the technological advancements that lie ahead. The findings of our report shed light on the dynamic and optimistic hiring landscape," Kartik Narayan, CEO of TeamLease Staffing, said.

According to the survey, industries with the most employers indicating plans to increase their workforce are healthcare,

pharma, automotive, manufacturing, engineering, and infrastructure.

In terms of workforce size growth, the leading industries are construction and real estate, travel and hospitality, electric vehicles (EV), and EV infrastructure.

A city-wise analysis shows that Delhi, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad are at the forefront in terms of employment opportunities. Moreover, emerging job locations such as Coimbatore, Visakhapatnam, and Jaipur are experiencing significant growth.

Employers are actively seeking candidates with strong communication skills, attention to detail, technical proficiency, and organisational abilities for both existing and new roles.

Emma Roberts calls out gender bias

Emma Roberts is sick of hearing the same old sexist talk about nepotism in Hollywood. According to a report, the actor discussed her views on the ongoing controversy surrounding nepo baby rumours and labelled it as gendered when she participated on the *Table for Two* podcast. She said that criticism of guys like George Clooney should be levelled on the same basis.

During the conversation, Emma talked about the nepo baby debate and said, "There's two sides to the coin. People like to say, You know, you have a leg up because you have family in the industry. But then, on the other side of that, you have to prove yourself more. Also, if people don't have good experiences with other people in your family, then you'll never get a chance."

"Everybody loves this kind of overnight success story. And so if you're kind of not the girl from the middle of

nowhere that broke into Hollywood, there's kind of an eye roll of like, 'Well, your dad was this.' I always joke, 'Why is no one calling out George Clooney for being a nepo baby? [His aunt] Rosemary Clooney was an icon.' I feel like young girls get it harder with the nepo baby thing. I don't really see people calling out the sons of famous actors, not that they should be called out."

In addition to being a well-known actor, George Clooney has directed and produced several Hollywood productions. He made his television acting debut in the late 1970s and went on to star in movies including *Ocean's 11*, *Out of Sight*, *Three Kings*, *The Perfect Storm*, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and *The Descendants*.



Anurag claims makers are casting 'influencers' and not 'actors'

Renowned filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has made a factual yet strong statement about the growing number of filmmakers casting influencers and not actors. He clarified, however, that some influencers are also good actors. He praised popular content creator and actor Bhuvan Bam for his acting skills. In a recent interview, Anurag lauded Bhuvan's acting skills, stating, "Makers are casting influencers, not actors. But some

influencers are good actors. Like Bhuvan Bam. He is a good actor." This accolade and validation mean a lot to the young actor and creator. Known for his cult classics and impactful storytelling, Anurag's opinion holds considerable weight among both peers and audiences. Reflecting on this high praise, Bhuvan Bam shared his excitement on his social media platform, saying that this comment from him has made his day. This validation from Kashyap is expected to further bolster Bhuvan's confidence and open up new opportunities for him in the industry.



AMERICAN COMEDIAN ANTHONY JESELNIK'S DEBUT TOUR IN INDIA

American comedian Anthony Jeselnik, known for his dark comedy style, is all set for his first-ever performance in India and excited to bring his *Bones and All* tour. Anthony's first-ever performance in India, the upcoming 'Bones and All' tour, will take place in Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru from August 8-10, 2024, and is presented by DeadAnt Live.

His most recent stand-up special, *Fire in the Maternity Ward*, premiered on to critical acclaim.

He created, hosted and produced the series *Good Talk* and the *Jeselnik Offensive on Comedy Central* and also appeared on multiple network roasts.

Additionally, he has written and performed stand-up specials *Thoughts and Prayers*.

Talking about his debut tour in India, Anthony Jeselnik said, "I'm excited to announce my first comedy tour in India, as it's somewhere I've always wanted to go and perform.

Bones and All is all new material and I hope you enjoy it. See you in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru this August."



THE BODYGUARD ACTOR BILL COBBS NO MORE

Renowned film and TV actor Bill Cobbs, known for his roles in films such as *Night At The Museum*, *Brother From Another Planet*, *Oz The Great And Powerful* and TV shows such as *The Sopranos*, passed away at the age of 90, surrounded by his family.

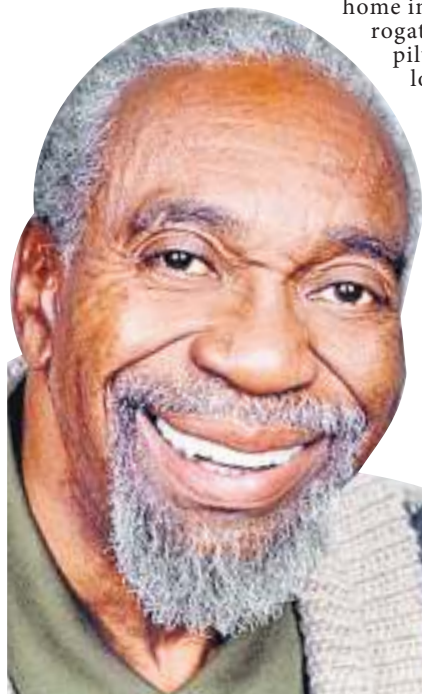
The actor passed away on June 25 due to natural causes at his home in the Inland Empire, California. His family confirmed his death on social media platforms, including Facebook and Deadline.com.

"We are saddened to share the passing of Bill Cobbs," wrote his brother, Thomas G Cobbs.

He added: "On Tuesday, June 25, Bill passed away peacefully at his home in California. A beloved partner, big brother, uncle, surrogate parent, godfather and friend. Bill recently and happily celebrated his 90th birthday surrounded by cherished loved ones." "As a family, we are comforted knowing Bill has found peace and eternal rest with his Heavenly Father. We ask for your prayers and encouragement during this time," he added.

Bill Cobbs was born in 1934 in Cleveland, Ohio. He kick-started his acting career with stage companies and made his feature film debut in 1974 with a small part in *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*. On his way to becoming an instantly recognisable character actor, Cobbs had roles throughout the 1980s in various films. In 1987, he became a series regular on *The Slap Maxwell Story*, a short-lived but well-regarded sitcom starring Dabney Coleman, who passed away in May. The 1990s saw Cobbs maintain a busy schedule with one-off TV appearances and film roles.

In 1992, he was featured in the hit Whitney Houston-Kevin Costner film *The Bodyguard* and in 1996, he played Medgar Evers' older brother, Charles Evers, in Rob Reiner's *Ghosts of Mississippi*. Other TV credits include *The Sopranos*, *JAG*, *The Drew Carey Show*, *One Tree Hill*, *Star Trek: Enterprise*, *Yes, Dear*, *Go On*, *The West Wing*, *NYPD Blue*, *Lost*, *Army Wives*, *The Glades*, *The Bay* and many others.

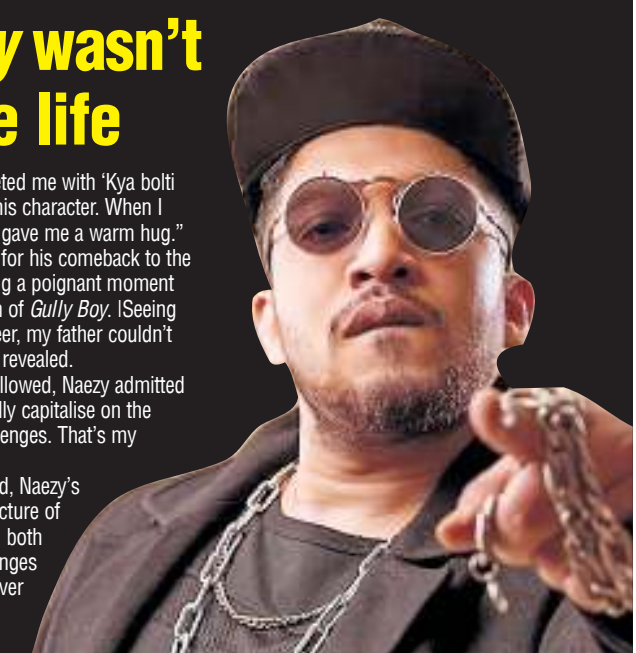


Naezy reveals Gully Boy wasn't a mirror of his entire life

Thursday afternoon in the *Bigg Boss OTT* house brought some throwback moments for Naezy filled with nostalgia! While talking to Armaan, Sai and Sana Sultan, Naezy opened up about the real story behind *Gully Boy*. Contrary to popular belief, he revealed that *Gully Boy* wasn't a mirror of his entire life. "About 40% of the story was inspired by my life, while the remaining 60% was fiction," he clarified. "My father never had a second marriage, but the emotional dynamic shown with him was real."

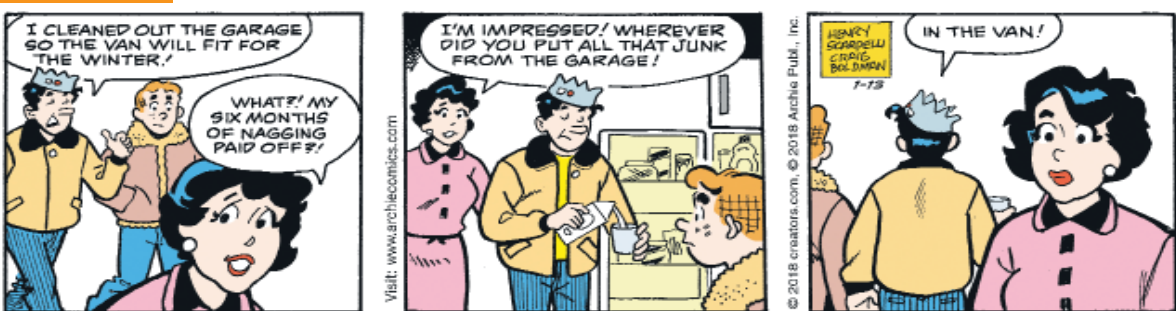
Reflecting on his early days, Naezy shared, "Practicing in trains and creating songs on my iPad—that was all real. I lived in a chawl, but I never felt lacking in anything." When asked about meeting Ranveer Singh for the first time, Naezy said, "I actually mistook

him for my fan! He greeted me with 'Kya bolhi public?' and he was in his character. When I realised it's Ranveer, he gave me a warm hug." Naezy credited Ranveer for his comeback to the Indian audience, recalling a poignant moment during the music launch of *Gully Boy*. "Seeing me on stage with Ranveer, my father couldn't hold back his tears," he revealed. Despite the fame that followed, Naezy admitted his regret: "I couldn't fully capitalise on the fame due to family challenges. That's my biggest regret."



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



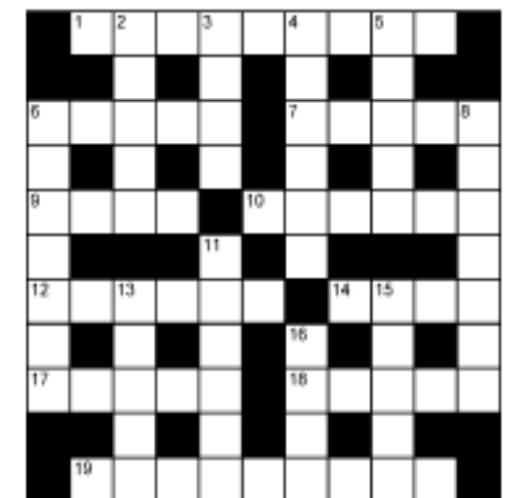
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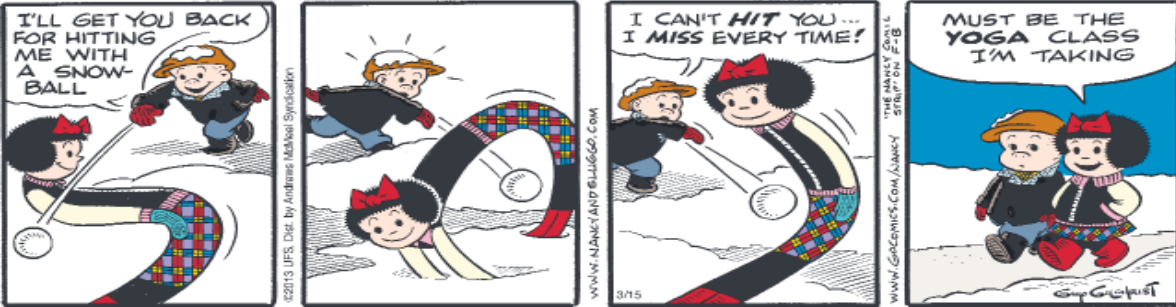
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- A pain in your mouth
- Smash
- A huge person
- One quarter of thirty-six
- Boil water in this
- Scared
- Lost blood
- Cut into two equal parts
- Sooner than expected
- Completely tired out

DOWN

- Sea
- Carry away
- Quarrelled
- This beats rhythmically inside your chest

- Under
- A weekday
- Film theatre
- Rest from work and take it easy
- Big
- Tame animals kept at home

SOLUTION



'I FELT UNEASY, DISTURBED AND VIOLATED ON SOLO TRAVEL'

SHRADDHA NEWARE

South Indian cinema actress Komica Anchal was seen sporting exotic looks in her recent social media posts, enjoying the picturesque beauty of Kenya. She got to explore all that nature had to offer and also spotted a wide array of wildlife roaming in their natural habitat. Her travels involved an immersive cultural experience, with unique dining and more. She found Kenyan people interesting; they were nice and friendly during her travels.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she speaks of the thrilling journey, "Kenya is an amazing destination for people who love to explore wildlife and the coastal area. It has stunning natural beauty, including Savannahs, snow-capped mountains, lush forests, golden beaches and massive wilderness areas."

Kenyan Savannah, she says, is a beautiful place to be; it is very calm and peaceful. "When I visited Kenya, unfortunately, it started raining after a while. But the occasional rains brought new life to the Savannah grassland. I got to see large families of wildlife grazing in the wild. There are no words to describe walking among the animals. I still can't get over the landscape of Kenya," says the *Hatyra* fame.

The actress, who said she only ever saw wild animals on school trips to the Zoo, had a once-in-a-lifetime experience! "Kenya is one of the best safari destinations. Safari is an adventurous place where people in a caged vehicle are moving around the animals, and during the drive, you are not allowed to get out of the car. I have never experienced viewing massive groups of animals. I visited Nairobi's Giraffe Center as well. I loved the big, googly eyes of little giraffes and enjoyed feeding them too. That was a priceless moment of my life!"

As a model, Komica is also revered for elegant fashion. As she continues to make perfect fashion statements during her travels, she is more than thoughtful about her style. "I always dress respectfully wherever I go and respect the culture of that place. For me, being comfortable in any outfit is the most important thing, but I also

want to look classy at the same time. People who reside in tropical areas have brighter clothing styles. I wore vibrant coloured comfy and classy outfits with beaded jewellery. If it was a sunny day, I wore elegant hats."

Enriching herself in authentic Kenyan culture and tribal people, she shares, "Kenya has a rich cultural heritage. I loved interacting with local communities and experiencing traditional dances. I was staying in Nairobi, so I went for a village museum tour at Bomas, Kenya." The actress mentioned seeing a variety of tribal groups and also rocking while performing dances and singing along! The locals welcomed her and hosted her for an authentic meal of traditional staple food *Ugali* alongside greens and proteins.

For her, it's always about staying in quality hotels. She says taking luxurious baths or even booking a relaxing spa session, chilling by the pool, and drinking cocktails is always good for the soul. While on vacation, she also keeps up with her fitness regime.

She danced her heart away in the middle of a Kenyan song to Bollywood song! However, "People around me were making my video without my consent and hooting! I felt uncomfortable because of all the eyes on me in an unfamiliar country. I stopped dancing, and could not enjoy the rest of my night. Later, when I put my selfie up, tagging the location, people started sending me unwelcome texts. There was no end to it!"

While flying back to India, a man approached her, saying, 'Oh! You are Komica Anchal, right? I saw you dancing in the pub. You were impressive!' Speaking of the horrifying experience, she shares, "After a couple of days, I wanted to watch TV and rest in flight. And this person was bothering me with unwanted attention. I felt uneasy, disturbed and violated, like I didn't deserve to travel alone. I was stalked, stared at and approached by people in an inappropriate way. I can handle such things, but I could see my courage slipping away that time."

Having studied in Mussoorie, she's always been a mountain lover too. She personally feels, "Mountains are prettier than beaches and lakes. They are calm and soothing. I have studied in Mussoorie, Dehradun. They are known for their alluring mountain views and greenery. So, mountains make me happy. I feel refreshed amidst the mountains."

Her go-to place for rejuvenation has always been Dubai. "If I am stressed, then planning a trip to Dubai with friends sounds like a fun idea. It has endless fun, the best shopping destinations, and the best nightlife!"

However, on the other hand, she feels, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the perfect destinations for sightseeing, water sports and various activities. It's a stunning land of white sand beaches, tropical rain forests, mangroves and exciting adventure activities. The island has delicious local cuisine and great shopping destinations. I can't wait to travel there again!"

As we head towards the end of the interview, she brings in an exclusive revelation: "I would like to go on vacation with Kartik Aaryan. I find him cute to be my travel buddy."

Celebrating working moms

The Inspire Beyond Motherhood Awards were started in 2019 to recognise mothers across different fields who had re-established their careers or completely changed tracks. Some of them went on to become entrepreneurs, bloggers, or chefs, as they found their passion after becoming mothers. Starting out in Mumbai in its first year, the awards are now being held across the nation. In a novel approach, Namrata Sadhvani partnered with Rohini Deepthi Natti to run a community, 'Oye Hyderabad', that is the community partner for the second year in a row for these awards. Speaking about what these awards are supposed to signify to these women, 'Oye Hyderabad's co-founder Namrata Sadhvani shares, "Beyond motherhood means your life doesn't have to come to a standstill once you become a mother. You can choose to excel in whichever field you want to and motherhood should not be a limiting factor for you."

become financially literate and have a say in the financials of their household. Women with a variety of backgrounds and working sectors were seen actively participating in the event. Some are coming from a corporate background, some are content creators, some are wellness experts and a few are journalists and authors.

Under the guidance of the event's guest speaker, Deepika Choudhary, chartered accountant, participants learned the importance of being financially secured. "SIP is not just Systematic Investment Plan, but it is Save, Invest, Prosper!"

During the talk many participants had a few burning questions, answered promptly by the financial expert. Krishna Madhuri, content creator, shares her views on the events theme of financial literacy, "We usually speak about financial independence for women. Along with independence, we need to know more about being financially literate."

Announcement of nominations opening on July 1, was followed by a lively session discussing each other's field of work and motherhood. As the event neared its end, they emphasised participation and nomination. Rohini Deepthi Natti, another content creator and co-founder 'Oye Hyderabad', mentions wanting a lot more nominations for the award, "The awards are not dependent on how many followers you have on social media, just to be clear. It's purely based on work and the impact that women are creating in our world, irrespective of their presence on social media."

The event was organised to create buzz around the actual awards, reportedly being held in September. Shezi M, radio presenter, Radio Mirchi, who earlier received this award shares, "After I won an award with them, I realised it's such an amazing platform for a bunch of women who are doing fabulous work! But in true mommy style, they go unnoticed and underappreciated."

According to sources, the award partners with a cause each year. This year's cause is the financial literacy of mothers. Aiming to educate mothers so that they too are able to



Komica Anchal, the South Indian beauty, was spotted taking in Kenya's breathtaking scenery. This week, *The Pioneer* will be collaborating with the actress for our Travelogue column, where she will share some special insights from her trip.



Review *Sharmajee Ki Beti*: United by surnames, divided by challenges

TEJAL SINHA

Tahira Kashyap Khurrana makes her directorial debut with *Sharmajee Ki Beti*. In addition to directing, Tahira wrote the narrative for this endearing movie, contributing a new and perceptive viewpoint. The slice-of-life film is now streaming on Amazon Prime Video.

PLOT

Sharmajee Ki Beti captures middle-class life through three different stories of the Sharmas. Basically, the film is about the lives of the Sharmas—not one, but three Sharma families (Jyoti Sharma, Kiran Sharma and Tanvi Sharma).

STORY

The film begins with Swathi Sharma (played by Vanshika Taparia), who visits a gynaec with her mother, Jyoti Sharma (played by Sakshi Tanwar). Swathi, just like any other growing teen, is concerned about her body and feels insecure about not getting her period yet. She shares her concern with her best friend, Gurveen Sharma (played by Arista Mehta). Jyoti is a teacher at a coaching center who worries about her payment being cut due to the half-day she had to take just so she could take Swathi to the doctor. She instructs her husband, Sudhir Sharma (played by Sharib Hashmi), to get their daughter ready for school, while Swathi often feels she's always looking messy.

The story then unfolds around Kiran Sharma (played by Divya Dutta), a housewife who is often forced to settle for less. Hailing from Patiala, she desires to enjoy the poise but figures out how the city dwellers are perennially on the run. She asks her husband, Vinod Sharma (played by Parvin Dabas), to go to London for a trip. With no



response, she shifts her desire to Goa and then to a local zoo. And Vinod says, 'Dekhte Hai' (we'll see). Then comes Tanvi Sharma (played by Saiyami Kher), a budding cricketer who plays for the Mumbai Women's Cricket team. However, her boyfriend Rohan (played by Ravjeet Singh) constantly refrains from playing the sport and asks her to choose between him and her game.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Sharmajee Ki Beti offers a stunning depiction of life's highs and lows from the multigenerational perspectives of its five female leads. Because it features universal themes of family dynamics, women's empowerment and personal growth, it will appeal to audiences of all ages. The important subjects covered in the movie include self-dis-

covery, women's empowerment and overcoming adversity with resilience. It offers a complex depiction of the challenges and victories faced by contemporary metropolitan women that is destined to stick with audiences long after the credits have rolled.

While Jyoti is constantly hurt by Swathi's tantrums about her not worrying about her daughter and questioning her for things like 'what do you even know about me?' This perfectly sums up the struggles of making things right and respecting the love between a mother and her daughter. The blend of humour and themes wins a cookie point. For instance, when Kiran's house help Chotu (played by Sushant Ghadge) humorously taunts her, saying, '5 minute main London se Byculla zoo'. The scene very well highlights how a middle-class housewife has to give up on her dreams, being dependent on her husband to take her out. And as the voiceover says, 'Udaan hai London waali, but land hoti hai balcony mai', that perfectly blends the emotions pretty well.

Tanvi being constantly confused about her relationship with her boyfriend sums up many current relationships, where one wants their partner to act according to them. Just like in one of the scenes, her boyfriend taunts Tanvi for behaving and dressing up like a girl, while she, on the other hand, is simply comfortable. Featuring powerhouse performances by Sakshi Tanwar, Divya Dutta and Saiyami Kher, the impressive talents of young actors Arista Mehta and Vanshika Taparia highlight how teens dealing with body image issues strive to be conventionally attractive, and so well!

Their authentic performances infuse depth into the narrative, making the film simply unmissable for a wide and diverse group of audiences. A special mention: Sushant Ghadge, who portrays Chotu, Kiran's housekeeper, has the best lines in the movie, without a doubt.

THE DRAWBACKS

While *Sharmajee Ki Beti* excels in its narrative depth, the growth of the actors and the situations, some viewers may get slightly bored mid-way.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Tahira's ability to blend satirical humour with heartfelt moments creates a balanced and engaging narrative that will appeal to viewers of all ages.

Written by Tahira, the movie is packed with humour that pops out of the most unexpected places; you'll be laughing before the punches are delivered. There are also charming moments that make you feel choked up. Not to give too much away, but be prepared for two very important scenes starring Divya and Sakshi, respectively, that will leave you feeling very overwhelmed. The movie presents a variety of viewpoints without disparaging anything or anyone, from appreciating one's body to having no regrets about personal decisions. Antara Lahiri's deft editing enhances the story, even though the film has a runtime of less than two hours. Rakesh Harida's cinematography makes sure that the entire movie has a fun vibe to it. The soundtrack wonderfully complements the story.

VERDICT

Sharmajee Ki Beti skillfully conveys the essence and principles of Indian middle-class households. It's a celebration of their goals and desires, as well as the little but important events that shape their lives. As a family, seeing it together can lead to insightful discussions and thoughtful insights. The twists and turns that the narrative brings out for the viewers make them hooked till the end, especially after the mid-way scenes.



SOUTH AFRICA BANISH AFGHANISTAN, ENTER MAIDEN T20 WC FINAL

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

South Africa exorcised their agonising semifinal jinx through an exceptional spell of pace bowling as they walloped an emotionally drained Afghanistan by nine wickets to enter their first-ever T20 World Cup final here. They will face the winners of the second semifinal between India and England in the title clash, but the Afghans will go home with their heads held high after a stirring run in the tournament. Marco Jansen (3/16) Kagiso Rabada (2/14) and Anrich Nortje (2/7) ripped the soul out of the Afghanistan top-order while bundling them out for a paltry 56 in just 11.5 overs after being invited to bowl. Despite the early departure of Quinton de Kock, bowled through the gate by impressive pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, the Proteas had little trouble in reaching 60 for one in 8.5 overs. Reeza Hendricks (29 not out), who put up his highest score in this event, and skipper Aiden Markram (23 not out) navigated them safely to the shores of victory as they have finally freed themselves from the painful tag of chokers in global events. Afghanistan have given their

everything to reach the World Cup semifinal, and in the crucial clash they were left with no energy, and produced a nothing effort that belied their doughtiness until now. It affected their batting as they looked unusually edgy against the South African pacers, who summoned a spell from hell. They reduced the Afghans to 28 for five inside the Powerplay and there was no coming back from that depth as they crashed to their lowest total in a T20 International. Their 56 was also the lowest total in a T20 World Cup semifinal clash. Once reduced to 28 for six, Afghanistan could not even offer a smidgeon of fight as their dream of reaching a maiden World Cup final was squashed even before it began. While the South Africa pacers were on the money, the Afghan batters too should cope some blame for being edgy on a pitch that hid no evils apart from those deliveries that kicked up from a length. Opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz was the first to perish, chasing Jansen's delivery outside the off-stump to give Reeza Hendricks an easy catch at slip. The dismissal of in-form Gurbaz seemed to inject doses of panic in the Afghanistan line-up, and Gulbadin Naib was consumed by a lovely in-



coming delivery by Jansen. But the next two dismissals were a combination of bowler's brilliance and batters' irrationality. Ibrahim Zadran, on whom a lot was riding for the Afghans, did not move his feet at all against a Rabada delivery that came back a bit. There was enough room for the ball to sneak past the bat and pad to rattle Zadran's leg-stump. Three balls later in the fourth over, Mohammad Nabi's dismissal was along similar lines and the only difference was that Rabada disturbed the off-stump this time. Nortje joined the party with the scalp of Azmatullah Omarzai, whose slash found Tristan Stubbs in the deep. Gurbaz, Zadran and Omarzai have been the leading run-makers for Afghanistan in this ICC showpiece, but on the crucial day all they could manage was a paltry 12 runs between them. Skipper Rashid Khan, who could have made some valuable runs, chose to expose all his stumps to Nortje to see the one close to his legs getting cartwheelled across the field. Leg-spinner Tbraiz Shamsi (3/6) applied the coupe de grace on Afghanistan batting line with two wickets in one over, jettisoning Karim Jannat and Noor Ahmad.



Laura calls for more red-ball cricket in women's cricket calendar

PTI ■ CHENNAI

South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has called for more Tests in women's cricket calendar and inclusion of red-ball tournaments in the rainbow nation's domestic structure, ahead of their one-off Test against India starting here on Friday. India and South Africa will face off here at Chepauk for only their third Test in history and first in nearly 10 years, a contest for which Wolvaardt conceded her side is not fully prepared for. While a multi-day red-ball women's competition was resumed in India last season, South Africa have no such tournaments.

"Most of us don't have any preparation in the format, since we don't play domestic four-day cricket. It's difficult, since I have to leave the balls that I have been cover-driving my whole life, and I still tend to play it by instinct," Wolvaardt said during a press conference here on Thursday. Citing the lack of preparation for red-ball cricket fixtures which are few and far between, the star batter even suggested scrapping the format. "We either need to play more Tests and incorporate it into the domestic level, or we can just leave it because playing one or three Tests is very hard to adapt to," she said. "But I want to have more of it," Wolvaardt added.



South Africa's last outing in the format was earlier this year in February when they were trounced by Australia by an innings and 284 runs in Perth. After this fixture against India, South Africa's next Test assignment will be against England in December. "Getting the opportunity to

play more red-ball cricket is awesome. Having three scheduled in a calendar year is pretty cool," she added. "I personally really enjoy the format. So, this Test will be a huge challenge for us, and hopefully, we will adapt to the conditions well." "Women's Tests, in general, is a bit unknown as neither teams have too much experience in it. India does have a good home advantage and winning here will be a tough challenge, but we are up for it," she added. "The pitch is expected to be spin-friendly while there is also forecast of rain. "Preparation-wise, we have been facing a lot of spin in the nets lately since it will be the biggest threat here. The balls

were staying low at the nets yesterday," Wolvaardt said. "Batting-wise, it's going to be a big challenge. But thankfully, we have a few top spinners in our squad who are licking their lips and getting ready for the game tomorrow. Hopefully, they are going to put on a great show," she added. With the South African men's team making it to the final of the T20 World Cup, Wolvaardt said her side would also be keeping an eye on Saturday's final. "Most of us woke up early to watch the game, but only to watch them chase 57. It was absolutely amazing to watch and felt incredible. We will definitely watch the final and cheer them on," she said.

Sri Lanka head coach Chris Silverwood steps down

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's head coach Chris Silverwood on Thursday stepped down from the role following the team's dismal outing in the ongoing T20 World Cup, the SLC announced. Former captain Mahela Jayawardene had resigned from the post of the consultant coach on Wednesday. "Being an international coach means long periods away from loved ones. After lengthy conversations with my family and with a heavy heart, I feel it is now time for me to return home (England) and spend some quality time together," Silverwood, who played six Tests and seven ODIs for England as a pacer, said in his statement. "It has been a real honour for me to be part of Sri Lanka Cricket and I will be taking away many fond memories,"

added Silverwood. Sri Lanka crashed out of the T20 WC in the group stages itself with two losses, a no result and a solitary win, and it was the former champions' worst performance in the ICC showpiece. During Silverwood's tenure, Lanka won the T20 Asia Cup in 2022 and also reached the final of the 50-over Asia Cup last year where they lost to India. They also secured a slew of bilateral series wins both at home and overseas, including one against Australia in the 50-over format and two away Test series wins over Bangladesh. The SLC has already started the process of finding a new head coach ahead of the team's next international outing against India in a white ball series next month. The Lankans will then head to England for a two-match Test series.

Rahane joins Leicestershire, to play County Championship and One Day Cup

PTI ■ LEICESTER

Former India skipper Ajinkya Rahane has signed with English county side Leicestershire for the second half of the ongoing season, the club announced on Thursday. As per the deal, he will be featuring in the team's final five games of the ongoing County Championship, besides playing in the One Day Cup, where the Foxes are the defending champions. The 36-year-old joins Leicestershire in place of Wiaan Mulder, who is expected to travel to the West Indies with South Africa in August. Rahane has accumulated over 26,000 runs across formats (First-Class, List-A and T20), having struck 51 hundreds with a top score of an unbeaten 265. Playing for the 'Men in Blue', he has collected more than 8,000 runs, including 15 centuries, along with a best knock of 188 in the New



Zealand Test in 2016. "I'm really excited to have another opportunity to come to Leicestershire. I've built a strong rapport with Claude (Henderson) and Alfonso (Thomas), and I'm looking forward to playing for the Club this summer," Rahane said in a club statement.

"I followed the team's results last year and was very impressed with what I saw. I'm hoping to enjoy my cricket and contribute to more success for the Club this season." Rahane is expected to arrive in mid-July, with his first contest being away to Notts Outlaws in the One Day Cup on July 24. "We are thrilled to welcome someone of Ajinkya's quality to Leicestershire. It was unfortunate that Ajinkya's schedule didn't quite work with ours last year. But, it's a massive boost to have secured his services for the business end of this season," commented Leicestershire's Director of Cricket, Claude Henderson. "He holds immense experience and vital leadership qualities, which will be hugely beneficial to the team alongside his run-scoring ability. Ajinkya's arrival also presents a fantastic opportunity for our batters to learn from one of the game's best."



Bumrah is 1000 times better than me: Kapil Dev

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Iconic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than what he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the ongoing T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an outstanding economy of 4.08 in the 23 overs he has bowled so far. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil told PTI Videos. Bumrah, who is widely regarded as the best pacer in international cricket now,

has played 26 Tests for India, picking up 159 wickets and an economy of under three. His 89 ODI appearances have yielded 149 wickets while his T20I wicket count stands at 85 from 68 matches. Kapil ended his career with a then world record 434 Test wickets and is considered one of the best all-rounders of all time who also claimed 253 ODI scalps. The 65-year-old, who led India to their maiden World Cup title in 1983, also lauded the overall fitness levels of the current national team. "They are very good. Outstanding. They are fitter. They are much more hardworking. They are fantastic," he said.

Debutantes in focus as India Women take on South Africa in one-off Test

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The focus will be on young talent, especially the debutantes, when the Indian women's cricket team squares off against South Africa in a one-off Test starting here on Friday, a decade after the two teams last clashed in a five-day game. With Test cricket not being a regular affair for women, as many as five in the Indian squad could get a debut in the longest format, after having established themselves and proved their mettle in the limited-overs circuit. Also, with India coming off a 3-0 clean sweep in the preceding ODI series against the same side, the momentum is surely with the hosts although this will be a different format altogether. The likes of Uma Chetry, Priya Punia, Saika Ishaque, Arundhati Reddy and Shabnam Shakil will be the ones to watch as they prepare for their Test debut. The last time India competed in a red-ball match was December 2023, which was their first Test outing in two years. Playing back-to-back home Tests

against England and Australia (one each), the hosts were successful in both instances. The Indians last played South Africa in a Test back in 2014 in Mysore, winning it by a comprehensive innings and 34-run margin. Although the focus has generally been on white-ball cricket for the Indian women, head coach Amol Muzumdar has mentioned that there will be more red-ball cricket going forward. He has said that having a Women's Test Championship will add more value to the bilateral Tests. "It's not a bad idea to have a (Women's) Test Championship, something we can look forward to. But that is for the Board (BCCI and ICC) to decide. If it happens, it's indeed better for the game," he had said on Wednesday. While Harmanpreet Kaur will lead the side with five Tests under her belt, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is the most experienced of the lot, having played a Test more than her skipper. Both Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues were in good form against England and Australia.



They would once again back themselves to come up with a solid show with the bat against the South Africans here. The likes of Shafali Verma and Deepti Sharma will also be expected to come good as they are currently the team's second and third-highest run-scorers respectively in the format. As for bowling, Deepti Sharma and Pooja Vastrakar were lethal forces that gave the England and Australia a hard time in December. Also, Sneha Rana's off-breaks could be a nightmare for the Proteas, especially on the Chennai track, which is traditionally known to assist spinners. As for South Africa, the women have played just one Test in two years, against Australia in Perth this February, which the latter won comprehensively. Even the South African side has five names in line for Test debuts. However, the team led by Laura Wolvaardt will continue to rely heavily on all-rounders Sune Luus and Delhi Tucker along with Tazmin Brits. With the ball, Masabata Klaas and

Anneke Bosch are their top wicket-takers, while spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba can be tricky to face on this track. Chepauk has hosted only one women's Test to date, back in 1976 when India drew against the West Indies. However, Muzumdar asserted that the team is aware of the demands here and will play accordingly. **SQUADS:** **India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Jemimah Rodrigues, Priya Punia, Shafali Verma, Shubha Sathesh, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Sneha Rana, Saika Ishaque, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Arundhati Reddy and Renuka Thakur Singh. **South Africa:** Laura Wolvaardt (c), Anneke Bosch, Tazmin Brits, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Mieke de Ridder (wk), Sinalo Jaftha (wk), Marizanne Kapp, Masabata Klaas, Suné Luus, Eliz-Mari Marz, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Tumi Sekhukune, Nondumiso Shange and Delhi Tucker.



Siva Karthikeyan to collab with Cibi Chakaravarthi for his next

Currently, Siva Karthikeyan is busy working on a huge action thriller helmed by director A.R. Murugadoss. The main female character is portrayed by Rukmini Vasanth. The antagonist in the movie is portrayed by Bollywood actor Vidyut Jammal. According to the most recent rumours, Siva Karthikeyan would probably collaborate with the young director Cibi Chakaravarthi after finishing the movie with A.R. Murugadoss. They have previously worked together on the critically acclaimed box office hit *Don* film. There are talks for Rashmika Mandanna to fill the major female role. It's possible that well-known actor SJ Suryah may play a big part in the movie. The team's official confirmation is keenly anticipated by fans. In the meantime, September is when Sivakarthikeyan's movie *Anaran* is supposed to be released. He's portraying a formidable army officer in this film. The audience's reaction to the teaser has been amazing. The leading lady is played by the stunning Sai Pallavi.

Kalki 2898 AD on par with H'wood superhero franchises

SHRADDHA NEWARE

Under Nag Ashwin's direction, this massive project, *Kalki 2898 AD*, takes place in a post-apocalyptic world where the city of 'Kashi' is the lone bastion of hope. It is unlike any other Indian film because of its distinctive fusion of science fiction and mythology.

PLOT: Based on the epic of Hindu mythology *Mahabharata*, *Kalki 2898 AD* takes place in a dystopian future known as *Kalyug*. The story revolves around Kalki's expected birth, which is meant to restore God's presence and put an end to the world's suffering.

HIGHLIGHTS: *Kalki 2898 AD* has a lot of intricate action scenes and is extremely stunning. It is on par with Hollywood superhero franchises thanks to its superior visual effects. The employment of several ethnic groups in a post-apocalyptic world, rather than only Indians, was one of the intricate aspects that helped to keep the viewers

interested in the story. It will appeal to those who prefer epics and action-packed films because of its U/A rating. Actors and filmmakers make noticeable cameos that add their unique flair to the narrative. It's fun to see Bhairava and Bujji joke around with each other.

DRAWBACKS: Despite the story's attempt to depict each character's development concurrently, there were moments when it was challenging to follow up. Prolonged and drawn-out action scenes tried their hardest to elicit oohs and aahs from the audience, but they couldn't hold their attention for very long. Although the addition of the AI droid/vehicle was performed fairly successfully, it did not explain to the audience why or how Bhairava even possessed this technology.

PERFORMANCES: Above all, *Kalki 2898 AD* is the tale of Ashwatthama's self-redemption following his effort to break the Pandava dynasty by sending his Brahmastra in the direction of Uttara's (Malvika Nair) womb. Krishna grants him a second opportunity at

salvation even as he curses him to spend all of eternity realising his foolishness. And as Ashwatthama, Amitabh steals the show.

TECHNICALITIES: The fight scenes in *Kalki 2898 AD* are a little strangely staged, especially the ones that call for a lot of visual effects or occur in close quarters. The impression that everything is taking place on a sound stage is unavoidable. That being said, the battle scenes in Ashwatthama are not in the same league. Even while he is cutting the adversary to shreds, his entire eight feet move in what appears to be a synchronised dance. Even though he is hurling concrete at Bhairava's head, he exudes grace. He and Bhairava-Bujji engaged in a specific combat scenario that highlights the fabled figure's level of fighting proficiency.

VERDICT: Overall, it's a great experience that is visually spectacular, entertaining and occasionally musically agreeable. It maintained the promise of action in a typical Tollywood manner.

**DIRECTOR AND WRITER:** Nag Ashwin**PRODUCED BY:** Ellipsis Entertainment production**DIALOGUES BY:** Nag Ashwin, Sai Madhav Burra**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Djordje Stojiljkovic**CAST:** Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Deepika Padukone, Disha Patani, and Keerthy Suresh (Voice-over)**MUSIC BY:** Santosh Narayanan**EDITED BY:** Kotagiri Venkateshwara Rao**RATING:** 3.5

VD's cameo in KALKI 2898 AD makes fans go gaga



Vijay Deverakonda is a heartthrob who has always captured hearts with his charming appearance. Whenever this handsome hunk appears on screen, he captivates the audience. A similar phenomenon was witnessed

when he made a 2-minute cameo in *Kalki 2898 AD* and fans couldn't help but talk about it endlessly. It has indeed come as a big surprise for everyone. Vijay Deverakonda's cameo in *Kalki 2898 AD* is truly causing a stir among fans.

Everyone is going gaga in the cinema halls and on social media as well. With the film having just been released, fans are raving about Vijay's cameo. Well, this is indeed an example of Vijay Deverakonda's massive fan

following. Being called the lover boy of the industry, Vijay never leaves a chance to surprise his fans and steal the hearts of the people. He is not only the lover boy on screen, but he has also captured the hearts of millions of fans nationally and globally.

ADAH SHARMA TO PLAY 'BADASS' IN RAPCHICK REETA

Actress Adah Sharma is all set to play a "badass, witty" titular character in the upcoming show titled *Rapchick Reeta*. A source close to the development shared, "Many actresses were considered, but the team unanimously zeroed in on Adah. She has excellent comic timing and a huge youth fan following. She is also very versatile, so she's perfect for the part of Reeta. Reeta is badass, witty, kind and a lot of fun. After *Sunflower*, *The Kerala Story* and *Bastar: The Naxal Story*, she has proved that she is one of the best among the young actresses." When contacted, Adah was tight-lipped and said: "Yes, I'm doing something exciting, but the team will make an announcement soon." The show will air on Disney+ Hotstar. Adah will also be making her singing debut next month with her first single, which is a rendition of the *Shiv Tandav Stotram*. The actress has also starred in South Indian films, including the Telugu movies *Heart Attack*, *S/O Satyamurthy*, *Kshanam*, *Subramanyam for Sale*, *Kalki* and *Question Mark*. Adah has also appeared in the Kannada movie *Rana Vikrama*. Tamil films like *Idhu Namma Aalu* and *Charlie Chaplin 2* and had a special appearance in the song *Maaman Waiting* from the movie *Idhu Namma Aalu*. The actress next has *The Game of Girgit* in the pipeline.



Shankar to complete Game Changer's production works after Indian 2 release

Fans have been eagerly awaiting the announcement of the release date for Ram Charan and Shankar's political action drama *Game Changer*, which has been in development for some time. With *Indian 2*'s release the next month, Shankar is occupied with its promotion right now. Shankar was asked to discuss *Game Changer* in an interview. "The movie is almost done. There are ten more days left to shoot. I will complete the production portion following the release of *Indian 2*. After that, I'll lock the finished video and focus on the post-production

tasks. We'll make a choice after all the work is finished," he revealed. The film will be released as soon as it can. The film stars Kiara Advani as the lead role; other actors include SJ Surya, Srikanth, Anjali, Jayaram and others in vital roles. The film is being bankrolled by Dil Raju under the banner of Sri Venkateshwara Creations. SS Thaman is composing the tunes.



Vyjayanthi Movies' next with Pavan Sadineni

Chalasanani Ashwini Dutt's Tollywood production company, Vyjayanthi Movies, is presently preoccupied with the release of *Kalki 2898 AD*, the much awaited film that stars Prabhas and Deepika Padukone in the key parts. The newest rumour has it that Vyjayanthi Movies has given the go-ahead for a new story told by the gifted and driven director Pavan Sadineni, whose web series *Paruvu* on ZEE5 has been an enormous hit lately. It is anticipated that an official announcement would follow the release of *Kalki 2898 AD*. There are rumours that Dulquer Salmaan will be the star of this upcoming, highly anticipated film.



Double Ismart title track shoot underway in Hyd

Ustaad Ram Pothineni and director Puri Jagannadh are back with *Double Ismart*, which marks another thrilling collaboration between them after the blockbuster *iSmart Shankar*. This new venture promises to elevate the excitement and entertainment quotient to a new level

with a gripping storyline and high-octane action sequences. The addition of Sanjay Dutt as the antagonist to the cast adds a significant layer of intrigue and star power, making this project one of the most eagerly awaited films in Indian cinema. The film has Kavya Thapar as the female lead. This mass action entertainer is announced for release on August 15th for Independence Day Eve. The title song shoot is currently underway in Hyderabad, with the entire team putting their best foot forward to ensure it becomes a visual and auditory treat for the audience. The song, which is expected to be a chartbuster, features Ram Pothineni in his signature energetic style, promising electrifying dance moves and captivating visuals. Jani Master is choreographing this song with some terrific mass moves for the energetic mass tune composed by Mani Sharma and the official announcement about the song release will be made soon. Produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur. Sam K Naidu and Gianni Giannelli are the cinematographers.



Nikhita Gandhi is all set to strike a chord with Naadu Vittu

The extremely talented Nikhita Gandhi after delivering massive chartbusters like *Gore Gore Mukhde Pe* and *Ishq Vishk* rebound title track is all geared up to enchant her audiences with a tamil track titled *Naadu Vittu*. The energetic electronic pop song is the perfect party number and Nikhita adds her extra glam to the track making it special for her fans. Kickstarting her journey as a musician with Tamil track *Kalyana Samayal Saadhnam*, Nikhita has sung many popular Tamil songs and has a massive fan base there. With *Naadu Vittu*, Nikhita is all set to yet again surprise her audiences and we are convinced even

this track is going to be a blast. Talking about the track Nikhita shares, "Naadu Vittu is a track where I have worked with Manoj Krishna for the very first time and it was such a bliss. I have started my journey with Tamil movies and hence this song is extremely special to me. I can't wait for the audience to hear it and I'm sure they would love it as much as I do."



Arjun Ambati, Aishwarya Pisse in Agnisakshi



Disney+ Hotstar announced the launch of its first long-format show in Telugu, *Agnisakshi*, which will premiere on July 12. Starring the popular television couple Arjun Ambati and Aishwarya Pisse, this riveting drama promises to captivate audiences with its intense storyline and powerful performances.

Agnisakshi delves into the emotional journey of Shankar, a dedicated police officer haunted by the untimely loss of a beloved family member. His life takes an unexpected

turn when he encounters Gowri, a young woman grappling with her own grief. Gowri dreams of becoming a police officer like her father but faces the crushing disappointment of failing her exam. As fate intertwines their lives, Shankar and Gowri find themselves connected by a mysterious murder, setting the stage for a gripping narrative. *Agnisakshi* is filled with suspense, emotion and unexpected twists that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

SDT's next tentatively titled Sambarala Yeti Gattu

Sai Dharam Tej carefully chooses his projects and is certainly not in a rush to work on consecutive movies.

He is currently working on a movie that Rohit KP, a rookie director, is directing. According to the latest updates, *Sambarala Yeti Gattu* is the intended title for the movie. For the film's filming, an enormous set is being constructed for the historical drama action movie.

The film's produc-

er, Niranjan Reddy, is paired with Aishwarya Lekshmi in the major role. According to reports, Sai Dharam Tej will be seen in a fresh appearance when the film's production gets underway.

