

There is nothing to worry about those leaving the party and joining thieves. The BRS will mould new leaders and will remain strong even if some people leave the party. The people were duped by false propaganda and the BRS was defeated. We should work hard whether ruling or in the opposition. The Jagityal MLA joined thieves. He was also groomed by the party.

- K. Chandrashekar Rao, BRS Chief P4

Veershaiva-Lingayat
 seer pitches for
positions now

'HYD IS
 NOW COMPETING WITH SOME
 MAJOR CITIES IN WORLD'

Rashmika Mandanna
 begins shooting for
SIKANDAR

DON'T MISS...

Lokesh aims comprehensive...

Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, emphasised his commitment on Friday to overhaul the state's academic sector within the next year. In a strategic review meeting with Education Department officials, Lokesh outlined ambitious plans for colleges and universities, aimed at enhancing academic standards and addressing critical gaps. Among the priorities discussed...

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Centre asks depts to review...

Irked over non-adherence to its directives, the Centre has asked all ministries to timely review the working of the employees so that the non-performers are prematurely retired from service. In an order, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) asked ministries concerned to direct the public sector undertakings (PSUs), banks, autonomous institutions and statutory bodies under their administrative control to undertake the exercise...

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India, US extend digital tax...

India and the US have decided to extend a 2 per cent equalisation levy or digital tax on e-commerce supplies until June 30, the finance ministry said on Friday. In a major reform of the international tax system, India and the US have joined 134 other members of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework (including Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK) in reaching an agreement on October 8, 2021, on the statement on a two-pillar solution to address the tax...

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Last Tango: Possibly final...

This Saturday afternoon in Barbados, no Indian fan would want Rohit Sharma to drag his jaded body towards the dug-out trying to hide a tear welling up at the corner of his eye. No Indian fan would want to revisit Virat Kohli's blank stare towards the podium where the coveted ODI World Cup trophy rested exactly seven months and 10 days back. What they would surely want is to see the two greats do a memorable tango in probably their 'Last Dance' in the game's shortest format...

-SPORTS

POCSO CASE

HC extends interim order on arrest of Yediyurappa

The Karnataka High Court on Friday extended by two weeks its interim order restraining the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) from arresting former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, in connection with a case registered against the BJP leader under POCSO Act. The bench of Justice Krishna S Dixit continued its June 14 order, as it permitted the prosecution to file its objections to the petition filed by Yediyurappa seeking quashing of the case. The Special Public Prosecutor sought time to file objections, and maintained that Yediyurappa's petition

may not survive as a chargesheet has already been filed. The court then said: "Call these matters week after next at request of learned Special Public Prosecutor for filing statement of objections if any. Interim order granted earlier to continue till next date of hearing." The CID on Thursday filed a chargesheet at the Fast Track Court 1 for POCSO Act cases here against Yediyurappa and three of his aides in connection with the case based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he sexually assaulted her daughter during a meeting on February 20 this year, at his residence in Dollars Colony here.

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WHITE PAPER RELEASED ON POLAVARAM PROJECT

Naidu: Jagan govt did more harm to AP than bifurcation

Claims project saw only 4% progress in civil works under YSRCP govt, compared to 72% during his earlier tenure

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday alleged that the State suffered greater damage under the previous YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP government than from the bifurcation of united Andhra Pradesh, citing the example of the Polavaram Project. Naidu claimed that the project, which was completed up to 72% during his regime between 2014 and 2019, had only witnessed a 4% progress in civil works over the last five years under the YSRCP government.



"We all have the anguish that our state suffered immensely due to the

bifurcation, but more than that loss, between 2019 and 2024 turned into the devastation caused by Jagan a curse for the state," Naidu said

- CM asserts the project could store 194 tmcft of water, irrigate 7.2 lakh acres, and generate 960 MW of hydropower.
- He says the TDP government spent Rs 11,762 crore on the project, while the YSRCP government spent only Rs 4,167 crore.
- The YSRCP government accused of causing delays and cost overruns by replacing existing contractors.
- Naidu highlights that the diaphragm wall damaged in 2020 was only addressed two years later, increasing repair costs.
- Says the project's height was reduced, affecting hydropower generation, criticising the diversion of Rs 3,385 crore of Central funds.
- Naidu emphasises fixing issues with the coffer dam, diaphragm wall, and guide bund before resuming main works.
- International experts from the US and Canada have been invited to assess and provide recommendations for the project.
- Naidu vows to elicit public input and work with the Centre to overcome the project's challenges.

while releasing a white paper on the Polavaram Project at the Secretariat. According to Naidu, the mega irrigation project can store 194 tmcft of water, enable the utilization of 322 tmcft, irrigate 7.2 lakh acres, provide drinking water to 28.5 lakh people, and generate 960 MW of hydropower. Saving about 500 tmcft to 700 tmcft of Godavari river waters from draining into the sea using the project and supplementing them with existing water resources across the state would eliminate the scope for famine, Naidu asserted. Naidu noted that the earlier TDP regime had spent Rs 11,762 crore on the project, while the YSRCP government had expended only Rs 4,167 crore. He highlighted that his successor had crippled the project mid-way by replacing existing contractors, resulting in cost and time overruns.

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LS adjourned amid Oppn ire over NEET

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The proceedings of the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day on Friday as the opposition demanded a discussion on the alleged irregularities in the conduct of the medical entrance exam NEET. When the House reassembled at 12 noon, opposition members continued with their demand for a discussion on matters related to the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). Speaker Om Birla and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told opposition members that they can discuss the matter during the course of the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. Birla said there are certain norms of Parliament that have to be followed and committees have to be formed to which Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said students are not aware of it. They are only demanding justice. As members from the Congress, TMC and DMK parties stormed the Well, Rijiju said it is for the first time that the opposition is seen demanding a discussion on an issue before the House takes up the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. "I assure the opposition we will answer any issue that you raise during the Motion of Thanks discussion," Rijiju said. As members continued with sloganeering, Birla said the people have elected members to this House so that they can raise and discuss issues, and not disrupt the proceedings.



Parl should give message that Govt, Oppn together: Rahul

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold a 'respectful' and good discussion in Parliament on the issue of alleged irregularities in the conduct of the NEET exam as it concerns the country's youth and their future. Addressing reporters in Parliament complex, Gandhi said the NEET issue should be discussed before the Motion of Thanks on the President's address is taken up. The NEET issue is the most important issue of the day, and the opposition parties have agreed that it should be taken up for discussion before anything else, the Congress leader told reporters.

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Experts from US, Canada to inspect Polavaram today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A team of experts from the United States and Canada will visit the Polavaram irrigation project to study the damages and suggest remedial measures. This team, organised by the Central government, includes David B. Paul and Gias Franco de Cisco from the USA, and Richard Donnelly and Seas Hinsberger from Canada. The experts have already arrived in New Delhi and are scheduled to meet with the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, Central Water Commission (CWC), Polavaram Project Authority (PPA), Central Soil and Materials Research Station (CSMRS), and Water Resources Department (WRD) officials. After these meetings, the team will travel



to Gannavaram airport and then proceed to the Polavaram dam site at Ramayapet in Eluru district. Their visit will include a thorough examination of the dam's management, security, civil engineering, and hydraulic structures. They will evaluate the project works from all perspectives and submit a report to the PPA with suggested remedial measures. The team will be at the Polavaram project site on June 30 and July 1. On

July 2 and 3, they will hold discussions with WRD, PPA, CWC, CSMRS, WAPCOS, MEIL, and AFRY officials. The experts will return to Delhi on July 4 and then back to the USA and Canada. David B. Paul is an expert in dam security and management, Richard Donnelly specializes in hydraulic constructions and water management, Gias Franco de Cisco is an expert in the structural engineering of dams, and Seas Hinsberger has over two decades of experience in geotechnical engineering and irrigation management. A senior official of the state irrigation department mentioned that these experts will visit the project every three months until its completion to guide local engineers in overcoming technical challenges.

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Ali quits active politics

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Noted Telugu film actor Ali has announced that he is quitting politics. In a video message, he declared that he would no longer be associated with any political party. Ali had been a member of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and was appointed as an advisor within the party. Reportedly, Ali had expected to be given an MLA or Rajya Sabha MP seat but was not awarded either position. In his video statement, Ali emphasised that he is now just a common man who will vote once every five years and will no longer engage in political activities. He expressed his intention to focus on his film career and stay busy with his shooting schedules, effectively saying goodbye to politics for good. Before joining YSRCP, Ali was affiliated with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

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Control seasonal diseases: Narayana

The Minister reviews situation with heads of 17 Municipal Corporation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Minister P. Narayana held a review meeting with the Commissioners and Engineering Officers of all 17 Municipal Corporations at the Amaravati Secretariat. The meeting focused on controlling seasonal diseases such as diarrhoea, dengue, and malaria, improving the drinking

water supply, and financially strengthening municipal corporations. State Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister Ponguru Narayana directed officials to immediately launch a special drive to prevent seasonal diseases prevalent during the monsoon.

Continued on Page 2

THREE IPS OFFICERS SHIFTED IN AP

Ayyanar made ADGP of CID

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has made a few changes in the Police department, transferring three senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officers. Dr. A Ravi Shankar Ayyanar, previously the Commissioner of Police in Visakhapatnam, has been appointed as the Additional



Director General of Police (ADGP) for the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). He replaces Harish Kumar

Gupta, who held this position in an additional capacity. Atul Singh, formerly the ADGP of the Andhra Pradesh Special Police (APSP) Battalion, has been promoted to Director General of the Anti-Corruption Bureau.

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'Amarnath Yatra is symbol of faith, unity'



PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Amarnath Yatra is a symbol of faith and unity, and the people of Jammu and Kashmir feel privileged to be part of the holy pilgrimage, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said here on Friday. Sinha attended an event organised by civil society, trade fraternity and citizens at Sheri-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) here to welcome pilgrims of Amarnath Yatra. The first batch of pilgrims reached the valley on Friday. "Glad to have attended an event organised by civil society, trade fraternity & citizens to welcome pilgrims of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra. People feel privileged to be part of holy pilgrimage and contributing to make the journey safe and a truly fulfilling

spiritual experience," the LG said on X. He said the spiritual journey to the holy cave is the symbol of faith and unity. "For centuries, it has been collective responsibility of the society to make every step of this journey blissful. J-K has glorious heritage of harmony, tolerance and brotherhood. It is the land of almost all religions known to mankind. These values deeply embedded in society are expressed in this yatra and everyone irrespective of religion and caste participates in serving the pilgrims," Sinha said. Speaking to reporters at the SKICC, the LG said for the past three-four years, a tradition has been established in Jammu and Kashmir to hold discussions with religious leaders, elected representatives, civil society members, and various district officials before the yatra.

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Weather models 'fail' to predict Delhi rains; meteorologists baffled

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Forecasting models "failed" to predict the extreme weather event that took Delhi residents by surprise early Friday, resulting in a record 228.1 mm of rainfall, meteorologists said. This amount is more than three times the June average of 74.1 mm and the highest for the month since 1936. An IMD official explained that the monsoon winds interacted with the remnants of a western disturbance, causing heavy rains in Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir. Independent scientists suggested that a thunderstorm over North Delhi could have triggered the torrential rains. On June 26, the IMD had predicted



only light to moderate rain and thunderstorms with gusty winds for Friday (June 28). On Thursday afternoon, the Met office noted that a trough extended from a cyclonic circulation over central Gujarat to west Bihar in the lower tropospheric levels. In the weekly weather briefing

uploaded on the IMD's YouTube page, scientist Soma Sen Roy said this trough was pumping moisture into north and central India. "The east-west trough is likely to strengthen during the week and rainfall will increase over north India," she explained. The IMD's extended range forecast issued on Thursday night predicted "fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning over northwest and east India during the next five days". It also suggested "very heavy rainfall" over Delhi on June 29 and June 30, but no one expected the torrential rain on Friday morning.

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Anitha alerts DCs over flood threat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Home and Disaster Management Minister Vangalapati Anitha has directed officials to remain vigilant amid the heavy rains over the past two days due to a depression. On Friday, the Minister conducted a video conference with District Collectors and District Revenue Officers (DROs) of the affected districts from the State Disaster Management Organisation office in Vijayawada.

During the conference, Minister Anitha emphasised the importance of alertness in the face of continuous rainfall. She urged authorities to report any issues immediately and to form special teams for relief measures.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the State is expected to receive above-normal rainfall from the southwest monsoon, necessitating special attention to low-lying areas. She advised examining flood flow at the field level in the Godavari and Krishna river catchment districts to take appropriate mea-



asures.

In June, 12 districts have recorded maximum rainfall, 9 districts have recorded high rainfall, and 5 districts have recorded normal rainfall. From Thursday morning to Friday, heavy rains were recorded in Alluri Sitaramaraju, Srikakulam, Krishna, and Vizianagaram districts. Gudem Kothavedhi in Alluri Seetharamaraju district recorded the highest rainfall at 184 mm. Minister Anita

stressed the need for regular checks on the condition of ponds and streams in river catchment areas prone to frequent flooding. She also advised officials to remain vigilant about rains and floods in upper stream areas.

Minister Anita inspected the State Emergency Operation Centre, where officials explained the 24/7 weather monitoring system. They assured her that SDRF and NDRF teams are

available for emergency relief operations. Officials also demonstrated the continuous monitoring and alert system used during calamities. Through the Common Alert Protocol, the AP Alert Centre showcased how alert messages are communicated to the public. The Minister inquired about the satellite phones, Satellite-Based Mobile Data Voice Terminal (SB MDVT), walkie-talkies, and V-SAT commu-

nication systems used in case of communication breakdowns.

Minister Anitha reviewed the situation virtually with Collectors and DROs of rain-affected districts. She noted that due to rains in catchment areas and the impact of the storm, floodwaters are entering the Godavari, Vamsadhara, Nagavali, and other rivers through rivulets. A yellow alert has already been issued in Alluri Seetharamaraju district due to rains and floods.

Alluri Sitaramaraju Collector AS Dinesh Kumar reported continuous rainfall in the district for a week. In response to rains and typhoon warnings, VRO, VRA, and other officials in the Devapatnam river basin have been alerted and preventive measures taken. Efforts are underway to restore damaged roads, and a grievance cell has been established for relief measures.

Officials from Srikakulam district reported being on high alert in response to heavy rains and have taken preventive measures. They confirmed that there are no significant problems reported so far.

Palla takes charge as TDP's AP unit chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivasa Rao officially assumed the role of TDP Andhra Pradesh President at NTR Bhavan in Mangalagiri on Friday. In his address, Rao expressed gratitude to TDP chief and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, as well as Minister Nara Lokesh, for entrusting him with this significant responsibility. He pledged to uphold the trust placed in him and emphasized his commitment to ensuring proper recognition for party activists, integrating them into the governance process.

Rao outlined his strategy to coordinate efforts between the party and the government, aiming to secure another majority in the next election. He assured that he would work tirelessly towards



this goal and vowed to address politically motivated cases against party activists, promising steadfast support for them.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu congratulated Palla Srinivasa Rao on his new role, express-

ing confidence that the party would achieve greater success and strengthen under his leadership. TDP General Secretary and Minister Nara Lokesh, along with numerous MLAs and party leaders, also extended their congratulations to Rao.

VSP's asset sales spark outrage amid merger demands

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the call for a merger with the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) gains momentum, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity behind the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), faces fierce backlash from trade union leaders over its proposal to sell valuable assets in Hyderabad and Chennai as part of a monetization strategy.

Despite targeting a production capacity of 7.3 million tons, VSP has fallen short under the current management. The recent sale of non-core assets, including the Raebareilly Forged Wheel Plant for Rs. 1910 crores and residential quarters in Visakhapatnam for Rs. 250 crores, has drawn sharp criticism. Stakeholders fear these actions could be part of a larger plan leading toward the plant's



closure. Adding to the uncertainty, the management has advertised the sale of stockyards in Hyderabad and Chennai. To generate revenue, they have also proposed leasing the Visakhapatnam Steel Club and Gangavaram Port Guest Houses, although interest has reportedly been limited.

A recent proposal to lease the state-of-the-art wellness centre,

built for Rs. 1.5 crore, has further exacerbated tensions. This facility, equipped with modern amenities including exercise halls, yoga rooms, and spa facilities, is currently up for a ten-year lease, with interested parties expected to submit operational plans by July 13th.

CITU State Secretary and Visakha Utku Parirakshana Porata Samiti Chairman Ch Narsinga Rao stated that the sale

of VSP assets is a precursor to its strategic sale. He emphasized that despite claims from BJP leaders, the central government has not reversed its decision on the strategic sale of VSP. Rao demanded a formal statement from the Centre announcing the repeal of its decision to sell VSP, asserting that the ongoing asset sales are part of a conspiracy to weaken RINL and pave the way for privatization.

Labour unions have strongly condemned the management's recent actions. They argue that the revenue generated from leasing facilities is negligible compared to the cost of accommodating VIPs in luxury hotels. These unions emphasize the need to prioritize efforts towards reviving production capacity, a critical issue compounded by the current situation of unpaid employ-

ee wages.

"We are opposed to the monetisation plan by the RINL finalised at the behest of the Ministry of Steel. Selling away valuable assets is not the solution. What is required immediately is to consider the merger of RINL with SAIL as a permanent solution of mutual benefit," said Visakha Steel Employees' Congress (VSEC) President Neerukonda Ramachandra Rao.

With accusations of mismanagement mounting and anxieties rising among employees, the future of VSP hinges on critical decisions to be made in the coming months. Stakeholders and the surrounding community await clear direction from the leadership as tensions escalate and the viability of this once-prominent industrial centre hangs in the balance.

TS Governor meets Naidu



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telangana State Governor CP Radhakrishnan met Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu at his residence in Undavalli in Guntur district on Friday.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh welcomed Telangana Governor

Radhakrishnan who visited their Undavalli residence," said an official press release.

In a post on micro-blogging site X, Minister for Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh said the Governor was honoured with a locally woven Mangalagiri handloom-made shawl. Lokesh said he also met Radhakrishnan, who made a courtesy call to Naidu.

HC extends interim order on ...

Continued from Page 1

A Bengaluru court on June 13 issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against Yediyurappa in the case registered against him on March 14 this year. The High Court on June 14 restrained the CID from arresting Yediyurappa, while directing him to appear before it for probe. Yediyurappa was questioned for over three hours by the CID on June 17.

The 81-year-old Yediyurappa has been charged under Section 8 (punishment for sexual assault) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Sections 354A (sexual harassment), 204 (destruction of document or electronic record to prevent its production as evidence) and 214 (offering gift or restoration of property in consideration of screening offender) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Weather models 'fail' to ...

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At 4:58 am on Friday, the IMD issued an alert, stating "light to moderate intensity rain with heavy intensity rain over a few places and winds of 20-40 kmph would occur over and adjoining areas of entire Delhi and NCR, Gannaur, Sonapat, Kharkhoda, Jhajjar, Sohna, Palwal, Baraut, Baghpat, Khakra, Pilakhua, and Sikandrabad during the next two hours".

Later, it reported that the Safdarjung Observatory recorded 148.5 mm of rainfall between 2:30 am and 5:30 am, indicating that much of the rain had already occurred before the IMD issued the alert.

Also, it declared the arrival of the monsoon in Delhi on Friday noon, less than 15 hours after it had projected that the primary rain-bearing system would reach Delhi within two to three days.

Control seasonal ...

Continued from Page 1

He instructed the concerned departments to fix any freshwater pipe leakages within 24 hours and ensure that garbage inside drains is cleaned promptly. He emphasised that seasonal diseases are likely to increase during the rainy season and advised the commissioners to prepare comprehensive preventive measures. He noted that while no cases of dengue have been reported in the municipalities so far, cases of diarrhoea have been reported in a few areas. The minister also mentioned that he discussed the issue with health department officials. A special drive should be initiated to prevent diarrhoea, remove silt from the drains, and ensure the smooth flow of drainage water. He announced that around Rs 50 crore would be released soon to address drinking water pipe leakages, remove garbage from

canals, and improve sanitation conditions. During the meeting, the commissioners presented various programs being undertaken in their corporations through a PowerPoint presentation. They also explained the financial conditions of the municipal corporations, the measures taken to improve the supply of drinking water, the development of the sewage system, and the removal of garbage from drains.

Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Chief Secretary, State Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department; D. Haritha, Managing Director of AP Urban Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation; Sridhar, CDMA; Ravuri Vidyullatha, Town Planning Director; Ananda Rao, Public Health Engineering Chief; and Commissioners of 17 Municipal Corporations participated in this review meeting.

Killer leopard captured in Nandyala

PNS ■ NANDYALA

The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department on Friday captured a leopard which killed a woman in Nandyala district, said an official.

The leopard had mauled the woman to death about 1 km inside the Nagarjunasagar Srisaillam Tiger Reserve (NSTR) on Tuesday. "The leopard captured near Pacherla check post is the same animal that killed the woman," Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APPCF, Wildlife), Shantipriya Pandey said. Incidentally, the deceased woman belonged to Pacherla village. The big cat entered into a trap cage set for its capture on Friday morning and is now being shifted to Tirupati Zoo, Pandey said.

Located in the Nallamalla hill ranges, an offshoot of the Eastern Ghats, NSTR is 3,728 sq km big, spread across Palnadu, Nandyala and Prakasam districts. The Forest Department has also rescued another leopard which fell into a dry well at Devanagaram village in Prakasam district on Thursday.

Ayyanar made ...

Continued from Page 1

Shanka Brata Bagchi, who was the ADGP for Law & Order, has been appointed as the new Commissioner of Police for Visakhapatnam.

The Director General of Police will assign interim officers to fill the vacant positions of ADGP for APSP Battalion and ADGP for Law & Order until permanent appointments are made.

These transfers were officially announced by Chief Secretary to the Government, Neerabh Kumar Prasad, through a government order issued on Friday.

Experts from US, Canada to inspect ...

Continued from Page 1

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had previously visited the Polavaram project site and requested the Centre to facilitate the visit of international experts to address structural deficiencies identified in the last five years.

After his visit, Naidu report-

ed that the diaphragm wall was constructed at a cost of Rs 480 crore to support the earth-cum-rock fill dam, with upper and lower cofferdams also under construction. However, when the YSRCP government led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy took over in May 2019, contractors and workers were changed under the process of reverse tendering,

disrupting progress.

As a result, the diaphragm wall suffered 35% damage during the 2020 floods due to the incomplete cofferdam. Officials now estimate that Rs 446 crore is required for repairs, with no guarantee of flood resilience. Constructing another diaphragm wall could cost Rs 990 crore.

LS adjourned..

Continued from Page 1

"There is a difference between protest on the road and protest inside the House... You (Opposition) don't want House to run? You don't want to discuss NEET during Motion of Thanks discussion?" Birla said.

As the House continued to see uproar, Birla adjourned the proceedings till Monday.

Amid din, TMC member S K Nurul Islam took oath as a Lok Sabha member

When the House met in morning, opposition members were on their feet seeking the acceptance of an adjournment motion to suspend all business and discuss matters related to NEET. However, the Speaker said he would first take up the obituary references to 13 former members, including ex-Lok Sabha speaker and ex-Maharashtra chief minister Manohar Joshi.

Naidu: Jagan govt did more...

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Sharing details of the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) meeting held on August 13, 2019, Naidu said that Reddy had gone ahead disregarding PPA's recommendations not to replace the contractors.

Calling the YSRCP government a "blind political dispensation," Naidu noted that the diaphragm wall, which was damaged in the 2020 floods, came to the YSRCP government's notice only after two years. Built at a cost of Rs 436 crore in 2018, the diaphragm wall's repairs will now require Rs 447 crore. Naidu added that constructing a new one would impose a financial burden of Rs 990 crore, among other cost overruns.

Furthermore, he noted that the crucial height of the project had been reduced from 45.72 meters to 41.15 meters. However, he asserted that there

should be no compromise with the original height as it is crucial for hydropower generation.

Naidu alleged that the YSRCP government had diverted Rs 3,385 crore of Central Government funds meant for the project, among other irregularities.

Claiming that the project had suffered greater damage than is publicly known, Naidu said the first priority is to resolve issues plaguing the coffer dam, diaphragm wall, guide bund, and other structures, after which the main works would be taken up. He mentioned that the Centre has invited international experts from the US and Canada to assess the project for 10 days a month to offer their recommendations to salvage the damaged portions.

Moreover, Naidu said the state government will gather ideas from the public and proceed with help from the Centre to overcome all the hurdles.

Parl should give message that Govt, Oppn...

Continued from Page 1

"The youth are worried and they do not know what is going to happen. A message and assurance should go to the youth from Parliament that India's government and the opposition are together in raising the concerns of students," he said. Gandhi said the INDIA bloc thinks this is the

most important matter. "I request the prime minister that since this is an issue concerning the youth, there should be a good and respectful discussion on the issue concerning the youth," he said, urging them to join the discussion. He said the opposition members will hold the discussion respectfully.

The former Congress chief

said during their meeting on Thursday, all opposition floor leaders unanimously felt that there should be a discussion on the NEET issue in Parliament.

"I want to tell the students of the country that this is their issue and we all in the INDIA bloc feel that your issue is the most important as you are India's future" Gandhi said.



Dy CM Pawan receives public grievances

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj held a review meeting with the Panchayat Raj, RWS and other officials at his camp office at Mangalagiri on Friday. He reviewed various issues and gave them suggestions at the meeting. He also reviewed the development works being executed by the departments and their status and spending of funds. Later Pawan Kalyan took memorandums from the general public who, in large numbers, waited outside of his camp office. He listened to their grievances and assured them of taking steps to resolve them.

Comprehensive educational reforms in one year: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, emphasised his commitment on Friday to overhaul the state's academic sector within the next year. In a strategic review meeting with Education Department officials, Lokesh outlined ambitious plans for colleges and universities, aimed at enhancing academic standards and addressing critical gaps.



Among the priorities discussed were the urgent need to fill teacher vacancies in degree colleges and universities, revamping curricula to align with industry demands, and assessing the fee structures in private engineering colleges. Lokesh underscored Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's strong interest in elevating university rankings and ensuring educational curricula remain relevant amidst evolving industrial needs. Addressing concerns about

property divisions among higher education institutions and declining institutional rankings, Lokesh instructed officials to expedite teacher appointments statewide, ensuring transparency in college staff transfers.

The meeting also focused on upcoming Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) examinations and the historical analysis of degree college admission

processes over the past decade. Lokesh criticized previous administration decisions that disrupted student welfare schemes, causing over six lakh students to face delays in retrieving their certificates under schemes like Vidya Deevana and Vasathi Deevana.

Highlighting outstanding dues under Vidya Deevana amounting to approximately Rs 3,480 crore, the Minister

urged immediate action from educational institutions to facilitate the return of students' certificates. Present at the meeting were Higher Education Secretary Sourab Gour, Intermediate Education Commissioner Pola Bhaskar, Higher Education Council Chairman K Rammohan Rao, and AP Higher Education Regulatory and Monitoring Commission Secretary Suryachandra Rao.



AIIMS-M'giri will be made one of the top 3 institutes: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has announced that necessary steps will be taken to ensure AIIMS - Mangalagiri achieves a top position nationwide, with full cooperation from the state government.

AIIMS Director Dr Madhabanandkar, who met the Chief Minister at the Secretariat on Friday, discussed the services provided to the public and highlighted the current challenges. A significant issue is the severe water shortage, which has hindered the expansion of services. The pipeline project intended to solve the water problem has stalled. Dr Madhabanandkar stated that while 7 million litres of water are needed per day, only 2 million litres are currently being supplied via tankers.

He also mentioned difficulties in constructing pipelines through forest land and highlighted problems with power supply. Dr Madhabanandkar informed the Chief Minister

that out of the 192 acres allocated for the institute, 182 acres have been given, and requested the remaining 10 acres to facilitate AIIMS' expansion.

The Director invited CM Chandrababu Naidu to inspect the facilities at AIIMS. The Chief Minister expressed concern over the issues affecting AIIMS and assured that a comprehensive review would be conducted to resolve them. He criticized the previous government for not addressing the water problem over the last five years and stressed that halting the supply of drinking water to AIIMS due to technical and financial issues is unacceptable. CM Naidu promised a swift resolution to the problem.

AIIMS was established with central funds of Rs 1,618 crore during the previous Telugu Desam government, which provided the necessary land and permissions for its construction. However, after the YSRCP government came into power in 2019, the institution has faced several challenges.

Kolusu promises help to kin of electrocution victim



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Kolusu Parthasarathy visited the family of Dondapati Ramadas who died due to electric shock yesterday in Edara village of Agirapalli mandal in Krishna district. The minister promised to support the family members of the deceased in all ways. Ramadasu's mother Nagaratnam 60, who was electrocuted, died and in the process of saving her, her son Dondapati Ramadasu 40 also died. As the mother and son both died at the same time, Ramadasu's family was inconsolable.

Ramadasu's wife Subhashini told the minister that Ramadas was previously working as a driver and after he was paralyzed for 5 years and had been receiving treatment at home. She requested the ministers to show her two sons, Navdeep 18 and Sandeep 17 who passed the tenth standard a livelihood. Minister Kolusu Parthasarathy immediately spoke to Energy Department SE and Dwara DRDA PD and directed the officials to ensure help immediately. The ministers consoled the family by assuring that it is the government's responsibility to support their family in all ways.

Ambati counters Naidu's charges over Polavaram

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Ambati Rambabu has accused Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu of disseminating false information in the just-released white paper on the Polavaram project. Rambabu claimed that Naidu's allegations were aimed at diverting attention from the mistakes made by the TDP government and targeting former CM Jagan Mohan Reddy. Rambabu asserted that Naidu's administration was responsible for the current issues plaguing the Polavaram project, pointing to strategic errors made during the TDP's tenure. He criticised Naidu's decision to take over the central government project in 2016 using outdated rates from 2013-14.

Countering Naidu's accusations, Rambabu emphasized that the Chief Minister was spreading lies about the Polavaram diaphragm wall. He argued that the wall was damaged due to the

improper construction of cofferdams during Naidu's administration. According to Rambabu, the proper procedure required constructing cofferdams only after diverting the river through the

contributions of the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, who he said was instrumental in securing the necessary permissions for the Polavaram project. He recounted that in July 2010,

required clearances. He pointed out that Naidu had previously served as Chief Minister but did not prioritize the Polavaram project during his earlier tenure.

The former minister dismissed Naidu's white paper as misleading, asserting that Naidu's fears stemmed from the missteps of the TDP government and the uncertainty surrounding the project's completion. Rambabu detailed the timeline of permissions obtained during Rajasekhara Reddy's leadership, including environmental and wildlife clearances and approvals from various central departments between 2005 and 2009.

Rambabu presented a comparison of the Polavaram project's status in 2019, when Naidu stepped down, and its progress in 2024 under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's government, asserting that significant advancements were made during the latter's administration.



spill, approach, and other channels, followed by the diaphragm wall. He contended that the diaphragm wall was built prematurely, leading to the current problems.

Rambabu highlighted the

during Rajasekhara Reddy's tenure, the Forest Department granted stage 2 permission. Rambabu praised Reddy for his efforts, stating that he visited the site multiple times and worked with MPs to obtain all

Action sought to solve District Central Library land dispute

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Former MLC MVS Sarma has called upon Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan to fulfil their pre-election commitment regarding the District Central Library land at Jagadamba junction. The demand comes amidst ongoing struggles over the one-acre plot, originally restored to the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha (ZGS) in 2014 after efforts by the Poura Gandhalayala Seva Samithi (PGSS).

Speaking to the media on Friday, Sarma said despite official restoration in March 2022, the land remains under the shadow of the CRPF's occupation since 2013, highlighting a stark disparity between legal paperwork and practical implementation. Sarma underscored persistent appeals made to top officials, including the Chief Minister and the District Collector, underscoring the enduring bureaucratic hurdles.



The ZGS, responsible for the District Central Library's oversight, continues to grapple with inadequate facilities after 14 years in temporary rented accommodations. Sarma dismissed financial constraints, revealing that the GVMC owes a staggering ₹200 crore in library cess collections—a crucial lifeline for revitalising the library's infrastructure.

Leaders of the PGSS have vehemently urged the government to expedite the construction of a modern library on its original premises, emphasising the urgent need for decisive

governmental intervention. Despite earmarked funds, delays in initiating construction have sparked renewed frustrations and calls for action. In a show of solidarity, key figures from the PGSS, alongside former ZGS employees, have vowed to escalate their efforts.

Senior PGSS members including K. Trimurthulu, P. Malleswara Rao, Ch.VLN Sastry, P. Mani, N. Prakasa Rao, and Lakshmi pathy, alongside former ZGS stalwarts, underscored their collective resolve to achieve their objectives swiftly.

AU, Turnip Innovations collaborate on Online Patent Certificate Course

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)-IPR Chair Centre for Intellectual Property Rights at Andhra University has announced a collaborative effort with Turnip Innovations, Kolkata, to introduce a specialised Certificate Course on Patents.

This programme, recognised by the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and supported under the National Education Alliance for Technology (NEAT) Scheme of the Ministry of Education (MoE), caters to students, researchers, faculty members, and individuals seeking in-depth knowledge of patent law.

Professor Hanumanthu Purushotham, DPIIT-IPR Chair Professor at Andhra University, highlighted that the course utilises an innovative online format, ensuring accessibility throughout the

year. Participants have the flexibility to enroll independently at their convenience and receive course materials conveniently through daily email deliveries. Upon registration, the programme begins promptly, offering a focused and thorough learning journey spanning just 15 days.

Emphasising the specifics of

receive a certificate, enhancing their professional profile and providing them with valuable insights into patent examination procedures. This programme is specifically designed for individuals aspiring to become patent examiners or agents, offering a simplified understanding of complex patent concepts.

The course is co-designed by Dr. Rahul Kapoor, Founder and Director of Turnip Innovations, and Prof. Hanumanthu Purushotham. Their combined expertise guarantees a streamlined learning experience, emphasising practical applicability in the field of intellectual property. This initiative transcends mere knowledge dissemination. It actively contributes to the fortification of India's intellectual property framework by fostering a new generation of innovators equipped to safeguard their creations through robust patent mechanisms.

Police file another case against Pinnelli

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Police have filed yet another case against former YSRCP MLA and senior leader Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy. This follows a complaint lodged by Palnadu TDP leader Shiva, accusing Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy of using abusive language and attempting to attack him.



However, in a twist to the allegations, it was claimed that during Pinnelli's arrest, it was TDP leader Shiva who allegedly attempted to intimidate and harm Pinnelli. Chaos ensued at the court premises when Pinnelli was brought

before the judge, with TDP supporters allegedly creating disturbances and intimidating YSRCP supporters present in solidarity with Pinnelli. Despite these events, the AP Police registered a case based on Shiva's complaint against Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy.

Tribal students still learning under trees

Despite assurances from political leaders during election seasons, their dream of a proper school building remains elusive

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an example of bureaucratic neglect and unfulfilled political promises, the tribal students of the Government Primary School in Chukkappalle village in Cheedikada mandal of Visakhapatnam continue to attend classes under the trees, enduring harsh elements. Despite multiple assurances from political leaders during election seasons, the dream of a proper school building remains elusive for these young

learners. The previous YSR Congress Party (YCP) government's efforts to construct school buildings were abruptly halted due to incomplete fund allocations. The construction was limited to laying foundations, leaving the students with nothing but makeshift shelters.

In Chukkappalle, 25 students from classes I to V, along with their two dedicated teachers, face daily challenges in makeshift conditions. The villagers, desperate for a proper

learning environment, erected a small structure, but it provides no protection during the rainy season. When the rains come, classes are abandoned, students return home, and teachers remain in the village, unable to conduct lessons.

During the previous government's second phase of initiatives, Rs 33 lakh was sanctioned, and Rs. 8.5 lakh was released for constructing a government school building, a kitchen shed, and toilets. The school committee and headmaster utilised the

grant to lay the foundation for the school building and complete the kitchen shed and toilet up to the slab. However, the lack of further funding brought the construction to a standstill, forcing students to go back under the trees.

School Principal Varaha Murthy detailed the dire situation, explaining that during rains, children seek temporary shelter in a makeshift structure and a shed built for the church in the village. This ongoing struggle for adequate



educational facilities highlights the urgent need for immediate and comprehensive implementation of promised infrastructure projects.

The tribal students and their

families remain hopeful yet cautious of more hollow promises. They demand swift action from authorities to ensure a brighter future for these young minds.

APL 2024 with Telugu commentary

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

FanCode, the official digital partner for the Andhra Premier League, will be streaming all the matches with Telugu commentary to go with the English commentary.

Former IPL stars and Andhra players T Suman and Kalyan Krishna will be the Telugu commentators for the league.

The upcoming season of the Andhra Premier League starts on June 30 and is slated to go on till July 13. Rayalaseema Kings, Coastal Riders, KVR Uttarandhra Lions, Marlin Godavari Titans, Bezawada Tigers and Vizag Warriors are the six teams taking part, and some

of the marquee players include Ricky Bhui, KS Bharat, Shaikh Rasheed, Hari Shankar Reddy amongst others.

All the 19 matches will be played in Visakhapatnam. Defending champions Rayalaseema Kings will face APL 2022 winners Coastal Riders in the opening match on Sunday, in what will be a rematch of last year's finals. All-day games will start at 2:30 PM, while the evening games will start at 6:30 PM.

The league is backed by the Andhra Cricket Association and will also serve as a platform for local players to showcase their talent nationally, with all the games being streamed live on FanCode.

Revanth plays musical chairs with bureaucracy

Revanth effects massive transfers of IAS and IPS officers. This has become a frequent headline in Telangana media since the Congress government took over the state's reins last December. Repeated transfers and postings of senior bureaucrats, from Principal Secretaries to district-level officers like Collectors and Superintendents of Police, have become the highlight of Revanth Reddy's Chief Ministership. The only other activity that came even remotely close in priority for the Chief Minister over his six-month tenure was luring Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) legislators into Congress.

It is common practice to effect some changes in the senior bureaucracy when governments change; it happens in any organisation, not just in the government. However, these frequent changes in the postings of senior bureaucrats bring to light a disturbing pattern. The Revanth government transferred some officers repeatedly over the past six months. Take, for example, the case of Ronald Rose, an IAS officer. Early this month, Revanth chose to post him as the Commissioner of GHMC. Less than three weeks later, the government transferred him again and posted him as the Secretary of Energy.

Another example is that of AV Ranganath, an IPS officer. Revanth initially posted him as the Additional Commissioner of Police-Crimes and SIT, then as the Inspector General of Hyderabad's Multi-Zone-1. This week, he was transferred again and posted as the Commissioner of Enforcement, Vigilance and Disaster Management of the GHMC (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation).

While Ronald Rose and AV Ranganath are only two examples, many more officers were transferred repeatedly over the past six months. And there is no guarantee that this week's mass transfers will be the last in the series for at least some time. It is evident that these rapid and repeated changes disrupt the functioning of crucial departments and raise questions about the government's decision-making process. One can only surmise the reasons.

It could be that Revanth Reddy, who has never had any experience as an administrator, is fumbling at the job. Though he has enough experience as a legislator-as a Member of Parliament (MP), Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), and Member of Legislative Council (MLC)-the current Chief Minister has no prior experience in an executive role in administration, be it the central, state or district level.



KISHORE POREDDY

Additionally, the Chief Minister, surrounded by heavyweight cabinet ministers, could be under constant pressure to honour the ministers' personal preferences. The Chief Minister might have initially thought that it was his prerogative to restructure his administration the way he wanted and made the postings accordingly. Given the role of group politics and

the upper hand of the high command in Congress, the constant shuffling of bureaucrats could be the result of his senior colleagues asserting themselves. Given the state exchequer's financial condition and the Congress' inability to deliver on either the Six Guarantees it promised to come to power or on development, it is even plausible that Revanth sees repeated bureaucratic shuffling as a shrewd tactic to divert the media's and public's attention from his government's failures. If that were the case, the Chief Minister should realise it is not working anymore.

More importantly, senior Congress leaders, including Ministers, have publicly accused many bureaucrats of working contrary to the government's agenda. The Chief Minister, too, had warned senior bureaucrats that they would not suffer lazy officials. The repeated trans-

fers could also be an attempt to warn bureaucrats that they better acknowledge there is a new boss in town. Again, if this is the case, it reflects inexperience and lack of gravitas and will only add to the bureaucrats' distrust, making the problem even more acute. Another notable and vital explanation could be that the new government is adversely affected by the earlier Chief Minister Chandrasekhara Rao's (KCR's) disastrous approach to bureaucracy and is struggling to come to terms with it. It is indisputable that Rao did his best to destroy the impartiality of the state's steel frame. The Kaleswaram disaster, mass-scale illegal phone tapping, and tens of thousands of contempt of court cases pending in the Telangana High Court against senior officers are all examples of bureaucracy turning unprofessional and doing things at his bidding. His methods included manipulating cadre allocations, large-scale appointments of retired officers to critical positions and giving preferred officers long tenures in plum positions. He erased the healthy separation between bureaucracy and politics, even guaranteeing favourite officials a political future if needed. Whatever the reason, the constant shuffling of officials, especially senior officers who are the lynchpins of effective governance, does irreparable damage to law and order, development, and welfare administration. Ineffective, inefficient, and rudderless governance will aggravate the sufferings and frustration of the people who already feel they have been taken for a ride by Congress with its false poll promises. The CM should take note.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

Kakinada now hub for PDS rice illegal transport: Nadendla

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadenla Manohar has regretted Kakinada has become a hub for the illegal export of Public Distribution Rice. The Minister made surprise inspections of the 10 rice mills and godowns at Mummidivaram on Friday. The Minister found PDS rice in six rice mills. Later he held a review meeting with the officials here in the Collectorate. Speaking on the occasion, he said that inspections had been carried out at 251 stock points and found anomalies at 180 stock points. Kakinada had become a green channel for the export of PDS rice through seaports during the YSRCP regime. The rice mafia, since there was no one to question them, exported PDS rice unabated. Some officials connived with the YSRCP leaders in the illegal export of PDS rice through the Kakinada port, he slammed.



"We are taking all stringent steps to check the illegal export of PDS rice. An integrated rice mafia worked during the YSRCP regime. Henceforth, the officials can not work for a family, who was involved in the PDS rice trade. Raids are being conducted extensively on the rice mills and godowns to ascertain the roots for the illegal PDS rice transport," the Civil Supplies Minister observed. "The Jagannad Reddy headed previous government had borrowed Rs 33,000 crore debts through the civil supplies department and it is not an ordinary issue. The government did not extend any benefits to the farming community with the borrowed money," Nadenla Manohar lashed out. He lamented that the government had to pay Rs 1,600 to the farmers for their 1.5 lakh metric tonnes of paddy which was purchased by the government. MLAs Vanamadi Kondababu, Pantam Nanaji, Varapula Satyaprabha, Civil Supplies MD Veerapandian and district Collector Shan Mohan Sagili were among those who attended the meeting.

Strengthen river and canal bunds: Collector to officials

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi directed the officials concerned to take steps to strengthen the embankments of rivers and canals in the district. The Collector held a review meeting with the officials here on Friday and reviewed the measures to be taken to tackle the heavy rains and floods during the monsoon season. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Vetri Selvi said that given the possibility of storms and floods during the current monsoon season, the banks of rivers and canals may breach and residential areas may be flooded. The weak embankments and bunds should be strengthened immediately, she told the officials and asked them to identify the areas prone to flooding and to plan the measures to be taken for the protection of the people in those areas and to make an advance plan on the



issue of misleading the people. As soon as the first danger warnings are issued at Bhadrachalam and Dhavaleswaram for the Godavari River, the staff should be assigned duties and prepared to move people especially pregnant women, infants and children to safe areas, establish rehabilitation centres and other duties, she instructed them. The officials should be ready for the establishment of rehabilitation centres, food, accom-

modation facilities, drinking water, sanitation, medical centres and other arrangements, she told the officials, stating that precautions should be taken to avoid any loss of life or property during natural calamities. The areas affected by cyclones and floods, especially the remote rural areas in the tribal mandals like Kukunoor, Velerupadu and Polavaram mandals face difficulties in transportation during floods, so essential goods should be sent in advance.

As there is a possibility of overflowing canals and streams due to floods and storms, warning boards should be erected at the places where flood water is rising at the causeway and staff should be appointed there to prevent people from entering. ITDA Project Officer M Surya Teja, DRO D Pushamani, Housing PD Ravi Kumar, RWS SE Satyanarayana and RDOs were among those who attended the meeting. Earlier, ITDA PD M Surya Teja explained to the Collector about the Polavaram project works, and R&R Package for evacuees through a PowerPoint presentation. The water storage capacity, spillway, spill channel, upper cofferdam, lower cofferdam, diaphragm wall construction works, diaphragm wall damaged areas and other details were explained by the Irrigation Superintending Engineer through PowerPoint presentation to the Collector.



SP lauds police officials for solving rape & murder case

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal appreciated the police personnel who cracked the sensational rape and murder of a woman which took place on June 21. A 21-year-old woman found raped and murdered in Chirala police stations limits in the district on June 21. The district police took the case as a prestigious issue and formed special teams to arrest the culprits. As many as 10 special teams were formed under the supervision of Additional SP and Chirala DSP. The special teams led by 10 Circle Inspectors arrested the perpetrators within 36 hours.

SP Vakul Jindal appreciated 21 police personnel at a programme held in the camp office on Friday. SP Vakul Jindal presented appreciation letters to DSPs B Prasad, CH Muralikrishna, CI V Mallikarjuna Rao, Circle Inspectors G Somasekhara, N Sathyanarayana, Santamagalur, K Narasimha Rao, Hazrat Babu, Y Srihari, ASI P Subba Rao, HC U Lakshmi Narayana, SB HCs A Siva Prasad Rao, M Srinivasa Rao, CH Nagaraju, PCs P Krishna, M Srinivasa, PC D Kripa Rao, PC N Venkateswarlu, PC B Vijay Kumar, K Subba Rao, HGS SK. Abdul Rauf and K. Parameshwara Rao.

Bhimavaram Municipality will be upgraded as a corporation: MLA

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

MLA Pulaparthi Ramanjaneyulu Anjibabu has promised to upgrade the Bhimavaram Municipality as a 'Municipal Corporation'. The MLA held a review meeting with the officials here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, he promised to resolve the court cases regarding Ramalam and China Amiram and upgrade the municipality as a municipal corporation at the earliest. The MLA alleged that three CRPs misappropriated Rs 30 lakh of municipality funds, and questioned the officials concerned why action was not taken against the officials. He instructed the officials to register a case against the three officials and take steps to recover the money from them. He also directed the officials to keep the town clean and ensure that garbage is not dumped on the roads. He ordered the officials to



issue notices to the vacant land owners as garbage is being dumped on the sites. He found fault with the officials for allocating house sites at the Summer Storage Tank. Municipal Commissioner M Syamala and other officials were present.

Won't allow shifting of KP container terminal: Somireddy

PNS ■ NELLORE

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leader and MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy asserted that they would not allow the shifting of the Krishnapatnam Container Port terminal. An all-party delegation led by Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy visited the Krishnapatnam port on Friday. They submitted a representation to the CEO of the port urging to drop the proposal of



shifting the container terminal. Talking to the media here on Friday, he said if the Container Port Terminal was shifted from

Krishnapatnam over 10,000 people would lose their livelihood. The employees' unions of Krishnapatnam port terminal are demanding the withdrawal of the proposal to shift the container terminal, he added. "The NDA MPs of the state will meet the Union Minister and appeal not to shift the Container Port. If needed we appeal to Gautam Adani not to shift the Container Port from Nellore district," he made it clear.

17 red sanders logs seized; one arrested

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The forest officials seized 17 red sanders logs worth over Rs 10 lakh at Rajiv Nagar near Srikalahasti. Forest officer Satish told the media here on Friday that a team conducted combing. They found a vehicle moving suspiciously at Navaratnala temple near Rajiv Nagar. The forest officials stopped the vehicle and checked the logs. They found 17 red sanders logs being transport-



ed in the vehicle illegally. The police seized the red sanders logs and the vehicle worth Rs 10 lakh. The police arrested one smuggler and he was produced before the court which sent him to judicial remand.

Collector conducts surprise inspection of Eluru GGH

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi conducted surprise inspections at the Government General Hospital here on Friday. District Collector Vetri Selvi made a surprise visit to the GGH and inspected various medical departments. On this occasion, the Collector asked the doctors about the infrastructure of the hospital. She also inquired about the number of outpatients visiting the hospital daily. The Collector also saw the casualty ward and the procedure there. She inquired about the number of doctors working in the hospital and the medical departments related to various diseases. The ward for pregnant women and the operation theatre were inspected. The doc-



tors in the emergency medical ward explained to her the functioning of the medical equipment. The Collector warned that the medical staff should perform their duties properly and that she would frequently conduct surprise inspections of the government hospitals and take action against the concerned staff, if any defects were found

in the medical services or if the patients complained. She also visited the Arogyamitra and Arogyasri centres and knew the services being provided to the patients there. She also inquired about the medical students studying at the medical college. DCHS Pal Satish and other doctors were among those who accompanied her.

Naga Rani assumes charge as WG Collector



C Naga Rani here on Friday took charge as Collector of West Godavari district. Joint Collector CV Praveen Adiya and DRO J Uday Bhaskar Rao welcomed her when arrived at the Collector's office. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Naga Rani said that she would strive for the development of the district. She said that since she worked in

various capacities previously, she had good knowledge and understanding of all departments and would work as per the priorities of the government. JC Praveen Adiya, DSO Uday Bhaskar Rao, administrative office P Papa Rao, RDOs K Srinivasulu Raju, M Achyut Ambarish and other officials met the Collector and conveyed their wishes by presenting a flower bouquet.

Nothing to worry about those joining thieves, says KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Addressing the BRS workers of Jagityal and Kortula former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao declared that the BRS is strong despite defections to the Congress. He said that there is nothing to worry about those leaving the party and joining thieves. He reassured workers that the party and not individual leaders shape political success. He highlighted the BRS's role in nurturing leaders and expressed confidence in meeting the hopes of the Telangana people. KCR encouraged workers to continue working diligently for the state's progress. He acknowledged the recent defections but stressed that the party would produce even stronger leaders. "The BRS will create leaders and remain strong even if some leave the party," he said. KCR said that those who left the party should not be a cause for concern and stated that the



party has a history of creating leaders and will continue to do so, emphasising that the strength of the party lies in its collective efforts and not in individual leaders. He reiterated the importance of achieving the remaining milestones for Telangana's development, noting that only the BRS understands the hopes of the people. He called for a united effort to fulfil unachieved goals, emphasising that the party's ultimate aim is the welfare and development of Telangana. KCR expressed his appreciation for Korutla MLA Dr K. Sanjay Kumar who has been serving people both as a doc-

tor and as an MLA. "People were duped by false propaganda and the BRS faced defeat. But we should work whether we are ruling or in the opposition. The Jagityal MLA joined thieves. He was also groomed by the party. We will create better leaders than him," KCR said. The BRS has announced a three-day break from meetings from Saturday to Monday to allow KCR to rest. This decision comes after continuous sessions over the past two weeks where KCR met with 50,000 BRS workers, leaders and citizens. The meetings, filled with heartfelt interactions and photo sessions have been highly appreciated by the people. The next schedule for the meetings will be announced after the break. In the last 15 days, KCR has met approximately 50,000 people at his Erravelli residence, spending hours interacting with them warmly and taking photos.

INDIA CORNER

Elderly man injured as Railway safety wall collapses near Thane station

A portion of a Railway safety wall collapsed near a platform at Thane station on Friday morning amid rains, injuring a 62-year-old man, civic officials said. The 60x20 feet wall caved in near Platform No. 2 at the busy train station on the Central Railway route at around 11.45 am, said Yasin Tadvil, chief of the Disaster Management Cell of the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC). The wall fell on a pedestrian who was passing by on an adjacent road, injuring him, he said. The man, Narendra Koli (62), was rushed to the Kalwa Civic Hospital where he is undergoing treatment, said Tadvil. Thane Fire Brigade and Regional Disaster Management Cell (RDMC) personnel later cleared the debris, he said.



UP: Three children drown while bathing in Gomti river

Three children drowned in the Gomti river here while bathing, police said on Friday. The incident happened in the Barua area on Thursday when Farhan (12), Abid (10), Hasnain (13) and some other friends went to the river, they said. The three boys got trapped in the waves while bathing. Seeing this, their friends started calling for help and passersby rushed to the spot, they said. District and police officials also reached the spot after getting information. Local divers searched for the boys till 11 pm but failed to trace them, Inspector Sriram Pandey said. A team of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) from Ayodhya was on Friday morning deployed for the rescue operation and the bodies were fished out from the river after an hour-long effort, he said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, he added.



Ex-Jharkhand CM Soren released after HC grants bail in money laundering case

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren was released from Birsa Munda Jail here on Friday after the high court granted bail to him in a money laundering case linked to a land scam, an official said. As Soren stepped out of the jail, a large number of JMM supporters cheered and raised slogans in favour of him. Soren's wife Kalpana Soren, a JMM legislator, thanked the judiciary and people for their support. "Heman Soren was released from the jail after completion of legal formalities," the official said. Soren, on his release from the jail, was seen waving at people and seeking blessings from his father and JMM supreme Shibu Soren. A single bench of Justice Rongon Mukhopadhyay granted bail to the former chief minister of Jharkhand earlier in the day. "...The petitioner is directed to be released on bail on furnishing bail bond of Rs 50,000 with two sureties of the like amount each," said the order passed by Justice Mukhopadhyay.



COMMUNITY LOBBING FOR CM & DCM POSTS

Veershaiva-Lingayat seer pitches for positions now

PNS ■ CHIKKODI (KARNATAKA)

A prominent Veerashaiva-Lingayat seer on Friday said Ministers from his community should be considered for the Chief Minister's post in case there is a leadership change, a day after a Vokkaliga one publicly urged Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah to give up his position in favour of his deputy D K Shivakumar. Also pitching for Veershaiva-Lingayat ministers to be considered in the event of creation of additional deputy chief minister post, Srisaala Jagadguru Channa Siddharma Panditaradhya Swamiji claimed that his community's votes were "decisive" for Congress to come to power in the state. "Karnataka state political developments and news that is emerging are in discussion. In case there is a change in the chief minister post and if additional deputy CM posts are cre-



ated -- in such a situation, I urge the party (Congress) and government to give priority to ministers from the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community," the seer said. Speaking to reporters here, he said: "The reason is, during the government formation, Veerashaiva-Lingayat votes were decisive. So Veerashaiva-Lingayat ministers should be given priority. There are ministers like --

Eshwar Khandre, M B Patil, S S Mallikarjun -- such people should be considered and their experience should be utilised. I urge that they should be given an opportunity." Reacting to this in New Delhi, CM Siddaramaiah said there is no "relationship between swamiji and politics." "There is no need to give much importance to swamiji's statement. What is the relationship between swamiji and a political party? Who has to

decide about the Chief Minister? It has to be done by legislators in a democracy and the high command," he said. Vishwa Vokkaliga Mahasamastana Math seer Kumara Chandrashekarathana Swamiji on Thursday had raised the pitch for Shivakumar at the Kempegowda Jayanti event here to commemorate the birth anniversary of Bengaluru's founder, in the presence of both Siddaramaiah and the deputy chief minister on the days. Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress President, is a Vokkaliga -- a dominant community in the southern parts of the state. Currently, he is the only deputy chief minister. The comments of the seers come amid demand by a few ministers, believed to be close to Siddaramaiah, to have three more deputy chief ministers -- from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Bengal CM flayed over comment on women feeling unsafe

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid an impasse over the oath-taking of two newly elected TMC MLAs, the office of West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose on Friday criticised Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her remarks suggesting women allegedly felt unsafe going to Raj Bhavan, stating it is expected of public representatives not to create "erroneous and slanderous impressions." Baranagar MLA Sayantika Bandyopadhyay and Bhagabangola legislator Rayat Hossain Sarkar have refused to take oath at Raj Bhavan as requested by Bose, instead staging a dharna in the assembly complex since Thursday, insisting that the swearing in take place in the Vidhan Sabha. "It is expected of public representatives to uphold Constitution and refrain from creating erroneous and slanderous impressions that may cast aspersions on the Governor," the Raj Bhavan said on X.

Bhujbal fomenting communal tension, alleges Jarange

PNS ■ JALNA

Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange on Friday accused Maharashtra minister and OBC leader Chhagan Bhujbal of fomenting communal tension, and urged Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to rein him in. He was speaking to media persons at Mahakala village in Jalna district in the wake of sloganeering and stone-pelting in his native Matori village in neighbouring Beed district. The incident took place on Thursday night when some people from nearby villages were passing through Matori to take part in a rally of OBC quota agitators Laxman Hake and Navnath Waghmare. Jarange claimed that Bhujbal had orchestrated the attack to wrongly blame the Maratha youths. "Bhujbal himself asked his men to hurl stones on their (OBC activists') vehicles and then blamed the Maratha youths. The chief minister and the home minister should rein him in for fomenting



communal discord," he said. Jarange also claimed that the police were harassing the Maratha youths and also accusing them of being involved in the stone-pelting incident. "The police are harassing the Maratha youths and blaming them for the stone-pelting. This injustice must stop," he said. He warned the government that the Maratha community would not remain quiet if such "targeted harassment" continued. Jarange claimed that on earlier occasions as well, Bhujbal had tried to disrupt peace in his Antarwali Sarati village, but his efforts were foiled.

"Bhujbal incited people and created a communal rift, but we foiled his plan," he asserted. OBC activists Hake and Waghmare's fast was a government-sponsored protest, Jarange said, adding that Bhujbal himself accepted that both were their activists. Jarange, who has brought the Maratha quota issue to the centre stage in the state, has been demanding the implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as 'sage soyare' (blood relatives) of Maratha community members. Kunbi, an agrarian group, falls under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, and Jarange has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits. However, OBC activists Hake and Waghmare have opposed Jarange's demand for the issuance of Kunbi certificates to the Maratha community, asserting that the state government must not take any decision that affects OBCs.

'J-K police like sword, war against terror cannot be won without it'

PNS ■ KATHUA/JAMMU

Describing the Jammu and Kashmir Police as a sword in the fight against terror, its chief R R Swain on Friday said no war against a terror ecosystem can be won without the police. Pointing to a series of recent terror attacks in the Union Territory, the DGP said terrorists can neither defeat the force nor diminish its resolve. He made the remarks at an event to regularise nine special police officers to the rank of constables, recognizing their contributions in eliminating two terrorists in the Hiranagar border belt of Kathua district. "The Jammu and Kashmir Police is like a sword against



the terror ecosystem. If this sword, which belongs to the people, is not properly maintained, victory in this war against terrorism cannot be achieved," Swain said. He said the Union government has also realized the importance of the police and is working to support them

accordingly. Two terrorists and a CRPF jawan were killed while a civilian was injured in an encounter between security forces and militants in Saida Sukhal village in Kathua district's Hiranagar area near the International Border on June 12. The DGP said while terrorists may inflict some harm, they cannot defeat the police forces and their resolve. "Rest assured, we will defeat them. It is our resolve," Swain said. He also said the police are well-equipped with advanced weaponry, including arms from Israel and Germany. "We have no weaknesses as far as arms are concerned," the DGP said.

One killed, six hurt after portion of roof collapses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A cab driver died and six people were injured after a portion of a canopy at Delhi airport's Terminal-1 collapsed on cars amid heavy rain early Friday, leading to suspension of flight departures, according to officials. Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu visited Terminal-1 (T1) to take stock of the situation. He said he was monitoring the situation and the injured had been hospitalised.



Delhi Fire Services (DFS) officials said three fire tenders were rushed to Terminal-1 (T1) of the airport after a call about the incident was received around 5:30 am.

Besides the roof sheet, the support beams collapsed, damaging the cars parked in the pick-up and drop area of the terminal. A search operation was conducted to make sure no one was trapped inside the damaged vehicles, they said. The injured have been admitted to Medanta Hospital near the airport. One of them was rescued from a car on which an iron beam had fallen. He was later identified as Ramesh Kumar, they added. Work was underway to clear the debris.

AAP demands Rs 1 crore compensation for Delhi airport incident victim's kin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Friday demanded compensation of Rs 1 crore for the kin of the person killed in the airport roof collapse incident. Addressing a press conference, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Jasmine Shah said the BJP-led central government should come in forefront and

explain the reasons for the incident. "A very sad incident happened today," he said. Shah demanded a high-level investigation into the matter. "We demand that the kin of the deceased be awarded compensation of Rs 1 crore for the kin of the deceased and Rs 50 lakh for those who were injured in the incident," he said.

Govt's quest to address security concerns should not be at cost of 'trampling' rights: Mehbooba

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The Centre's quest to address security concerns in Jammu and Kashmir should not come at the cost of "trampling constitutional rights and eroding" the very rule of law, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said on Friday. Her remarks came after Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police RR

Swain on Sunday said that locals, who are found supporting foreign terrorists will be dealt with under the Enemy Agents Ordinance, which is much harsher than the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. "Jammu Kashmir police's recent decision of invoking the draconian Enemy Ordinance Act from the Maharaja's era against its own citizens on mere

suspicion of abetting & aiding militants isn't only deeply concerning but a major breach of justice," the former chief minister of the erstwhile state of J-K, said in a post on X. She said these archaic laws "violate" human rights and the punishments accompanying it are "grossly incompatible with principles and values of justice enshrined in the Constitution".

'Farmers may have been stopped, but their reps are in Parliament'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers may have been stopped from entering Delhi during the 2020-21 protests, but their chosen representatives cannot be stopped from entering Parliament and their issues will be raised strongly in the 18th Lok Sabha, according to CPI-M MP Amra Ram. The farmer leader, who has been with the All India Kisan Sabha and was also involved with the 2020-21 farmers' protests, said people have taught a lesson to the ruling BJP in the recent elections. In an interview with PTI, Amra Ram, who won from



Sikar in Rajasthan as a candidate backed by the INDIA bloc, said the agrarian crisis loomed over the country and the farmers' protests, as well as issues like Agniveer scheme, led to the reduction of BJP's

numbers in Lok Sabha. Amra Ram, who chose a tractor to reach Parliament on his first day but was not allowed to take it inside, said he did so to send out a message that the government may have stopped farmers from entering the national capital, but they have elected and sent him to Parliament. Asked about the Lok Sabha elections, Amra Ram said, "It is the result of the struggles that have been going on for the last 10 years against the BJP's poor governance, whether farmers, youths or labourers." "BJP was at 303 in 2019, and they are at 240 today.

MeT issues 'orange warning' for seven districts in Himachal for next two days

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Heavy rains lashed Shimla and surrounding areas on Friday and the MeT department issued an 'orange warning' indicating "very heavy rain", thunderstorms and lightning at isolated places in seven of the 12 districts in the state over the weekend. The MeT also issued a 'yellow warning' of heavy rain, thunderstorms and lightning at isolated places on July 1 and 2 and predicted a wet spell in the state till July 4. Delayed by five days, the southwest monsoon had hit several parts of Himachal Pradesh on Thursday. It issued an orange warning for the Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi, Shimla, Sirmour and Solan districts on Saturday and Sunday. Earlier on Friday, debris from drains littered the roads at several places in Shimla and three vehicles parked near a drain were buried in the muck on the Malyana Surala road. No casualty was reported, officials said. In another incident, four roads -- two in Kangra and one each in Kinnaur and Kullu districts -- have been blocked for vehicular traffic following

rains as per the state emergency operation centre. State capital Shimla and surrounding areas received heavy rains and Jubbarhatti in the suburbs received 136 mm of rain on Thursday evening while Shimla received 84 mm of rain. Gohar received 42 mm of rain, Mashobra 38 mm, Slapper 34.6 mm, Kufri and Shilaroo 24.2 mm, Sarahan and Berthim 22 mm each, Ghagas 18.8 mm, Karsog 18.2 mm, Kahu 16 mm and Pandoh 12 mm as per the data released by the MeT. The MeT has cautioned of damage to plantation, horticulture and standing crops, partial damage to vulnerable structures, minor damage to kutch houses and huts due to strong winds and rain, disruption in traffic and water logging in low-lying areas. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said that reports of damage have also poured in from Nerva near Chopal in Shimla district. "I request the people of the state to stay away from Rivers and drains as the level of water rises following cloud bursts which could prove fatal and people should take precautions.



Centre asks depts to review employees' working

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Irrked over non-adherence to its directives, the Centre has asked all ministries to timely review the working of the employees so that the non-performers are prematurely retired from service. In an order, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) asked ministries concerned to direct the public sector undertakings (PSUs), banks, autonomous institutions and statutory bodies under their administrative control to undertake the exercise of periodic review of employ-

ees. It said instructions have been issued from time to time for undertaking periodic review of the government servants' performance with a view to ascertaining whether they "should be retained in service or retired from service prematurely, in public interest". The administrative ministries and departments have repeatedly been requested to adhere to guidelines issued in this regard and furnish a report to this effect to the DoPT, said the order issued to the secretaries of all central government departments.



However, it has come to notice that various ministries and departments are not adhering to the said guidelines resulting in delay in identifying the government employees due for review under relevant provisions of Fundamental Rules (FR)-56 (J)/(I) and Rule 48 of Central Civil Services or CCS (Pension) Rules (now, revised as Rule 42 of CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021), it said. These rules lay down the policy of periodic review and

premature retirement of government servants and to ensure efficiency, economy and speed in the disposal of the government functions. "In view of the above, the ministries/departments are requested to take immediate action to identify the employees due for review under relevant provisions of Fundamental/Pension Rules and ensure that their cases are expeditiously submitted for consideration before the duly constituted review committee as per extant instructions," read the order dated June 27. Further, all the ministries,

departments and organisations have been asked "to strictly adhere" to the timeline mentioned in DoPT's order issued in this regard in 2020 "for undertaking the exercise of review of performance of the government servants and for the employees of PSUs/banks/autonomous institutions/statutory organisations under their administrative control to ensure that the employees with doubtful integrity or found to be ineffective are not allowed to continue in government", according to the order.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Presidential address

President's address, while highlighting various Govt achievements, fell short of raising some serious concerns

As the inaugural session of the 18th Lok Sabha progresses, it is evident that this Lok Sabha would be way livelier and more eventful than the previous one. Thanks to a more evenly distributed treasury and opposition benches. This was evident from the day one and in the address by President Droupadi Murmu to both houses of Parliament. Her address drew significant attention and controversy. In the customary joint address, President Murmu made a mention of the various achievements of the government, including its pervasive welfare schemes and the resilience of the Indian economy. The address, while highlighting various achievements of the Government was silent on various issues of national importance. For this the Opposition was vocal in criticising its content and omissions, especially the exclusion of the ongoing violence in Manipur. The Opposition response was not ill founded but rooted in deeper political and social tensions prevailing in the State. The address, intended to set the tone for the parliamentary session, included references to several critical issues and achievements. Notably, it highlighted irregularities in examinations and touched upon the historical context of the Emergency imposed in 1975. The reference to the Emergency was frowned upon by the Congress which dubbed it as an effort to deflect attention from the current political scenario. However, the glaring omission of the escalating violence in Manipur stood out starkly. President Murmu addressed the troubling trend of examination paper leaks, acknowledging the impact on the credibility of academic processes. She emphasised the government's commitment to transparency and reform in examination systems, underscoring the need for stringent measures to ensure fairness and integrity. The mention of the Emergency, referred to as the 'biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on the Constitution,' was a strategic move that dug up the historical blunder. This reference, while aimed at highlighting the Government's commitment to democracy, struck a nerve with the Congress, reminding them of a period they would prefer to distance themselves from. The most contentious aspect of President Murmu's speech was the omission of any direct mention of the violence in Manipur. The President's speech did acknowledge the government's broader efforts in the Northeast, citing increased allocations for development and initiatives under the Act East Policy, but this was seen as insufficient by many. The exclusion of the Manipur violence from the President's speech was perceived by the Opposition as an attempt to downplay the crisis and avoid accountability. The speech did not adequately address the concerns of the day and call for action from the Opposition regarding various pressing issues. Engaging with these concerns and outlining a collaborative approach to resolve the crisis could have fostered a more constructive political dialogue and demonstrated Govt's willingness to work across party lines.



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PICTALK



Sadhus shout slogans as the first batch of pilgrims leaves for the Amarnath Yatra, in Jammu

Suu Kyi spends another birthday in jail

Despite the Junta's desperate measures, including heightened repression and forced conscription, the resistance continues to gain ground



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

On June 19, 2024, Aung San Suu Kyi spent yet another birthday in prison, as she completed 79 and stepped into her 80th year. No one knows where she is. Even her son, Kim Aris, has not heard from her since receiving a thank-you note from her in January this year for a package he had sent her. Yet not a squeak was heard from leaders of Western democracies who were, not so long ago, condemning her incarceration and Myanmar's ruling junta which had usurped power through a coup on February 1, 2021, and unleashed savage repression as protests surged throughout the country. Clearly, Myanmar is no longer visible on the radar of the democratic world's concerns. There are doubtless possible explanations. Member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are engrossed with the war in Ukraine and the possibility of the latter turning into a wider European War, if not World War III. Liberal elements in several European countries are alarmed by the gains made by right-wing forces in the recent elections to the European Parliament. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom and President Emmanuel Macron of France are facing elections. Growing popular anger over Israel's continuing offensive in Gaza, which has caused around 40,000 deaths, a large part of whom are women and children, is worrying governments that continue to support the Netanyahu regime. President Joe Biden's worries range from Israel's war, the conflict in Ukraine, immigration, and fending off the challenge posed by Donald Trump in the November presidential elections in the US. Whatever the reasons, the fact is that Myanmar is no longer the global concern it was. Such things have happened before. Public and governmental spans of attention are proverbially ephemeral. It is this transience that mostly sustains autocracies. There is a perceptible process. The initial response to a coup is condemnation by democracies and



often, the imposition of sanctions. Not all countries, however, react this way. Given the dynamics of global power play, some countries, mainly autocracies themselves, do not join the chorus of outrage. Rather, they rally behind the usurper. Mostly thanks to them, the sanctions do not work. The junta that had staged the coup carries on. New developments on the global scene consume the attention of countries condemning the coup. The junta is replaced by another entity as the principal target of outrage. Slowly, opposition towards it declines and there is a gradual trudge towards normalization of ties, particularly if the uniformed dictators relax their tyranny a little while retaining their grip on power. Is this what is going to happen in Myanmar? One does not know. It will, however, be of no credit to the world's democracies if this does not happen and the people of Myanmar are able to overthrow the junta forcibly, which, by the look of things, is by no means a remote possibility. The Sit-Tat (which, and not Tatmadaw, is the real name of the junta's army), has been suffering reverse after reverse ever since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth the Alliance) launched its current offensive, codenamed



THE JUNTA'S GROWING DESPERATION IS REFLECTED IN THE STERN MEASURES IT HAS BEEN TAKING AGAINST THOSE IT REGARDS AS SURRENDERING OR DESERTING, THE KILLING OF ALL SUSPECTED OPPONENTS AND HEIGHTENED EFFORTS AT CONSCRIPTION GIVEN THE REFUSAL OF PEOPLE TO SERVE IN ITS FORCES

Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. Comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) operating in the Kokang Special Region of Northern Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in Shan State, and the Arakan Army, based in the Rakhine State in the country's western part, it has been acting in close cooperation with the National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Democratic Force (PDF), and other ethnic armies like the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Karen Liberation Army (KNA), the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), and one of the country's most powerful armed ethnic organisations, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). According to an analysis in the website *The Irrawaddy*, dated June 22, 2024, the junta has lost, since its coup on February, 2024, to the resistance forces one Military Regional Command, three Military Operational Commands, seven headquarters of the Border Guard Police Battalions, and 63 of the 545 military battalions besides more than 2,500 frontline bases including tactical and frontline bases of military divisions.

Among the latest gains by the resistance forces, Mohinga Matters lists the Chin Brotherhood Force's capture of the junta's battalion station 304 in Chin State's Matupi township on June 17, 2024, and the KNLA's capture of Sukali military station, south of Myawaddy city, on June 18. The Junta's growing desperation is reflected in the stern measures it has been taking against those it regards as surrendering or deserting, the killing of all suspected opponents and heightened efforts at conscription given the refusal of people to serve in its forces. Indeed, those sentenced to death include Brigadier-General Zao Myo Win for surrendering to the MNDA. The junta has also killed a highly respected Buddhist monk, Bhaddanta Manindabhivamsa, who has been strongly critical of it by shooting at his car on June 19, Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday. Given its faltering conscription scheme, the junta has reportedly been planning to conscript women in some parts. Needless to say, all this only serves to swell the tide of anger against it sweeping the country. Time is running out for Myanmar's uniformed tyrants. (The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PLIGHT OF GIG WORKERS

Madam — The alarming unemployment rate and the availability of cheap labor in India enable multinational companies to dictate terms and exploit poor gig workers with low wages. Over the years, there has been significant outcry in the U.S. and Europe about companies like Amazon, which have been fined and investigated for poor working conditions for non-permanent employees. These commercially driven giants often prioritize profit over worker welfare. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken cognizance of the dire working conditions in Amazon warehouses, where workers are forced to endure inhumane conditions without breaks, often in extreme heat. Despite regulations like The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, which aims to ensure the safety, health, and social security of contract laborers, the situation remains dire. To meet unrealistic and dangerous targets, unemployed youths are compelled to work under miserable and unhealthy conditions. Consumer indifference further exacerbates the situation, allowing such exploitation to continue unchecked. Regulatory agencies and consumer awareness can make a significant difference. It's crucial to recognize that the gig economy relies on underpaid employees, whose rights and well-being should be central to national development. **Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital**

PRESERVING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Madam — This refers to the article, "The Dark Days of India's Emergency" (27-6-24). When India achieved independence, many doubted its ability to sustain a democratic republic for long. However, the Indian people have consistently demonstrated their wisdom, commitment to democracy, and their ability to resurrect it whenever it has been threatened. Indira Gandhi's declaration of the Emergency, despite being an act that stifled democracy, required considerable boldness. The hardships endured during that peri-

Integrity of India's education system



Scams and the Integrity of India's Education System The National Testing Agency (NTA) is under immense pressure following irregularities in this year's NEET-UG (medical), NET (teaching), and JEE (engineering) exams. The plight of the affected candidates, who prepared for months and traveled long distances to their exam centers, is heartbreaking. They now face the

daunting task of preparing for re-examinations, which could have a detrimental effect on their morale and undermine their faith in the system. These candidates come from diverse backgrounds, including corporate employees, housewives, and educators, making it difficult to balance their jobs and studies, let alone prepare for re-exams. There are significant flaws in the examination system, necessitating stringent legal actions and severe punishments for those responsible for these scams. Re-examinations only delay the admission process without addressing the root causes of the problem. Political parties should focus on addressing the underlying issues rather than exploiting the situation for political gain. They need to cooperate and propose constructive solutions to tackle this urgent matter. The states must collaborate with the central govt to restore the integrity of the education system. **Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur**

THE SPEAKER'S ELECTION

Madam — The election of Om Birla as Speaker was a foregone conclusion, serving merely as a formality to placate opposition parties. The tradition of allotting the Speaker's post to the ruling party and the Deputy Speaker's post to the opposition has been abandoned. Although AICC President asserted the INDIA bloc would not withdraw its candidate, Jairam Ramesh admitted they did not seek a division. Consequently, the opposition has forfeited its right to demand the Deputy Speakership. The trust deficit between the treasury benches and the opposition necessitated the election. Ideally, an agreement could have been reached where the opposition conceded the Speaker's post to the ruling party in exchange for the Deputy Speakership. This trust, if honoured, would have exposed any ruling party's deception. **KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Directive on doctor's fees sparks controversy in Bihar

The debate over how much doctors should charge for consultations has heated up in Bihar after Pappu Yadav capped fees in his constituency

Pappu Yadav, an independent Member of Parliament from Purnia in Bihar, has sparked a heated debate by instructing doctors in his constituency to cap their consultation fees at 500 rupees. This directive has not only caused an uproar in medical and political circles but has also highlighted a long-ignored issue: the regulation of doctors' fees for patient consultations. Amid the political backlash and ongoing arguments, several critical questions arise: Who sets the consultation fees for doctors? Is there any mechanism to control the exorbitant fees that doctors often charge? What roles do the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Medical Council of India (MCI) play in regulating these fees? Unfortunately, the answers appear bleak for patients. The IMA has distanced itself from the responsibility of setting doctor's fees, citing the "Clinical Establishments Act" as a reason for their inaction. In reality, doctors charge consultation fees ranging from 500 to 2,000 rupees per visit, with no standardization or over-



sight. Adding to the problem is the unethical practice of government doctors running private clinics, sometimes even during official hospital hours. In Bihar, it is common knowledge that government doctors often skip their hospital duties to treat patients privately. Many of these patients had initially visited them at government hospitals. Despite this rampant issue, the IMA has not implemented any regulations to curb this behavior, instead deferring the matter to state governments, stating they will follow any rules set by the states regarding private practice. In Bihar, however, such rules are frequently disregarded. Historically, whenever a state government has attempted to ban private practice for government doctors, the medical community has reacted with strong opposition, organizing protests and strikes, which have left many patients without care. This ongoing struggle highlights the urgent need for regulatory reform in the medical sector to ensure fair and ethical treatment for all patients. The controversy ignited by Pappu Yadav's directive to cap consultation fees at 500 rupees underscores the urgent need for regulatory reform in India's medical sector. The outcry from both political and medical circles highlights the long-standing issue of unchecked and exorbitant consultation fees, which often range from 500 to 2,000

rupees, with no standardization or oversight. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Medical Council of India (MCI) have largely abdicated responsibility, citing the "Clinical Establishments Act" as a reason for their inaction. Meanwhile, unethical practices persist, such as government doctors running private clinics during official hours, exacerbating the problem. In Bihar, the issue is particularly severe, with government doctors often neglecting their duties in public hospitals to treat patients privately. Attempts by state governments to regulate this practice have faced fierce opposition from the medical community, leading to protests and strikes that disrupt patient care. This situation reveals a critical need for comprehensive reforms to ensure fair and ethical medical practices. By addressing these challenges, regulatory bodies can create a more equitable healthcare system that prioritizes patient welfare over profit, ultimately fostering a more just and efficient medical landscape. (The author is a columnist, views are personal)



GYAN BHADRA





FIRST COLUMN DISCOVERING WISDOM THROUGH A ZEN TALE

The truth is that the world around us is often a reflection of our inner world



RAVI VALLURI

There was a man who stumbled upon a Zen story which in several ways typified his state of mind, thought process, attitudes and his reactions and responses to various adverse situations in life.

Zen Story

Aeon's ago two men visit a Zen Master. The first man says, "I am thinking of moving into this town. What is it like to inhabit this place?"

The Zen Master pondered for a while and then questioned the man, "What was your old town like?"

The first man responds, "It was dreadful living in the town. Everyone was hateful. I loathed staying in the town. This therefore is the reason why I am looking for a fresh place to dwell."

The Zen Master replied instantly, "This town is very much the same. I do not think you should move here. You will discover the place to be resentful and you would end up hating and disliking everyone." This left the first man flummoxed and speechless.

The first man left in a disarray and the second one entered the room of the bearded Zen Master. The room was dimly lit but the virtuous one was incandescent with radiance, sitting silently.

The second man posed the same question, "Master I am thinking of moving to this town. What is it like?" The Zen Master was once again thoughtful and asked the second man, "What was your old town like?"

This man blessed with a cheery disposition exclaimed, "Oh, Master! It was wonderful. Everyone was brimming with confidence and zest; people were friendly and I was jollity personified. Right now, I am interested in a change of place though I am comfortable in the old place of dwelling."

The Zen Master nodded his head and with a twinkle in his eye replied, "This town is very much similar to your old one and I am positive that



you would feel at home in the new township. Welcome aboard."

Life is full of vicissitudes. There are high points and low ones. The first man faced constant misadventure in his old township. He squabbled with his wife, snarled at his children and was at odds with his superiors, juniors, and peers. He was not at peace with himself, with his energy/prana/chi levels at a low ebb.

While the second person, accepted all situations and people as they were. This resonates with one of sutras of the Art of Living, "Accept people and situations as they are." Such people do not find fault with any situation and are at peace with themselves. This becomes the state of their mind.

This Zen story pivots on the idea of karma. Whatever happens to anyone is the result of their own actions. We may travel around the world in the hope of escaping a life we condemned. What we will find instead is that we continue to carry our baggage with us wherever we go. Verily it applies to a positive mindset too, in that happiness is a matter of one's choice.

Upon reading the Zen story the man whose life was like that of the first individual decided to make a metamorphosis in his life and opted to be positive like the second man. He made a 360 degree turn in his thought process and broke the glass ceiling of negativity and accepted all challenges in life. "Invoke the valour in you. Just say, 'Okay, whatever comes, I am going to take it as a challenge.' When you invoke this energy, fear vanishes," says the spiritual master Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; Views are personal)

Challenges ahead for RaGa as Leader of the Opposition



KS TOMAR

Rahul Gandhi's new avatar enhances his ability to foster the Opposition unity and effectively counter the BJP's influence within Parliament

Rahul Gandhi's decision to accept the Congress Working Committee's (CWC) offer to become the new Leader of the Opposition in Parliament may serve a dual purpose. Firstly, it will provide him with a statutory position under the law, positioning him as a direct rival to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2029 elections, compelling Modi to take him seriously, unlike in the past. Secondly, despite being the strongest critic of the Prime Minister both inside and outside Parliament, Gandhi's voice has often been drowned out by the BJP's "shouting brigade" over the past decade. However, this scenario is poised to change as the BJP enters the Lok Sabha with a reduced strength of 240 MPs, down from 303 in the previous Lok Sabha. In contrast, the Congress has almost doubled its strength, increasing from 52 to 102 MPs, including three independents.

This bolstered presence will enable the Congress to counter the BJP's tactics more effectively. A tit-for-tat dynamic may emerge in Parliament: if the BJP's "shouting brigade" attempts to silence Rahul Gandhi, Congress MPs may respond by disrupting the Prime Minister's speeches. The overall parliamentary balance of power has shifted as well. The combined strength of the NDA (BJP and its allies) will be reduced to 294, down from 336 in the previous term. Meanwhile, the Congress-led UPA has increased its seats from 90 to 234, including several new additions, posing a significant challenge for the ruling party.

Challenges as Leader of the Opposition As the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Parliament, Rahul Gandhi will face numerous challenges requiring a dedicated and full-time commitment. The role cannot be managed on an ad hoc basis as it demands continuous effort and strategic planning. Key responsibilities and strategies include:

Regular Interaction with Allies: Gandhi must engage regularly with leaders of allied parties to formulate strategies aimed at cornering the weakened BJP-led alliance in Parliament. Building and maintaining strong relationships with diverse political groups will be essential.

Aggressive yet Mature Approach: It will be crucial for Gandhi to demonstrate aggression balanced with maturity, particularly when highlighting issues of public importance. His ability to address these issues effectively in Parliament will be key to his success.

Unifying a Fragmented Opposition: One of the most significant challenges will be unifying a fragmented opposition. The diverse political ideologies and regional interests create a complex landscape, making consensus-building a critical yet difficult task.

Countering the Ruling Party's Narrative: Despite the BJP's reduced majority, countering its dominant narrative remains a formidable challenge. The ruling party's stronghold on media and public perception necessitates a strategic and compelling opposition narrative.

Scrutiny of Leadership Style: Gandhi's leadership style and communication skills will be under constant scrutiny. Establishing his credibility and demon-



RAHUL GANDHI MAY ALSO GAIN AN IMPORTANT POSITION AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, WHICH PRIMARILY EXAMINES REPORTS FROM THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL

strating robust leadership in parliamentary debates and public forums are crucial for gaining public trust and support.

Responsibilities as LoP

Holding the Government Accountable: Gandhi will lead the opposition's efforts in holding the government accountable. This involves articulating the opposition's stance on various issues, participating in debates, and ensuring effective representation.

Rallying Opposition Parties: He will need to rally opposition parties, build consensus, and coordinate their efforts. This can be challenging given the diverse ideologies and interests of different parties.

Effective Communication: Gandhi must communicate effectively within and outside Parliament. His speeches, statements, and interactions with the media will shape public perception and influence political discourse.

Strategic Decision-Making: Making strategic decisions regarding when to cooperate with the ruling party and when to oppose them requires astute political judgment. Balancing these choices will be crucial.

Mastery of Parliamentary Procedures: Understanding parliamentary rules, procedures, and tactics is crucial. Gandhi will need to master these to effectively challenge the government.

Raising Critical Issues: People expect the LoP to raise critical issues, propose alternatives, and offer constructive solutions.

Meeting these expectations will be key to Gandhi's effectiveness as LoP.

Rahul Gandhi may also gain an important position as the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, which primarily examines reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). The PAC has a majority of government nominees and typically decides issues by vote. Additionally, as LoP, Gandhi would be part of various collegiums alongside the Prime Minister and Chief Justice of India (or government nominees), responsible for selecting the heads of key investigative and transparency agencies including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Lokpal, Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Chief Election Commissioner/Election Commissioners, and Chief Information Commissioner (CIC).

Historical Parallels: Indira Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are an amended version of Karl Marx's quote suggests that history repeats itself first as tragedy and not necessarily as farce; hence its recurrence has ended up enhancing Rahul Gandhi's prestige as LoP. Political observers note two stark similarities between the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi's comeback in 1980 and Rahul Gandhi's recent resurgence. Indira Gandhi earned the title "Bechari" in the eyes of the people due to the excesses and humiliation inflicted on her by the Janata Party after losing power, a fallout of the

Emergency's dark era. In the late 1960s, she was derisively called "Goongi Gudiya" (Dumb Doll) by her detractors, which ultimately helped her emerge strong and bounce back to power in 1980. Similarly, Rahul Gandhi's rejuvenation as a credible LoP in 2024 comes after being dubbed "Pappu" by the BJP.

At this juncture, experts suggest that the common people witnessed a privileged member of the Gandhi family walking in scorching heat and biting cold, highlighting their problems. This might have changed their opinion about him, leading them to perceive him as a "Bechara Shehzada" (Poor Prince), earning their sympathy and contributing to the BJP's undoing in the 2024 polls.

The NDA government's focus on Hindutva, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and tall promises failed to address people's real issues. Prime Minister Modi can be credited for popularizing the term "Shehzada" (Scion) for Rahul Gandhi, but this campaign ultimately transformed his image from "Pappu" to a credible national leader. Overall, Rahul Gandhi's leadership as LoP will significantly impact India's political landscape. To effectively represent the opposition in Parliament, he will need to rise to these challenges, demonstrating strong leadership and a commitment to addressing the concerns of the Indian people.

(The writer is a senior journalist and a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Union budget needs to adopt all-inclusive approach to health

India needs to spend more on infrastructure development, innovation, and accessibility for universal health coverage by 2030

As India anticipates the unveiling of the first comprehensive Union Budget under the Modi 3.0 government, the healthcare sector finds itself at a crucial crossroads. The interim budget has set a preliminary roadmap, yet achieving a transformative overhaul of the healthcare ecosystem requires a robust and unified effort. It is imperative to prioritize increased funding for healthcare infrastructure, innovation, and accessibility to create a new ecosystem that can support India's ambitious healthcare objectives. One of the primary expectations from the forthcoming budget is the reclassification of hospitals as infrastructure investments. This reclassification has the potential to attract substantial



SUGANDH AHLUWALIA

private sector investments, which are vital for the development of state-of-the-art healthcare facilities across the country. Additionally, extending interest rate subventions for medical equipment could alleviate the financial strain on hospitals, facilitating the modernization of technology and improvement in service delivery. A significant step forward for India's healthcare system

would be the formulation of a roadmap to boost public healthcare expenditure to 3% of the GDP. According to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Reserve Bank of India estimates, healthcare expenditure needs to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.9%. The current goal is to achieve 2.5% public expenditure on healthcare by 2025-26 and 3% by 2030-31. While these targets are ambitious, they require meticulous planning and strategic execution to be realized. The economic burden of healthcare costs is a major concern for the lower and middle-income groups in India. High out-of-pocket expenditures, coupled with escalating healthcare costs and insurance barriers, neces-

sitate immediate government intervention. Incorporating advanced treatment methods into the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and encouraging private health insurance companies to adopt similar practices can significantly enhance healthcare accessibility for these groups. The government must also place a strong emphasis on rural healthcare in its budget allocations. Direct investments in healthcare infrastructure and medical personnel, along with targeted incentives to attract doctors and hospitals to underserved areas, are critical. This approach will expand healthcare coverage and spur innovation in insurance products, making comprehensive health-

care accessible to all, especially in rural regions where the need is most pressing. Physical infrastructure along with the human resources is essential for delivering quality healthcare. Rational regulations and policies are critical to supporting India's aspiration to achieve UHC by 2030. Such regulations should enable seamless collaboration among all stakeholders, ensuring that quality healthcare services are accessible to all citizens, regardless of socio-economic status. This approach will help address health disparities and improve overall health outcomes in the country. The private sector has a pivotal role in delivering quality healthcare services. Bridging the critical gaps in service delivery is

essential for achieving UHC, particularly in addressing the dual burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases. Health insurance is a vital component in the journey toward "Health for All." With low insurance coverage, many individuals face substantial out-of-pocket expenses when seeking healthcare services. Implementing mandatory health insurance and gradually expanding coverage to include self-employed professionals and other currently excluded groups can pave the way for a more equitable healthcare system. This strategy would ensure that all citizens have access to essential health services without financial hardship. Access to quality healthcare is fundamental for everyone, and UHC

is key in this regard. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), UHC means access to essential health services, including affordable medicines and vaccines, without financial difficulty. Strengthening health systems and essential infrastructure is vital for achieving UHC. The private sector's investments in healthcare infrastructure and training health workers are significant contributions toward this goal. Achieving the goal of Healthcare for All by 2030 in India presents numerous opportunities but also requires overcoming significant barriers. A multi-faceted approach is essential for increasing access to and delivery of quality healthcare. Developing a

sustainable healthcare business model that integrates primary, secondary, and tertiary care systems is crucial. Such a model should emphasize affordability and high quality, enhancing the reputation of Indian healthcare. Substantial support for the hospital sector is also necessary, including a combination of investments and tax reliefs, to build infrastructure assets and provide top-tier healthcare services across the country. Bridging the rural-urban divide in critical care facilities is imperative to reaching the goal of Healthcare for All by 2030.

(The author is Chief Strategy Officer at Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

FATF adopts India's mutual evaluation report; hails anti-money laundering regime

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Plenary on Friday adopted the mutual evaluation report of India's anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism regime during its plenary meeting held here. In its brief outcome statement, the global body said that India's legal regime in these two domains was achieving good results. It, however, said the country needs to address delays relating to concluding money laundering and terrorist financing prosecutions. The final evaluation report for the country will be published later when the "quality and consistency review" is completed, it said. The Paris-headquartered body leads global action to tackle money laundering, terrorist and proliferation financing. India's mutual evaluation on FATF guidelines, a measure that checks a country's efficacy to make effective laws and policy and implement them to check financial crimes, was last done in 2010.



Reliance Industries mcap tops Rs 21 L cr mark amid rally in shares

Shares of Reliance Industries climbed over 2 per cent on Friday, taking its market valuation above the Rs 21 lakh crore mark. The heavyweight stock rose by 2.31 per cent to settle at Rs 3,131.85 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 3.27 per cent to hit a record high of Rs 3,161.45. It was the biggest gainer among the 30-share BSE Sensex firms. On the NSE, the stock climbed 2.19 per cent to settle at Rs 3,128.25 each. The company's market valuation jumped by Rs 47,777.57 crore to Rs 21,18,951.20 crore. Reliance Industries is the country's most valued firm by market capitalisation (mcap). In volume terms, 10.33 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and 144.77 lakh shares on the NSE during the day. So far this year, shares of Reliance Industries have jumped 21.16 per cent on the BSE. Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) on February 13 this year became the first Indian company to achieve a market capitalisation of Rs 20 L cr.



Stanley Lifestyles shares jump nearly 30% in debut trade

Shares of luxury furniture brand Stanley Lifestyles Ltd ended with a premium of nearly 30 per cent on Friday, against the issue price of Rs 369. The stock started the trade at Rs 499, reflecting a jump of 35.23 per cent on the BSE. During the day, it soared 38.21 per cent to Rs 510. Shares of the company ended at Rs 474 each, up 28.45 per cent. On the NSE, it listed at Rs 494.95, up 34.13 per cent. Shares of the firm ended at Rs 479 apiece, rallying 29.81 per cent. The company's market valuation stood at Rs 2,702.62 crore. In volume terms, 55.85 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and 216.11 lakh shares on the NSE during the day. The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Stanley Lifestyles got subscribed 96.98 times on the last day of subscription on Tuesday. The Rs 537-crore initial share sale had a fresh issue of up to Rs 200 crore and an offer for sale of up to 91,33,454 equity shares. The initial share sale had a price range of Rs 351-369 per share.



Tata Steel UK begins legal action against union strike

PNS ■ LONDON

Tata Steel on Friday said it is being forced to commence legal action to challenge the validity of a steelworkers' union strike ballot, as it warned that its blast furnaces at Port Talbot may have to pause operations amid the industrial action.

The Mumbai-headquartered steel major had originally planned to shut down one of the blast furnaces by the end of June and the second one by September. However, Unite the Union's proposed strike from July 8 could result in the closure being forced earlier.

"Following the announcement by the Unite Union to unilaterally call strike action from July 8, Tata Steel is unfortunately forced to commence legal action to challenge the validity of Unite's ballot," a Tata Steel spokesperson said.

"In the coming days, if we cannot be certain that we are able to continue to safely and stably operate our assets through the period of strike action, we will not have any choice but to pause or stop heavy end operations (including both blast furnaces) on the Port Talbot site.



The Mumbai-headquartered steel major had originally planned to shut down one of the blast furnaces by the end of June and the second one by September. However, Unite the Union's proposed strike from July 8 could result in the closure being forced earlier.

That is not a decision we would take lightly, and we recognise that it would prove extremely costly and disruptive throughout the supply chain, but the safety of people on or around our sites will always take priority over everything else," the spokesperson said.

The company again called for Unite to withdraw its industrial

action and join the other unions - Community and GMB - in giving consideration to the company's proposed memorandum of understanding, which it said puts forward a wide-ranging proposal including "generous employee support packages, training, and skills development".

"We understand the impact

of our restructuring will have on many employees and contractors, but we remain committed to a just transition and - pending a government-backed grant funding agreement - to the 1.25 billion pounds investment in low-CO2 steelmaking, which will ensure Tata Steel has a long and sustainable future in the UK," the company's spokesperson added.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham claimed it is "fighting for the future of the steel industry" and wants things deferred until after the general election on July 4 as it claims to have secured "serious investment" from the Opposition Labour Party - which is leading the pre-election surveys.

"Tata putting out a statement to shut or pause its blast furnaces three months earlier than they intended to is the latest in a long line of threats that don't deter us. The Unite campaign is not about selling jobs, it's about securing the long-term future of steel making in this country for thousands of workers in Port Talbot and South Wales," she said.

Govt in process of finalising policy to offer PCI coal to steel makers to reduce imports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is in the process of finalising a policy to offer washed PCI coal to steel makers in order to reduce imports, a senior official said on Friday.

PCI (pulverized coal injection) coal is a type of metallurgical coal, which is used in the steel making process as auxiliary fuel for partial replacement of coke. It helps steel plant increase efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

"We are actually thinking about a policy...whereby we will be washing and offering washed PCI coal to the steel sector (only specifically to the steel sector) end use so that we will be able to reduce imports,"



M Nagaraju, additional secretary, coal, said at a workshop on coal matrix for the Indian metals industry organised by industry body Ficci here. He also said that there was a need to remove ash content in PCI coal.

At present, most of the steel makers in the country import

the imported coking coal and reduce imports," he said.

Nagaraju further said that the government will set up about eight coking coal washeries to meet the demand of the steel sector. "We are going to set up about eight coking coal washeries so that by 2030 we will be having at least 60 million tonnes of washed coking coal in the country to meet the steel sector demand," he added.

According to mjunction services -- a B2B e-commerce platform -- India's coking coal imports rose to 57.22 million tonnes in FY24 compared to 54.46 MT imported in FY23. Imports of PCI coal also increased to 16.69 MT in 2023-24, against 15.69 MT a year ago. MT

GAIL advances net zero emission target to 2035

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd on Friday said it has advanced the target to achieve net zero carbon emission by five years to 2035 as it takes multi-prolonged approach to reaching the goal.

The company was previously targeting net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

"GAIL Board accorded approval to advance its net zero target for Scope-1 and 2 emissions by five years, from the year 2040 to year 2035," the company said in a statement.

Scope 1 covers emissions

from sources that an organisation owns or controls directly -- for example from burning fuel in factories or even in its fleet of vehicles.

Scope 2 are emissions that a company causes indirectly and come from where the energy it purchases and uses. For example, the emissions caused when

generating the electricity. "This decision follows an extensive study undertaken by GAIL to enhance its sustainability goals and align with India's broader net zero commitments," it said. GAIL plans to achieve this ambitious goal through a strategic approach.

Markets snap record rally

Profit-booking hammers banking, finance stocks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty halted their three-day record-hitting rally to close with losses on Friday as investors booked profit in banking, finance and tech stocks despite a positive trend in global equities.

Snapping a four-session winning run, equity indices succumbed to selling pressure after mid-session when profit-taking emerged on few counters.

After hitting fresh all-time high level in early trade, the 30-share index declined 210.45 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 79,032.73. During the day, it jumped 428.4 points or 0.54 per cent to hit a fresh record peak of 79,671.58.

The Nifty went lower by 33.90 points or 0.14 per cent to 24,010.60. During the day, it climbed 129.5 points or

0.53 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 24,174.

The Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark on Thursday and the Nifty hit the 24,000 level for the first time in intra-day trade.

In the past four trading days, the BSE benchmark jumped 2,033.28 points or 2.63 per cent.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Maruti, JSW Steel and Bajaj Finserv were among the laggards. In contrast, Reliance Industries, Tata Motors, Asian Paints, Nestle and Titan were the biggest gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green.

European markets were trading mostly higher. US markets ended in positive territory on Thursday.

Bank of Maharashtra launches remote A/c opening

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In today's fast-paced world, convenience reigns supreme and this extends to financial services. Recognizing this shift, Bank of Maharashtra is leading the charge in revolutionizing account opening with the introduction of Video-KYC (Video Based Customer Identification Process). This innovative solution streamlines the process, allowing individuals to open savings accounts entirely from the comfort of their homes and embracing efficiency.

Bypassing Branches, Embracing Efficiency Traditionally, opening a bank account involved time-consuming visits to branches, filling out paperwork, and waiting in queues. Video-KYC eliminates these hurdles. Customers can now initiate and complete the entire account creation process through a secure video call with a bank representative. This not only saves valuable time but also caters to those with busy schedules or limited mobility. Security Meets Simplicity:

The Power of Video-KYC The Video-KYC process prioritizes both security and ease of use. Here's what customers need to know:

Requirements: To ensure a smooth experience, prospective customers should have their Aadhaar number, a signature on white paper, a



mobile number linked to their Aadhaar, and a soft copy of their PAN card readily available. The Process: The process is designed to be user-friendly. Customers simply visit the Bank of Maharashtra website, navigate to the VCIP section, choose their preferred lan-

guage, and follow the prompt, "I want to open a new account via VKYC." This includes agreeing to terms and conditions, providing basic information, and scheduling a video call at their convenience.

Two-Factor Authentication: During the video call, the bank executive guides customers

through verification process, which includes confirming a reference number sent to the customer's linked mobile number. This two-factor authentication ensures a secure and transparent experience. Once the live KYC verification is complete, accounts activation typically

occurs within 24 hours. Account Activation and Beyond: A World of Banking Convenience. Once the account is live, customers then gain access to a wide range of banking products and services through the bank's internet banking platform and the MahaMobile app. From receiving an ATM/debit card to managing finances online, Video-KYC accounts empower customers to bank entirely from their fingertips. Additionally, the seamless integration with technology provides real-time transaction alerts and account statements, fostering greater control over finances.

Leading the Digital Charge: Bank of Maharashtra's Commitment to Innovation

The implementation of Video-KYC underscores Bank of Maharashtra's commitment to providing a seamless, secure, and efficient banking experience. This innovative solution eliminates the need for extensive paperwork and offers a contemporary approach to account opening, catering to the demands of the digital era.

India, US extend digital tax on e-commerce supplies till June 30

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US have decided to extend a 2 per cent equalisation levy or digital tax on e-commerce supplies until June 30, the finance ministry said on Friday.

In a major reform of the international tax system, India and the US have joined 134 other members of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework (including Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK) in reaching an agreement on October 8, 2021, on the statement on a two-pillar solution to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy.

On October 21, 2021, the US and Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK reached a political compromise on the transitional approach to the unilateral measures in force while Pillar 1 is implemented.



On November 24, 2021, India and the US agreed that the same terms that apply under the October 2021 Joint Statement shall apply between India and the US with respect to India's charge of 2 per cent equalisation levy on e-commerce supply of services and the US' trade action regarding the said

Equalisation Levy. The validity of this agreement was from April 1, 2022, till implementation of Pillar 1 or March 31, 2024, whichever is earlier.

On December 18, 2023, the Inclusive Framework issued a statement calling for a finalisation of the text of the Pillar 1 multilateral convention by the

end of March 2024 with a view to holding a signing ceremony by the end of June 2024.

On February 15, 2024, the US and Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK decided to extend the political compromise set forth in the October 21 Joint Statement until June 30, 2024.

"In light of above developments, India and the United States have decided to extend the validity of the agreement reflected in November 24 Statements until June 30, 2024. All other terms of the transitional approach remain the same," the finance ministry said in a statement.

India and the US will remain in close contact to ensure that there is common understanding of the respective commitment and endeavour to resolve all issues on this matter through constructive dialogue, it added.

Key infra sectors growth rises 6.3%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The eight key infrastructure sectors growth rose by 6.3 per cent in May on healthy expansion in the production of coal, natural gas, and electricity, though the growth rate is lower than in April, according to official data released on Friday.

The production of the eight sectors grew 6.7 per cent in April.

The growth of these core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 5.2 per cent in May 2023.

The official data showed that fertiliser, crude oil, and cement output recorded negative growth in May.

During April-May this fiscal, the output of these sectors was up 6.5 per cent against 4.9 per cent in the same period last fiscal.

The production growth of

coal, natural gas and electricity rose by 10.2 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 12.8 per cent, respectively, against 7.2 per cent, (-) 0.3 per cent and 0.8 per cent in May 2023.

The growth rate in the production of refinery products and steel slowed down to 0.5 per cent and 7.6 per cent during the month under review.

The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the country's Index of Industrial Production (IIP). Commenting on the data, Ipra Ltd Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said that while the core sector growth sustained above 6 per cent for the fourth consecutive month, it eased slightly in May.

A combination of factors, including the heatwave over parts of the country and the phased parliamentary elections could have curtailed activity and execution in some sectors, she added.

Tech Mahindra launches indic language LLM 'Project Indus'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech Mahindra on Friday announced launch of Project Indus, a large language model (LLM) designed to converse in a multitude of Indic languages and dialects.

The first phase of Indus LLM is designed for the Hindi language and its 37+ dialects.

Project Indus is our seminal effort to develop an LLM from the ground up. Through

Makers Lab, our R&D arm, we created a roadmap, collected data from the Hindi-speaking population, and built the Indus model. "Our collaboration with Dell Technologies & Intel will help deliver cutting-edge AI solutions that enable enterprises to scale at speed. We will redefine

the GenAI landscape, driving innovation and operational excellence," Nikhil Malhotra, Global Head --Makers Lab, Tech Mahindra, said.

This collaboration aims to redefine AI-driven solutions in various industries by leveraging

Tech Mahindra's unique capabilities to develop localized and verticalized industry-agnostic LLMs with Dell and Intel's robust infrastructure, a company statement said.

It said it will create multiple tailored use cases and enable customers to leverage various applications, including customer support, experience, and content creation across healthcare, rural education, banking and finance, agriculture, and telecom, among other industries.



'I couldn't conceive of scene that didn't involve a woman'

Actor-director-producer Kevin Costner is quite clear about the audience he caters to and makes films for. However, he shared that to serve a compelling story to his male audience, his films need strong female characters who drive the story forward. Kevin recently joined the cast members of *Horizon: An American Saga* for a live recording of the *Happy Sad Confused* podcast and he said that his planned four-movie saga differs from many Western films that have come before, as per reports. He said that in those films, the women characters "drive the story in every plot line." Costner, who co-wrote the franchise with Jon Baird, said he "couldn't conceive of a scene that didn't involve a woman" while shaping the story. As per reports, *Horizon* chronicles

the journey of several characters during and after the Civil War as they settle the American West. Kevin Costner stars in the film opposite a sprawling ensemble cast, which includes Sienna Miller, Jena Malone, Isabelle Fuhrman, Abbey Lee and Ella Hunt. He told the *Happy Sad Confused* audience that he is aware his directorial efforts skew more towards men in their appeal, but he said strong women are what he's most interested in. "I make movies for men. That's what I do," Costner said. "But I won't make a movie unless I have strong women characters. That's how I've conducted my career. I think that's why I have such a good following. I thank you, women, for dragging your men here. It was a Western, after all. I just can't conceive of a movie without having (strong women)."



Welcome to the Jungle's next schedule to be shot in Kashmir

Director Ahmed Khan and producer Firoz A. Nadiadwallah's much-anticipated *Welcome to the Jungle* is set to bring the most spectacular ensemble cast as they revive the *Welcome* franchise in its third installment of the movie. The team is all geared up to kickstart a month-long, exciting marathon schedule in Kashmir. After an extensive schedule in Mumbai, the team of *Welcome to the Jungle* is heading to Kashmir for a month-long marathon schedule. The schedule promises high-octane action scenes on a grand scale and picturesque songs. With a massive production team and a unit

of 1,200 people, the makers are now set to start their marathon schedule in Kashmir. The audience will witness the coming together of several military helicopters, 250 military personnel, 350 government officials, and 300 Kashmiri locals, along with the combined efforts of over a thousand people, to bring them the best cinematic extravaganza. *Welcome to the Jungle*, promises unparalleled entertainment. The makers recently brought on board 200 horses and horsemen from Mumbai, Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar, and several other locations for a power-packed action sequence.

what's brewing?

Saiee shares how Tabu helped her for a movie role!

Tabu has played a pivotal role not only in shaping Saiee M Manjrekar's performance in the upcoming film *Auron Mein Kaha Dum Tha* but also through the course of her career. Saiee, who plays the younger version of Tabu's character in the movie, received invaluable guidance from the seasoned actress. Tabu's mentorship, particularly in reading out dialogues and setting the tone for delivery, significantly influenced Saiee's portrayal of her character, Vasu. Saiee feels a deep connection with Tabu, almost as if she has manifested this opportunity. Growing up, she was inspired by Tabu's powerful performances and often watched her movies to learn the nuances of acting. This connection became even more special as Saiee stepped into a role that closely mirrors Tabu's character. "I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Tabu. She would help me prep for my character Vasu by reading and rehearsing my

lines, so that I would get the tone and dialogue delivery right. My father has always said how in his opinion Tabu is the best actress and since my childhood he's said if you want to learn acting sit and watch Tabu's films. So I've watched so much of her work growing up because my father said she is the actor I need to take inspiration from. When you watch her there is so much to learn from her and I feel like I manifested it in some way," says Saiee M Manjrekar. She continues saying, "I've been taking cues and inspiration from Tabu ma'am and it has been a dream come true, especially since my father has always admired Tabu's talent who worked in the critically acclaimed film *Astitva*, often praised her as the best actress of her generation." Tabu's words left a lasting impression on Saiee, who grew up watching Tabu's movies and learning from her performances. The chance to work with Tabu not only fulfilled a childhood dream but also provided Saiee with a masterclass in acting as she continues to make an impact in the entertainment industry.



Hina Khan diagnosed with stage three breast cancer

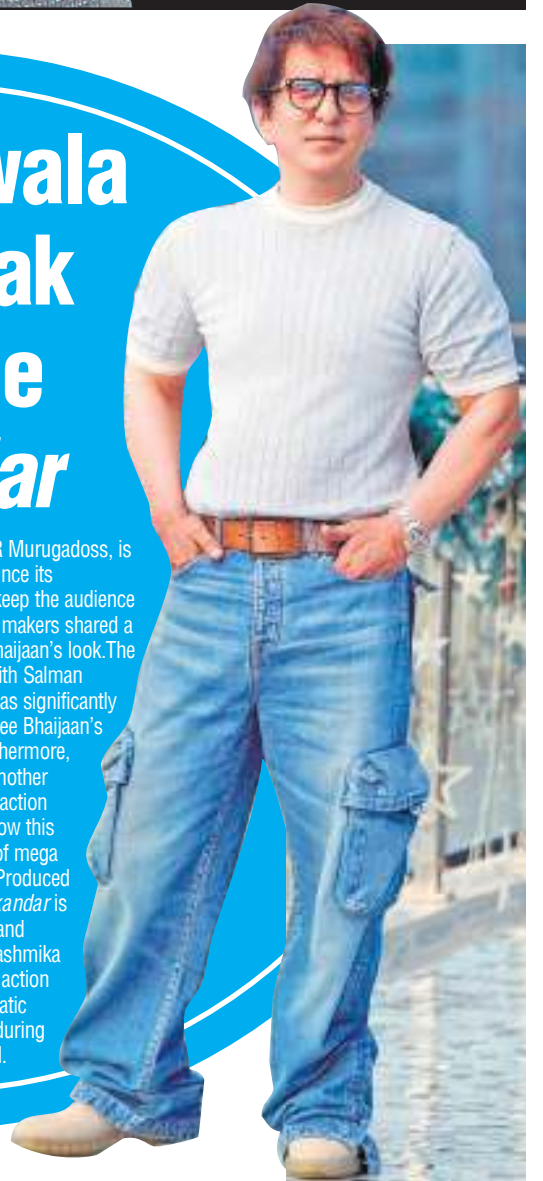
Actress Hina Khan has been diagnosed with stage three breast cancer and is currently undergoing treatment. In an Instagram post on Friday, Hina shared the news with her followers and expressed her resolve to overcome the disease. Hina wrote, "Hello everyone, to address the recent rumour, I want to share some important news with all the Hinaholics and everyone who loves and cares for me. I have been diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. Despite this challenging diagnosis, I wish to reassure everyone that I am doing well. I am strong, determined and fully committed to overcoming this disease. My treatment has already begun, and I am ready to do everything necessary to emerge from this even stronger." She requested privacy and blessings as she battled the disease. "I kindly ask for your respect and privacy during this time.

I deeply appreciate your love, strength and blessings. Your personal experiences, anecdotes and supportive suggestions would mean the world to me as I navigate this journey. I, along with my family and loved ones, remain focused, determined and positive. With the grace of the almighty, we believe I will overcome this challenge and be completely healthy. Please send your prayers blessings and love," Hina wrote. Hina is an Indian television star, known for serials like *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* and *Kasautii Zindagii Kay*. She was the runner-up on *Bigg Boss 11*, hosted by Salman Khan. Hina has also appeared in films like *Hacked* (2020) and *Shinda Shinda No Papa* (2024).

Nadiadwala shares sneak peek from the sets of Sikandar

Sajid Nadiadwala's *Sikandar*, starring Salman Khan and directed by AR Murugadoss, is indeed gaining momentum. The film has been in the headlines ever since its announcement. Moreover, the makers are not leaving any chance to keep the audience excited with interesting updates about the film. Continuing this streak, the makers shared a sneak peek from the sets, which has heightened the anticipation to see Bhaijaan's look. The makers of *Sikandar* revealed a glimpse that captured the poster, along with Salman

Khan's iconic bracelet. This has significantly increased the excitement to see Bhaijaan's look in and as *Sikandar*. Furthermore, the makers recently shared another glimpse from the sets as the action sequence shoot began and now this sneak peek guarantees a lot of mega entertainment on Eid 2025. Produced by Nadiadwala Grandson, *Sikandar* is directed by AR Murugadoss and features Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna in lead roles. This action entertainer promises a cinematic experience like never before during the Eid 2025 weekend.



Billy Ray alleges being 'physically, emotionally' abused by his ex-wife

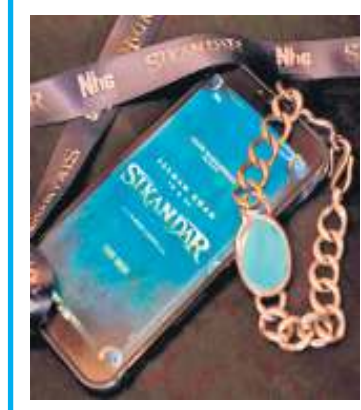
After Firerose, his ex-wife, accused him of violence, Billy Ray Cyrus has been in the news. Cyrus asserts that his former partner abused him "physically," "verbally," and "emotionally" in a new court filing that was submitted on June 24 in Tennessee. The documents read, "While the plaintiff would acknowledge that he was certainly vocal, frustrated and angry with the defendant in May 2024, it is the plaintiff who, in fact, has been abused. Not only verbally and emotionally by the defendant, but physically abused by the defendant."



In addition, Cyrus refuted the "mind boggling" accusations made against him regarding his abuse of Firerose.

The manager of Cyrus, Scott Adkins, claimed in an affidavit to have seen the statements made by the Achy Breaky Heart hitmaker. The Australian artist accused the 62-year-old of abusing him, and he even refuted a message she wrote for him when she moved out of their premarital apartment. The alleged note that was offered as proof stated, "I am so sorry. Please give me a chance to make this right. I can explain everything, but I need you by my side." The country music icon says that Firerose threatened to ruin his career if he tried to get a divorce. This is in reaction to her allegation.

He asked her about a last name he was unfamiliar with, and that's when she made the threat. Cyrus claims that Firerose threatened to disclose to the public that he was seeking a divorce because she required a double mastectomy. Furthermore, Cyrus claimed that Firerose had known for four years that she had a BRCA1 gene mutation, which raises her risk of breast cancer, but she had not told him about it until after they were married. The only people supporting Cyrus "false claims," according to a Firerose representative, are on his payroll, whose credibility is questionable.



FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
		6		
7		8		
	9			
10				
11			12	
	13			
14				
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16				
17				
18				
				19

SUDOKU

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8		2						6
	9		7	3				8
						5	6	4
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1				6	8			9
	2						1	7
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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

RULES

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

ACROSS

- One of the continents
- A short letter
- Opposite of false
- Repairing
- Went red in the face
- A game with bat and ball
- A king's son
- Come to an halt
- Sprinkle this on food
- A bird that can be trained to race
- Four times twenty
- You need this to be allowed to drive a car
- The world's largest bird
- Wine is made from these
- Middle
- Young woman
- Twirl

SOLUTION

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

DOWN

- A female relation
- A baby's toy
- Water from the sky

'HYDERABAD IS NOW COMPETING WITH SOME MAJOR CITIES IN WORLD'

SHRADDHA NEWARE

Sukhbir Singh is no stranger to the city of Nizams, as he first came to Hyderabad back in 2011 on January 17. Pacing out 12 years later, he was once again back in the city last year, this time as the General Manager of Novotel Hyderabad Airport.

After working in the hospitality industry for more than twenty years, he seems to know every nerve of the business. Speaking to us about his association with Hyderabad, the Jamshedpur-born says, "The city was extremely kind to us. It's an easy city to live and grow in, and it does not have too much discrimination for people from outside the city or within. The warm and kind nature of people in the city continues to be so even now."

Comparing his hometown, Jamshedpur, to the city of Hyderabad, the former director of sales and marketing shares, "My hometown is a small industrial town and we grew up in a township. People work on shifts and that's about it. There's not too much hustle, bustle, or trade that happens. Hyderabad is a bustling metropolis today, competing with some of the major cities in the world."

Coming to the changes he has witnessed in the city since his last tenure here, from 2011 to early 2014, the former General Manager of Accor Mumbai area speaks to us about the changes he has witnessed: "The traffic has of course gone up in the last 10 to 12 years. But I think there's been a lot of infrastructure developed. The city was designed to make people's lives easier."

He further shares a titbit with us about the land behind Novotel Hyderabad Airport: "In 2011, we were a hotel, 40 kilometers away from the city. The space behind the hotel used to be nothing but rugged terrain, and we would advocate for the SUV car companies to bring them here so that they could do a bit of a trial run for the customers."

As a person now associated with the development of hospitality, he has contributed to many sustainable projects, one of which includes a small patch of exotic vegetables being farmed to sustain the hotel.

Talking about a life-changing memory, he

mentions that it relates to both his work and family because he wanted to be a hotelier. From a salesperson into an operational role, he shares, "I had come in here as a director of sales and marketing. From my family's perspective, I think they were elated with the idea and supported my decision. When you are making transitions, there's a lot of hard work that needs to be done. My wife made sure that she supported the entire endeavour as much as possible. Now I am in my 11th year as a general manager, thanks to Hyderabad and the hotel."

He further compares driving in Mumbai versus Hyderabad from his residence to work. He says, "What was different from Mumbai was that I used to calculate the distance in time. Whereas the people in my team, who were local, used to calculate that in terms of kilometers. So for me, Banjara Hills was 30 minutes away and for them, it was 37 kilometers away."

He explains people being puzzled at this, but for him, driving 30 minutes from his residence, which is 2400 sq. ft. according to him, unlike the 700-800 sq. ft. ones in Mumbai, was a welcome thing. He adds, "Language is not a problem, which is typically what people believe in the north—that when you go down to South India, you could have a barrier from a language point of view. We didn't have that."

For him, his wife has been a shadow throughout. He gleefully shares, "My wife loves that song, *Tu jahan jahan chalega, mera saya saath hoga*. She's been my shadow, and she has been with me for the last 20 years. Having to move every two and a half or three years, my wife has gotten too good at packing up her old house in

two days and then moving pin codes and moving states. He shares that his wife had a big influence in making the decision to move to Hyderabad since she too enjoys the city.

Kind is the word that comes to his mind when thinking of Hyderabad, saying, "The city has been very, very kind to us."



HYDERABOND

For our special Hyderabadond segment, Sukhbir Singh, who is from the industrial town of Jamshedpur, joins *The Pioneer* and shares his affinity, love for the city.

Heat wave worsens kidney stone crisis for younger people

Having a stone in your kidney can be a painful and recurrent condition that is increasing in the younger population. Recently, it has been seen that there is a rise in kidney cases among youngsters. Kidney stones are deposits of minerals and salts that are formed inside the kidney. They affect parts of the urinary tract, from the kidney to the bladder. When the stone moves through the urinary tract, it causes a urinary tract infection, severe pain, vomiting and can cause other complications like fever and sepsis.

ed an increase of 30% in emergencies for kidney stones during the summer months.

Factors contributing to the rise

• Dehydration

It is the most direct consequence of a heat wave. The body loses more fluids, due to which urine becomes concentrated and increases the risk of kidney stone formation. Younger individuals are more vulnerable to it as they are more active and stay outdoors.

• Dietary habits

Modern eating habits include a high intake of processed foods, sugary beverages, and high-sodium food products, which contribute to kidney stone formation. When these eating habits are combined with dehydration, they create the perfect environment for the development of kidney stones.

• Sedentary lifestyle

The rise in sedentary lifestyles among urban youth increases the risk. Lack of physical activity leads to obesity, which is another risk factor for kidney stones.

Preventive measures

• Hydration

It is important to stay hydrated, as water helps dilute the substances in urine that cause stones. Individuals should aim to consume at least 3 litres of liquid daily.

• Dietary adjustments

Decreasing the consumption of salt, animal protein, and sugar lowers the risk of kidney stone formation. It is beneficial to add high-water-content fruits and vegetables to the diet.

• Regular check-ups

Routine medical check-ups help in the early detection of kidney stones and make it easy to manage them. Individuals with a family history of kidney stones should be more aware.

• Public health

The rise in kidney stone cases among the young population brings a whole new challenge to public health. It leads to an increase in healthcare costs, lost productivity, and long-term complications. Public health campaigns that are focused on prevention, awareness, and early intervention are essential. The sudden surge in kidney stone cases in India, especially among young adults, is a pressing health concern due to rising heat waves. Addressing the issues leading to the stone formation by creating awareness, taking preventive measures, and providing timely intervention. As there is a change in climate and its impact on global weather patterns, the importance of health measures becomes crucial.

(The author, Dr. Amit Tiwari, is a consultant-urology, at Manipal Hospital.)

The impact of heat waves

Recently, India has been experiencing scorching heat, with temperatures above 45 degrees Celsius in many regions. This extreme heat causes various direct and indirect health impacts, which include dehydration and an increased risk of kidney stones. Dehydration causes a reduction in the volume of urine, which allows minerals to crystallise and form stones.

Rising incidence among younger populations

Traditionally, kidney stones were seen among older adults. However, according to recent trends, there has been an increase in the number of younger adults being diagnosed with kidney stones. Various factors contribute to the rise, including sedentary lifestyle, environmental factors like heat waves, and eating habits.

Study insights

As per a study done by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), it was shown that there has been an increase in kidney stone cases among teenagers. The researcher also added that it is caused by longer exposure to high temperatures, sweating, reduced liquid intake and a higher concentration of stone formation in urine.

Recent news reports

There is a sudden surge in cases related to kidney stones in states that are affected by heat waves. Hospitals in these regions report-



Rautu Ka Raaz. Slow burning crime drama with compelling narrative

TANISHA SAXENA

Plot: Sangeeta, the corrupt and regressive warden of Sewadham, a school for the blind in the village of Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, has been found dead. As Inspector Deepak Negi (played by Nawazuddin Siddiqui) and his team investigate the case, layers of the

Review

DIRECTED BY : Anand Surapur

PRODUCED BY : Umesh Bansal, Shariq Patel, Chintu Srivastava, Anand Surapur

CINEMATOGRAPHER : Sayak Bhattacharya

CAST : Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Rajesh Kumar, Atul Tiwari

STREAMING ON : Zee5

RATING : 3/5

story begin to unravel. The prime suspects include the school's trustee, Manoj Kesari (played by Atul Tiwari), the principal, and a few others.

Highlights : *Rautu ka Raaz* is a slow burning crime thriller set in the backdrop of the hilly terrain of Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand. Unlike any typical crime thriller *Rautu ka Raaz* is a subtle portrayal of village life.

Siddiqui's performance is a tour de force, blending stoic resilience with a palpable sense of vulnerability. His portrayal of a man grappling with his inner demons while unraveling external mysteries is nothing short of mesmerising. Complementing Siddiqui's gravitas is Rajesh Kumar, who plays Sub Inspector Naresh Dimri. Kumar's body language and dialogue delivery make this character a uniquely compelling sub inspector, significantly enriching the narrative.

The supporting cast is equally impressive, with standout performances from Narayani Shastri, Samridhi Chandola, Harshit Verma, and others, adding depth to the film's intricate web of characters. Each role, no matter how small, feels essential to the fabric of the story, creating a living, breathing community that is as much a part of the mystery as the crime itself.

What sets *Rautu ka Raaz* apart from other crime thrillers is its pacing. This is not a film that rushes to reveal its hand. Instead, it slowly peels back the layers of its narrative, allowing the audience to savour each revelation. This deliberate pace is both a strength and a challenge; it demands patience but rewards

viewers with a richly textured story that stays with them long after the credits roll.

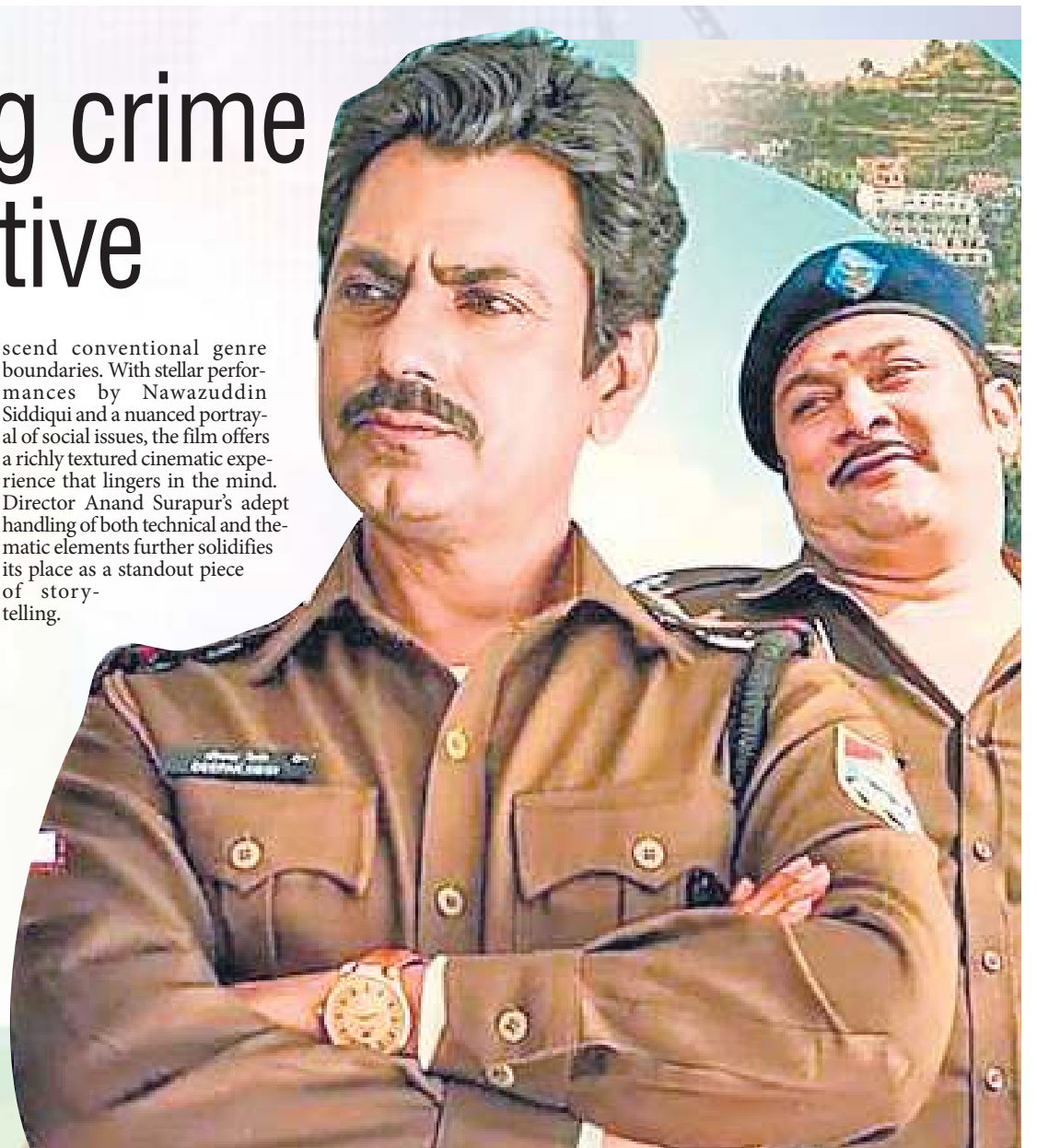
In the compelling narrative of the crime thriller, an unexpected focus emerges on pivotal social issues, particularly the urgent necessity to improve facilities for visually impaired children. Going beyond its primary storyline, the film eloquently portrays the multifaceted lives of visually impaired individuals, subtly emphasising their equal participation in the spectrum of human experiences. A poignant moment unfolds when Rajat, who is blind, inadvertently overhears a conversation revealing unjust treatment by the warden. What is truly commendable is how seamlessly and poignantly these themes are interwoven within the framework of a crime thriller. Moreover, the film's ending is profoundly touching.

Drawbacks : While *Rautu ka Raaz* excels in its narrative depth and character development, some viewers might find its slow pacing challenging, especially those accustomed to faster-paced thrillers.

Technical aspects : From the opening frame, the film captures the breathtaking vistas of the Garhwal foothills. The lush, rolling terrain, shrouded in mist, provides a beautiful backdrop that becomes a character in its own right. Cinematographer Sayak Bhattacharya's lens transforms the hills into a labyrinth of mystery, where every twist and turn reveals a new layer of intrigue.

Verdict : *Rautu ka Raaz* is a must-watch for aficionados of slow-burn crime dramas and those intrigued by narratives that tran-

scend conventional genre boundaries. With stellar performances by Nawazuddin Siddiqui and a nuanced portrayal of social issues, the film offers a richly textured cinematic experience that lingers in the mind. Director Anand Surapur's adept handling of both technical and thematic elements further solidifies its place as a standout piece of storytelling.



Proteas will succumb to unplayable Axar, Kuldeep in final: Sarandeep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Sarandeep Singh feels the "unplayable" spin combination of Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel will be too much for the South Africans to handle during the T20 World Cup final in Bridgetown, Barbados on Saturday. Wrist spinner Kuldeep has taken 10 wickets in four games with a best of 3/19, while Axar has grabbed eight from seven games with a best of 3/23. Both left-arm spinners are expected to play in the final. "If you ask me, who are the two players who will win it for India in the final, I will say Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel. They are outright match-winners in spin-friendly conditions," Sarandeep told PTI Videos on Friday. "We are having at the world's best spinners at the moment. Look at the way Kuldeep and Axar came in, they are winning all the games. They are unplayable. Everyone is talking about Kuldeep. He is going to destroy the South African middle order. "He has done it against Australia (in Super 8s) and

England (in semifinals). Now it's the turn of South Africa. Axar is also a very dangerous slow left-arm orthodox bowler. An outright match-winner. Indian spinners will win the final." India and South Africa are coming into the final having not lost a single match in the World Cup. While South Africa won all their eight games, India were victorious in seven as the tie against Canada in Florida was washed out due to rain. Sarandeep, who played three Tests and five ODIs, added that Axar and Kuldeep would be even more potent on the spin-friendly Bridgetown wicket. "Axar starts getting wickets from the sixth over. It's not easy for Axar to bowl in powerplay. He comes, bowls, and makes things easy for the rest of the bowlers. Kuldeep and Axar are complementing each other so well. "The wickets in West Indies are not easy to play especially if you have world-class spinners like Kuldeep and Axar. It was not easy for England, it will not be easy for South Africa as well,"



Sarandeep observed. The former India off-spinner added that skipper Rohit Sharma was spot on in his assessment of Caribbean conditions and opted for four spinners. "Rohit opted for four spinners but (Yuzvendra) Chahal is not in the scheme of things. The reason is, others have done their job exceedingly well. (Ravindra) Jadeja is the senior-most player but he is not coming into powerplay. Axar knows how to bowl in these conditions. He is the best option for us to bowl into the powerplay. He is giving the results as well," he added. On whether South African spinners Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi could also trouble the Indian batters, Sarandeep said, "Yes they will. Keshav and Shamsi are also very good. Let's see how Indian batsmen handle the spinners. "India has a very strong middle order. India has left-handers like Rishabh Pant, Shivam Dube, Axar, and Jadeja. Four left-handers in the middle order. It will be interesting to see how Maharaj and Shamsi are going to tackle

them. And vice-versa. This will be a big challenge for them also." Sarandeep added that India has the best batting and bowling lineup in the world. "Bumrah's economy is 3.5 or 3.6. This is so unreal. Other bowlers go over 9 or 10. Even after eight games, his economy is 3.5. This is so unreal. What else can you ask from him? India is the favourites not only in batting but bowling as well." The former cricketer played down Virat Kohli's lack of form. Virat has scored only 76 runs in seven innings. "Virat is waiting for the final to perform. He is a world-class player, no doubt. He is mentally very strong. He is a team man. He is playing for the team. And there is some plan given to him. "Normally he opens only in the IPL. But here he had been given a clear-cut role. Virat is trying to hit from the first ball and trying to put more pressure on the bowlers. But somehow he is getting out quickly. But I am not worried about him. He is a big-match player. And that big game is coming. His big innings is coming against South Africa."

Buttler admits tactical mistake of not bowling Moeen Ali on turning Providence track

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Admitting that they were completely outplayed by India in the T20 World Cup semifinal, England skipper Jos Buttler said in hindsight it was a tactical mistake on his part to not bowl Moeen Ali on a turning Providence pitch here. Indian spin twin of Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav claimed three wickets each as the defending champions folded for 103 in 16.4 overs in their pursuit of 172 in a rain-interrupted semi-final here on Thursday. "Yeah, disappointing. I think we were outplayed by India. They fully deserved the victory," Buttler said in the post-match media interaction. "They had an above-par score. I was hoping to restrict them to 145-150 probably on that pitch. It was always going to be a tough chase from there." Having won the toss, the England skipper went in with an unchanged XI and it was Adil Rashid and Liam Livingstone who were his chosen spinners, overlooking Moeen Ali perhaps to deal with the damp conditions. Rashid and Livingstone conceded just 49 runs in their eight overs with the former also ending the explosive innings of India skipper Rohit Sharma for a 39-ball 57 in the 14th over. Asked if there was a failure of plans or execution, Buttler said: "A little bit of both. I thought they played well as well. I thought we bowled a little bit without luck in the power play, a few close calls there. "But, yes, I think the benefit of hindsight and reflecting, I



would have got Moeen (Ali) in the game of course. So, yes, bits and pieces here and there," Buttler admitted. The ball was turning viciously and staying low as Rohit placed close-in fielders that resembled playing Tests in India. "I think everyone knew what to expect from this wicket. I think traditionally the bounce is low. And yeah, I thought India played really well and they played the conditions better than we did." Asked about their playing combination, Buttler said: "We thought long and hard about selection, about whether we kept the same balance that had been working well, or did we need four seamers on that particular wicket. That was a really tough call that we made and we ended up sticking with what we had."

"India played a really good game of cricket, whatever team or whatever happened at the toss -- they were going to be a tough team to beat and we had to be at our best if we were going to win the game and we were short of our best today." India will face South Africa in the final and Buttler feels it will be a game of close margins. "The two top sides in the final is going to be a game of small margins and it's going to be a great game. Two really good teams," he said. The Buttler-led side managed to beat only one Test playing nation -- West Indies -- in this tournament and were on the brink of early elimination after a washout against Scotland and a defeat to Australia in the group stage. However, Australia handed them a lifeline by beating Scotland and they narrowly

managed to make the Super 8s beating Namibia via DLS method. "Reaching a semi-final of a World Cup is an achievement. We wanted to obviously go all the way. That was what we came here for," said Buttler, who led them to the T20 World Cup title in 2022 after taking over white-ball captaincy from Eoin Morgan. "We faced lots of challenges and adversity throughout the whole tournament and we've stuck together well and played well enough to get to this stage. But unfortunately, at this stage, we've fallen short." "I think everyone has made progress and we've played well and not well enough, but I think the stuff that we've been doing behind the scenes, the way we've prepared, the way we've trained, the way we've played in patches has been really good. "There's a lot of talent in the team. And yes, we came up against a top team today in these conditions," he said. Asked if there would be fresh faces the next time, he said: "Yeah, I think... I can't do that. I haven't taken in the defeat. Very much thinking about this game and what happened and yeah, I think they say there's some time between today and the next matches, and we can see what happens." On his future plans and whether he would stay on as captain until the Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February, he said: "To be honest, I'm just looking forward to some time away from the game. "As I sit here, emotional after a loss, I don't need to dive too deep into it right now. I just look forward to some space from the game."

Plan was to make it difficult for England without doing anything extraordinary: Axar

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

His exploits in the powerplay set up India's massive win over England and left-arm spinner Axar Patel said keeping things simple was the key as it helped him make life difficult for rival batters "without doing anything extraordinary". Coming in to bowl in the fourth over, Axar (3/23) removed England skipper Jos Buttler off his very first delivery before dismissing Jonny Bairstow and Moeen Ali in consecutive overs to derail England's chase as they eventually folded for 103 in pursuit of 172 in the T20 World Cup semifinals here on Thursday. "Obviously in powerplay, it is difficult (to bowl) but when you know that you are getting help from the wicket, then without thinking much, without doing anything extraordinary, I thought that the more I keep it simple, the easier it would be for me," Axar said during the post-match press conference.



"We spoke in the dressing room that it's not an easy wicket (for batting), and I knew that the batsmen will charge at me. It wasn't going to be easy to hit me down the ground and also (they) couldn't hit off the back foot because the ball wasn't coming on the bat. "So my plan was to make it difficult for them, force them to think of playing some other shots, and, that's what hap-

pened on the first ball. So that was the plan." Axar sent his first ball from round the wicket and Buttler, looking for the reverse-sweep, ended up lobbing it up for wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant to do the rest. "I hadn't really planned to get a wicket on the first ball. My mindset was to put the ball in the right areas. Obviously, when you play knockouts, you want to start and finish well with the first and last ball," said Axar, who was adjudged the Player-of-the-Match. "I think it was difficult to hit big shots, to sweep and reverse sweep because some balls were keeping low on this wicket, so you can't connect it so easily." India scored 171 for 7 after being asked to take first strike and Axar said they were confident of defending the total. "I think 170 was a par score, we could defend it. Rohit bhai said after he finished batting that it was very difficult to hit big shots because the odd ball was spin-

ning, it was staying low and skidding as well. "When we made 170, we knew that we had scored 10-15 runs extra, which we could have defended." Batting at number eight, Axar also hit a six during his 10-run cameo and he said it gave him an idea about the nature of the surface as the pacers were bowling slower balls in the death overs. "Obviously, I got a clue from that (batting) as to what I could do and what I couldn't. When I went to bat, everyone was bowling slower, the ball was not coming at the speed I wanted so I couldn't connect properly. So giving pace would have made it easy for them. It was important to hit the ball at a good area. "It's also about pressure. When you are chasing, and you know that the wicket is helping the bowlers, as an opener, or anyone in the top four, they think of cashing in on the powerplay as much as possible but it didn't work out."

Shafali Verma becomes fastest woman double-centurion in Test cricket

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Dashing India opener Shafali Verma smashed the fastest double-century in the history of women's Test cricket, eclipsing Annabel Sutherland of Australia during the one-off Test against South Africa here on Friday. Shafali, 20, scored her double ton off just 194 balls, bettering Sutherland's feat, which came off 248 balls against South Africa earlier this year. Shafali also became the second Indian after former skipper Mithali Raj to hit a double century in Test cricket after almost 22 long years here. Mithali's 214 had come off 407 balls and the former India skipper achieved during



the drawn second Test against England at Taunton in August, 2022. Shafali struck 23 fours and eight maximums during her attacking knock. She brought up her twin ton with consecutive sixes of off-spinner Delmi Tucker, followed by a single. Shafali was finally run out at 205 off 197 balls. Besides, her opening partner Smriti Mandhana also made an attacking 149 off 161 balls with the help of 27 boundaries and one six to stitch a formidable opening partnership of 292 runs, which came off in just 52 overs. India are going great guns against South Africa on the opening day scoring at close to a run-a-ball.

Last Tango: Possibly final time Rohit and Virat will play for India in T20I format

New Delhi, (PTI)

This Saturday afternoon in Barbados, no Indian fan would want Rohit Sharma to drag his jaded body towards the dug-out trying to hide a tear welling up at the corner of his eye. No Indian fan would want to revisit Virat Kohli's blank stare towards the podium where the coveted ODI World Cup trophy rested exactly seven months and 10 days back. What they would surely want is to see the two greats do a memorable tango in probably their 'Last Dance' in the game's shortest format, at least in India colours. If one understands the drift of Indian cricket's ecosystem, whether it is the BCCI mandarins or the national selectors, they want the troika of Kohli, Rohit and also Ravindra Jadeja to go out on a high from the format. This is because next month's Zimbabwe series would certainly usher in a new dawn keeping in mind the 2026 T20 World Cup in India. To prepare for any global trophy,

the core needs to be finalised two years in advance and in 2026, a 39-year-old Rohit or a nearly 38-year-old Kohli or even Jadeja are unlikely to fit in. At this point, with the focus firmly on the final, no one wants to use the sensitive 'R' word as far as T20Is are concerned but it is believed that if India can beat South Africa in Barbados on Saturday, both skipper Rohit and Kohli would know that in this format, they have nothing more left to achieve. There may or may not be a formal announcement as they would continue to be a part of IPL, where they are still two of the biggest brands apart from Mahendra Singh Dhoni and the non-cricketer -- Shah Rukh Khan. For Kohli, it will be the completion of a cycle with all three ICC white-ball trophies (2011 ODI World Cup, 2013 Champions Trophy) in his cabinet. Just like Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara decided immediately after beating India in that 2014 T20 World Cup final that they would both quit the



shortest format, one doesn't know if the two greats would do something similar. Kohli and Rohit, the two generational talents with 8334 T20I runs, six centuries, 69 fifties and 119 catches between them are the last bridge between the old and new and they both

deserve to be in the same frame with that trophy in hand. Both are World Cup winners but those two victories belonged to the Dhonis, Sachin Tendulkars, and Yuvraj Singh's way more. This trophy would rightfully belong to them. Champions have egos -- some have pretty pronounced ones, while few others keep them concealed. One could gauge the pain in Kohli's eyes after he got out against England and if anyone wants to count the 'King' out of the final, do it at your own peril. For Rohit, if one wants to sum up November 19, 2023 for him, the apt coinage would be Sudhir Mishra's 1996 cult classic 'Is Raat Ki Subaah Nahin'. Even if he asserts that he has moved on, the wounds have healed, he would still be itching for a closure. One can say with a degree of certainty that had India won the 2023 ODI World Cup, Rohit would not have been desperate to play this edition of the T20 World Cup. He wants some kind of closure as far as white ball global triumph is

concerned. A T20 World Cup triumph would give him that. His popularity is organic. Dhoni was 'Mahi bhai' to his juniors, a man they revered. Kohli earned respect with his humongous on-field achievements. But Rohit gets love, unadulterated -- from peers as well as juniors. No wonder Ravichandran Ashwin chokes while narrating how the skipper asked one of the team physios to accompany the spinner to Chennai after his mother had a health scare and that too in the middle of a Test match. They have seen the crests and troughs of Indian cricket together for more than a decade. They had arrived when Nokia 3310 was in vogue and in their twilight zone, they are witness to change in nature of fandom -- every third android phone owner is either a 'Viratian' or a 'Rohitian'. Thankfully for Rohit and Kohli, there is nothing more to prove. If Saturday indeed is their 'Last Dance' in T20Is, the void will be difficult to fill not just in terms of quality but also, and perhaps more so, emotionally.

Kamal Haasan gets high praise for his role in **KALKI 2898 AD**

During a special press conference in Chennai, Kamal Haasan finally talked about the reaction *Kalki 2898 AD* has been receiving. The actor is presently occupied with the promotion of his next film, *Indian 2*, which will hit theatres on July 12. He has found time in his hectic schedule to view the movie and talk about *Kalki 2898 AD*. "In *Kalki*, I have played a small role that makes an appearance for a few minutes only," the actor started. "I haven't even started my actual role in the movie yet; I have more work ahead of me in the sequel. I was shocked when I saw this movie as a fan."

"*Kalki 2898 AD* is one of many signifiers that Indian cinema is moving towards global entertainment. Nag Ashwin approached mythology with caution and impartiality toward all religions. The storytelling legacy of India is unmatched by any other culture, with the exception of Greece, Japan and China. By bringing everyone together, Ashwin has selected stories from that and carried them out very patiently."

After seeing the movie, Kamal complimented Amitabh Bachchan's performance and stated that he wasn't sure how to classify him. "I'm not sure if he qualifies as a new actor or a veteran. He did a really good job on the movie. It appears like the

movie was created with kids in mind. Now, don't question how a white-haired man can watch these kinds of movies. This movie makes you realize that every adult has a child inside of them. I think this is a fantastic attempt and I'm glad to be involved. The fact that this adventure will continue makes me delighted," he continued.

The cast of *Indian 2*, which features Kamal Haasan and Shankar, will soon be travelling to Singapore to promote the film. This will be Senapathy's feature film comeback. The actor will also feature in *Thug Life*, a 2025 release directed by Mani Ratnam.



Kalki 2898 AD collects Rs 191.5 cr globally on day one

Nag Ashwin's 3D spectacle *Kalki 2898 AD* registered a record opening at the global box office, earning Rs 191.5 crore gross on day one of its release, the makers said on Friday. Touted as a marriage of Hindu epic *Mahabharata* and science fiction, the big-budget film is produced by Vjayanthi Movies and was released on Thursday in six languages: Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi and English. It features a star cast led by Prabhas,

Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Haasan, along with Disha Patani, Saswata Chatterjee and Shobhana. Vjayanthi Movies shared the opening day figure of the movie on its official X page through a poster which stated that *Kalki 2898 AD* earned Rs 191.5 crore in gross box office collection (GBOC). The film's day one earnings is the third highest opening day collection for any Indian film. It is behind *SS Rajamouli's RRR* (Rs 223 crores) and

Baahubali 2 (Rs 217 crores), which also featured Prabhas in the lead role. On Thursday, trade pundits had predicted that the film might earn around Rs 200 crore globally on its opening day. Previously titled *Project K*, it is arguably the most expensive feature film in Indian cinema history, at a reported Rs 600 crore. Large crowds were seen outside theatres in several cities, including Hyderabad and Mumbai. The initial reviews were also favourable.

Suriya's *Kanguva* releasing on October 10

Suriya's highly anticipated film *Kanguva*, produced by Studio Green, is set to hit screens on October 10. The recently unveiled sizzle teaser offered a glimpse into its expansive and thrilling universe, showcasing superstar Suriya in a never-before-seen avatar as the Mighty Warrior, and Bobby Deol as the formidable antagonist. This revelation has ignited immense excitement among fans, heightening

anticipation to unprecedented levels. The makers of *Kanguva* have now officially confirmed the release date with a striking new poster. The announcement reads: "Prepare to welcome the Warrior King Our #Kanguva is poised to capture your hearts and dominate screens starting October 10, 2024."



Odela 2 begins crucial schedule in Hyd

Odela 2 is a proud production of Madhu Creations and Sampath Nandi Teamworks, with director Ashok Teja of *Odela Railway Station* fame.

The first look poster of superstar Tamannaah Bhatia as the wise Naga Saadhu "Bhairavi," which was previously released, went viral throughout the nation and greatly increased anticipation for the movie.

The multilingual supernatural spectacle has finished filming in a number of gorgeous sites in India as part of its first schedule. With the almighty blessings of Mahadev Lord Shiva at his sacred home of Varanasi, the film's filming got underway in March.

Now, the makers have announced that the team has begun a crucial schedule for the film in Hyderabad. According to the

makers, the team is currently canning key action sequences that are being choreographed by top stunt masters!



Prithviraj Sukumaran & wife Supriya Menon acquire stakes in Kochi FC

Pan-India star Prithviraj Sukumaran, known for his impeccable roles in *Aadujeevitham*, *Saala: Part 1* and many other blockbusters, has acquired stakes in a football team in the Kerala Super League. The power couple, Prithviraj Sukumaran and Supriya Menon, have invested in Kochi FC, one of the six teams competing in the league.

Their involvement brings a new level of excitement and visibility to the league. This move is not only an investment, but also a passionate effort to enhance the local sports culture. By acquiring Kochi FC, the couple aims to provide a platform for budding football talents in the region, creating opportunities for players to shine.

Mathew Joseph, CEO of Super League Kerala,

emphasised that actor Prithviraj's involvement in the league will create a unique blend of entertainment and sports in Kerala. This exciting development is set to unfold during the 60-day league, starting at the end of August this year.

On the work front, Prithviraj Sukumaran has fans eagerly awaiting his upcoming directorial blockbuster, *L2: Empuraan*, a sequel to the critically acclaimed *Lucifer*.



First song from *Double Ismart* to be out on July 1

Ustaad Ram Pothineni and dynamic director Puri Jagannadh are set to dazzle audiences once again with their upcoming Pan-Indian film *Double Ismart*, proudly produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur. The film has been scheduled for release on August 15, 2024, on the eve of Independence Day.

The makers are gearing up for the musical promotions, with renowned composer Mani Sharma returning after delivering a chart-buster album and captivating BGM for the first part. The first single titled *Steppa Maar* is set to release on July 1.

A striking poster has been unveiled, featuring Ram Pothineni exuding stylish vibes and dancing in front of a Lord Shiva statue. The song promises to be an electrifying tune that will instantly captivate the masses, with Ram's dance moves expected to be a major highlight. Choreographed by Jani Master, the lyrics are penned by Bhaskara Bhatla and Anurag Kulkarni has lent his vocals.

Described as a mass action entertainer, *Double Ismart* has generated immense hype, especially with Sanjay Dutt playing the main antagonist and Kavya Thapar starring as the female lead.

The film will be released in

Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi languages.



RASHMIKA MANDANNA BEGINS SHOOTING FOR *SIKANDAR*

The excitement around Salman Khan's upcoming film *Sikandar* has intensified as the shooting progresses in Mumbai, with the recent addition of Rashmika Mandanna to the sets. Directed by renowned filmmaker AR Murugadoss and produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, *Sikandar* is slated for an Eid 2025 release.

According to sources, the actress is currently in Mumbai and has joined the shooting of the film. Salman Khan, a Bollywood icon known for his charisma and box-office prowess, headlines *Sikandar* alongside Rashmika Mandanna, marking her eagerly anticipated debut opposite Khan. The film promises a blend of action, drama and entertainment, characteristic of Murugadoss's directorial style.

Sikandar is set to captivate audiences with its compelling storyline and stellar performances. With production in full swing and Mumbai providing the backdrop for pivotal scenes, anticipation is building among fans eager to witness Khan and Mandanna's on-screen chemistry.

As the Eid 2025 release date draws nearer, *Sikandar* is poised to be a blockbuster, offering viewers a cinematic treat filled with excitement and emotion.

K'taka murder case: Naga Shaurya defends Darshan

Actor Naga Shaurya has expressed his support for Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who is currently in custody in connection with the alleged murder case of Renukaswamy. Naga shared a photo on his Instagram, showing Darshan tying a watch on him.

Addressing Darshan as "anna" (brother), Naga wrote in his post that Darshan is not someone who could ever harm anyone and expressed confidence in Darshan's innocence. "My heart goes out to the family of the deceased, and I genuinely wish them strength during this difficult time," Naga Shaurya wrote in his Instagram post. The actor expressed disappointment at people rushing to conclusions about the issue.

He stated, "Darshan Anna is not someone who could ever harm anyone, even in his worst nightmares. Those who know him well can attest to his generosity, kind-hearted nature, and unwavering commitment to helping others. He has always gone out of his way to support

those in need and has been a pillar of strength for many." Naga Shaurya also conveyed his faith in the judicial system, believing that the truth will soon come to light. He emphasised the need for privacy and respect for the families involved in the challenging situation.

"We must also remember that another family is suffering greatly as well. They deserve privacy and respect during this challenging period. I firmly believe that Anna, known for his integrity and compassion, will be proven innocent and that the real culprit will be brought to justice," he concluded in his post, adding a folded hands emoji. For those unfamiliar with the situation, Darshan and his friend Pavithra Gowda were arrested on June 11 in connection with the alleged murder of Darshan's fan Renukaswamy. According to police officials, Renukaswamy had allegedly sent obscene messages to Gowda, which reportedly led to the tragic incident.



Raa Raja trailer hints it's a new concept film

The trailer of the film *Raa Raja*, directed by B. Shivaprasad and starring Sugi Vijay and Mounika Maguluri as the lead hero and heroine respectively, has been released under the banner of Sri Padmini Cinema. The trailer was impressive with its unique



concept, extraordinary taking and brilliant background score. Without revealing the character faces, the concept designed is very interesting. The horror thriller elements have created a lot of curiosity. The new concept of *Raa Raja* will give audiences a very different experience when they see the trailer. Shekhar Chandra is providing music for this film, while Rahul Srivatsav is handling the DOP. Uppu Maruthi is the editor, and Ramachandrayulu is the art director. Makers have announced to make the release date of this film official very soon.

Raghava Lawrence's *Benz* to star Fahadh Faasil & SJ Suriya

In an exciting update from the world of cinema, Raghava Lawrence is all set to helm his next directorial venture titled *Benz*, which promises to be a captivating thriller featuring two acclaimed actors in antagonistic roles. The film has garnered attention with sources confirming that Fahadh Faasil and SJ Suriya will portray pivotal villainous characters. Raghava Lawrence, known for his dynamic filmmaking style and penchant for blending action with emotional depth, has chosen a compelling narrative for *Benz*. The inclusion of Fahadh Faasil and SJ Suriya, both renowned for their versatility and intense portrayals on screen, adds an intriguing dimension to the project.

Bakkiyaraj Kannan, celebrated for his directorial prowess showcased in films like *Remo* and *Sulthan*, brings his distinct vision to *Benz*. The collaboration between Lawrence, Kannan and the ensemble cast promises a cinematic experience that will keep audiences on the edge of their seats. Speaking about

the film, Raghava Lawrence expressed his enthusiasm for working with Fahadh Faasil and SJ Suriya, highlighting their ability to bring depth and complexity to their respective characters. He shared his excitement for the audience to witness their performances in roles that challenge traditional perceptions of antagonists in Indian cinema. *Benz* is poised to be a milestone in Raghava Lawrence's career, marking his foray into a genre that blends high-octane action with intricate storytelling. As anticipation mounts for further details about the film's plot and production, fans and critics alike eagerly await its release to witness the clash of titans portrayed by Fahadh Faasil and SJ Suriya. With production underway and the groundwork laid for a gripping narrative, *Benz* is set to redefine the boundaries of cinematic storytelling, promising audiences an unforgettable cinematic journey into the world of intense drama and thrilling confrontations.



PIG TALK



The stars of *Indian 2* arrived for their movie promotions in Malaysia. Kamal Haasan, Siddharth and SJ Suriya, landed in the vibrant city amidst cheering fans and flashing cameras on Friday. The makers took to their social media handles to share the image of the trio having their moment in Malaysia as they landed there.