

ANALYSIS 7

RAYS OF HOPE EMERGE IN
A CHAOTIC SCENARIO

MONEY 8

SUGAR PRODUCTION RISES 15 PC TO
RECORD 35.24 MN TONS SO FAR

SPORTS 11

ENG 'WON'T DIE WONDERING'
UNDER MCCULLUM: SOUTHEE

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2022: PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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URVASHI RAI
PLAYS
A JOURNALIST
IN GREY

Page 12

PM STOPS CAR TO ACCEPT PORTRAIT OF HIS MOTHER IN SHIMLA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday stopped his cavalcade during a roadshow in Shimla to accept a painting of his mother made by a girl. The road leading to Ridge Maidan in Shimla was jam-packed with onlookers waiting to catch a glimpse of PM Modi. Among the crowd gathered, a girl named Anu stood holding a portrait of PM Modi's mother Heeraben Modi. On spotting the portrait, PM Modi stopped his car, got out of it before approaching the girl. "What is your name? Where do you live? How many days did you take to make this painting?" PM Modi asked the girl.

MALAYALAM SINGER EDAVA BASHEER COLLAPSES ON STAGE, DIES AT 78

Music lovers in Kerala mourned the death of popular playback singer Edava Basheer, who collapsed on stage at a music event held in Alappuzha. Edava Basheer collapsed while performing at the event, on Saturday night, to mark the 50th anniversary of a popular music troupe, Bhima's Blue Diamond Orchestra. Political leaders and film industry expressed condolences on the death of the 78-year-old singer. "The demise of Edava Basheer, who played an important role in popularising 'ganamela', is a huge loss to the music world," Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had said in his condolence message.

SRI LANKA PORT IS POWERED BY PEDALS AFTER FUEL SHORTAGES

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka's main seaport unveiled a free bicycle service on Tuesday, allowing workers to navigate the facility without petrol-powered vehicles, as the island nation struggles with unprecedented fuel shortages. The island nation is experiencing its worst financial meltdown since independence, leaving authorities struggling to pay for adequate supplies of vital imports. Motorists around the South Asian country are forced to spend hours or even days waiting for rationed fuel at gas stations. The bicycle initiative was aimed at conserving petrol in the Colombo deep-sea container port, Sri Lanka Ports Authority chairman Prasanth Jayamanna said.

COMMUNICATION SATELLITE GSAT-24 LAUNCH ON JUNE 22: ISRO

India's communication satellite GSAT-24 will be launched by ArianeSpace from Kourou in French Guiana on June 22, the Indian Space Research Organisation said in a mission status update on Tuesday. "NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), a Govt. of India company under Department of Space (DoS), is undertaking GSAT-24 satellite mission as its 1st Demand Driven mission post space reforms", the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said. GSAT-24 is a 24-Ku band communication satellite weighing 4180 kg with pan-India coverage for meeting DTH application needs.



AP projects have no sanction

TS objects to pumped hydro storage schemes
Writes to KRMB chairman to stop the projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana ENC Muralidhar wrote a letter to the chairman of the Krishna River Management Board on Tuesday. Telangana complained about pumped hydro storage schemes undertaken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. In the letter, he objected that the AP had carried out pumped storage schemes on Krishna river without any permission. He appealed to stop unauthorised projects. The board was asked to provide details of all pumped storage schemes undertaken by the AP. He also complained about the Greenko power

project undertaken at Pinnapuram in Kurnool district. He said Krishna waters should not be used for the project without permission.

It may be mentioned here that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on May 17 performed the first concrete pouring ceremony at the 5230 megawatt (MW) integrated renewable energy storage project in Pinnapuram.

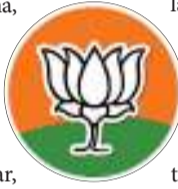
The project being implemented by Greenko Group and funded by Arcelor Mittal Group comprises daily pumped storage of 10,800 MW, 3,000 MW solar and 550 MW of wind power.

BJP playing Kapu card in AP, TS

Saffron party seeks to curry favour with Munnuru Kapu in TS & all Kapu sub-castes in AP

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), always considered a communal party, is now playing caste politics and using the 'Kapu card' in both Telugu states to woo numerically strong castes. In Telangana, the Munnuru Kapu community has the second-highest population and in Andhra Pradesh, the Kapu community decides the fate of a political party.



If Bandi Sanjay Kumar, who hails from the Munnuru Kapu community, heads the party in Telangana, it's Somu Veerajulu of the Kapu community in Andhra Pradesh who is presently leading the party.

The BJP, which is looking to expand its base in South India, is focusing on both the Telugu states. To woo the Munnuru Kapu community, the BJP leadership has selected former MLA and former Telangana BJP President K Laxman

who also belongs to the same community as a Rajya Sabha candidate in Telangana. Earlier, Laxman was made OBC chairman of the BJP. In Telangana, the Mudiraj community has the highest number of voters, and the Munnuru Kapu are the second largest community in terms of votes. Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind, and present Rajya Sabha candidate K Laxman belong to the Munnuru Kapu community.

Former Minister and Huzurabad MLA Etala Rajendar belongs to the Mudiraj Community. The BJP leadership hopes to garner support from the two major communities in the forthcoming Assembly elections.

Meanwhile, in Andhra Pradesh, the Kapu community plays a crucial role in deciding the fate of a political party in the elections. Compared to the dominant castes

WILL 'KAPUS' PROTECT BJP HOPES?

The word Kapu in Telugu means the protector. True to its meaning, the predominantly Kapu caste constitutes around 15% of the five crore population of Andhra Pradesh state. If the Kapu and its sub-castes unite, they can decide the fate of a political party. But disunity is the main drawback of this community. For several decades now, it has become a practice for the Kapu community to hold Kapu leaders' meetings and demand the political parties some seats for the community before the elections. If the Kapu and all its sub-castes unite, they will be in a position to give some seats to other communities. Ironically, they are asking others for a political pie.

of Reddy and Kamma, the Kapu community is a numerically strong group but to date, no Kapu leader has become the chief minister either in the erstwhile combined Andhra Pradesh or in the truncate AP after bifurcation. The BJP is trying to take advantage of the Kapu aspirations of occupying the CM post in AP, so it is trying to woo the Kapu community.

Andhra Pradesh BJP president Somu Veerajulu is from the Kapu community. In addition to this, the BJP is planning to project Jana Sena

president Pawan Kalyan as its CM candidate in the forthcoming Assembly elections. At present, BJP and Jana Sena have a political alliance and the former hopes this alliance will continue in the next Assembly elections too. The Kapu community has several sub-castes including Telaga, Balija, Ontari, Munnuru Kapu, Turpu Kapu, and others. If all these communities stand united and support a political party in the elections, it will not be a tough task for a Kapu leader to occupy the CM seat.



WEF president thanks Jagan for taking part in Davos 2022 meet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

World Economic Forum (WEF) president Borge Brende expressed sincere gratitude to chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for his participation in the WEF's annual meeting that was just concluded recently in Davos.

Borge Brende on Tuesday wrote to Jagan. In the letter he said "I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your active participation in the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2022. The meeting convened against one of the most challenging geopolitical and geoeconomic backdrops in decades.

Steep hike in AP bar licence fees likely

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Jagan Mohan Reddy government has begun the exercise on the new bar licence policy as the existing licence for five years (2017-22) will be completed in June and the government has decided to implement the new licence policy from July. There are currently 840 bars across Andhra Pradesh and the number will remain unchanged.

According to sources, the licence fees will be increased drastically.

At present there are three slabs, for a population below 50,000 the fee is Rs 10 lakh, for a population more than 50,000 and below three lakh the fee is Rs 20 lakh and for a population above



three lakh, it is Rs 30 lakh per year.

According to sources, the government has been working to enhance the fee to Rs 20 lakh, Rs 30 lakh, and Rs 50 lakh respectively in the three slabs. However, the licence fee for non-IT coverage is low and the non-refundable registration charge is high. There will

be an increase of 10 percent of the fee per annum. The Excise department is preparing to issue a new bar licence policy notification in a maximum of 10 days. Soon after the notification is issued, the department will be busy receiving the applications. Till now, there has been a policy of renewing the

existing bar licences from time to time.

Soon after the YSRCP came to power in 2019, it tried to scrap the then-existing bar licences. However, the government had to step back as the bar owners moved the court claiming they had licences till 2022. Now that the period is going to end, the government is coming up with a new approach to seeking new applications. According to Andhra Pradesh State Beverage Corporation Ltd (APSBCL) MD, D Vasu Deva Reddy, it is too early to discuss the new bar licence policy. He said the policy of a 10 percent hike every year is an old practice and the decision to increase the licence fee by more than 10 percent is yet to be decided.

TIRUPATI WOMAN'S DEATH

Hubby turns out to be killer

Accused admits to murder, stuffing body in suitcase & dumping it in irrigation tank 5 months ago

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a gruesome incident, a man brutally murdered his wife, stuffed the body in a suitcase, and dumped it in an irrigation tank.

The appalling incident took place five months ago but came to light only on Tuesday during the police investigation. The body was found in a decomposed state.

According to police, the accused Venugopal, a software engineer, married the deceased Padmavati alias Padma in 2017 in Tirupati. Padma belonged to Korlakunta village near the temple town. Differences cropped up between the couple as Venugopal started harassing his wife from day one of their marriage itself. They lodged police complaints against each other. Later, Padma went to her parents' house in Tirupati and stayed with them.

However, on January 5, the accused Venugopal went to her house and convinced Padma's parents to send her with him to lead a family life, forgetting the differences. Trusting him, Padma went with him. However, Venugopal brutally murdered his wife, stuffed the body in a suitcase,



and dumped it in an irrigation tank, located at Venkatapuram on the outskirts on January 5. He kept telling Padma's parents that she had been with him.

Since the parents were unable to speak to her, they suspected foul play and lodged a complaint with the Tirupati East police station. The police registered a case and arrested the accused Venugopal.

During interrogation, Venugopal confessed to the murder of his wife. The police

retrieved the decomposed body from the tank and shifted it to the Government hospital for postmortem.

The parents told the media that they did not expect that he would kill their daughter. When their marriage was held he was working as a software engineer in Chennai and now he is working in Hyderabad. The parents grieved inconsolably after knowing that the body of their daughter was found in a decomposed state. They appealed to the police to punish the accused sternly.

App to monitor prices of essentials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma has said that a special app will be launched to monitor the prices of essential commodities and vegetables at Rythu Bazaars. The CS said that, at various rythu bazaars and retail markets in the State.

The CS on Tuesday held a review meeting with the officials of departments concerned on the prices of various essential commodities and vegetables at the Secretariat. On the occasion, the CS directed the officials of the Departments of Marketing, Oil Fed, CEOs of Rythu

Bazaars, and other departments to take appropriate steps to ensure the full availability of various essential commodities including vegetables and cooking oils in Rythu Bazaars. The CS said that, at present, the price-monitoring was done through dashboards and soon an App will be made available to monitor the same. He said that the Director of Economics and Statistics and Marketing is already working on the special App, which will be available within a week.

Per capita income remains below pre-Covid level

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's annual per capita income at constant prices remained below the pre-COVID level at Rs 91,481 in 2021-22, official data showed on Tuesday. However, the per capita income based on Net National Income (NNI) at constant price grew by 7.5 per cent in FY22 over the previous year. The per capita income at constant price was Rs 94,270 in 2019-20 before it dipped to Rs 85,110 in 2020-21 on account of the disruption in economic activities caused by COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns.

Putting behind Covid pangs, AP airports begin to look up

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Slowly coming out of the Covid pandemic-induced situation, airports in Andhra Pradesh are on the uptick. In the 2021-22 Financial Year (FY) both passengers and aircraft movement had increased when compared to 2020-21 at airports in Andhra Pradesh. Among all the four operating airports in the state, Tirupati airport had witnessed the highest growth both in terms of passenger traffic and aircraft movement. Vizag continues to top among the airports in the state in both passenger traffic and aircraft movement.

Among the four airports, Tirupati airport registered 77 pc growth in passenger traffic and 44pc growth in Aircraft move-



ment.

Passenger traffic at Tirupati airport went up to 6,23,341 in 2021-22 when compared to 3,52,375 in 2020-21 registering a growth of 77 pc. Aircraft movement was 8,158 in 2021-22 while it was only 4,612 in 2020-21.

Vijayawada airport witnessed the lowest growth among the air-

ports in the state in passenger traffic with just 23pc. After Tirupati, Vizag airport witnessed the highest growth in terms of both passenger traffic and aircraft movement.

With 16,10,483 passenger traffic and 14,852 aircraft movement, Vizag airport witnessed a growth of 45 pc and 29 pc in both segments in 2021-22. In 2020-21, Vizag air-

port witnessed passenger traffic of 11,13,516 and aircraft movement of 10,67.

Vijayawada airport witnessed 6,25,131 passenger traffic in 2021-22 when compared to 5,07,215 in 2020-21 registering only 23 pc growth. The Vijayawada airport had witnessed 9,528 aircraft movements in the just concluded financial year against 7,423 movements in 2020-21.

Rajahmundry airport witnessed 35pv growth in passenger traffic with 2,75,60 in 2021-22 when compared to 2,04,365 in 2020-21. The same airport witnessed 7,019 aircraft movements in 2021-22 which was 5,682 in 2020-21 with a growth of 19pc.

Among all the four operating airports in the State, only Vizag and Vijayawada are the international

airports. Though Vijayawada is designated as an international airport, no international flight operates from there. Only the Vizag airport handles international flights.

"When compared with the financial year 2020-21 regarding the number of passengers traveled and aircraft from the airports of Andhra Pradesh, most of the airports have increased passenger and aircraft movements in the financial year 2021-22. Among the four airports, Tirupati airport registered 77pc growth in passenger traffic and 44pc growth in Aircraft movement.

As could be seen from the statistics, it is clear that the airports in Andhra Pradesh have a bright future," said O Naresh Kumar of Andhra Pradesh Air travelers Association.

SC takes up hearing over NGT stay on resort works

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Supreme Court bench on Tuesday heard the plea by the Andhra Pradesh government against an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) which halted the construction works at Rushikonda Hills in Visakhapatnam as part of a tourism project.

Appearing on behalf of the State government, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi said it is a prestigious project being constructed by the government. He added that only on the basis of a letter, NGT constituted a committee and that committee ex parte looks into it and says there is no environmental degradation or violation.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Tithi: Dvitiya: May 31 07:19 PM to Jun 01 09:47 PM
Tritiya: Jun 01 09:47 PM to Jun 03 12:17 AM

Nakshatram:
Mrigashirsha: May 31 10:01 AM to Jun 01 01:00 PM
Ardra: Jun 01 01:00 PM to Jun 02 04:04 PM

Rahukalam: 12:14 PM to 1:51 PM
Yamagandam: 7:22 AM to 8:59 AM
Varjyam: 10:29 PM to 12:17 AM
Gulika: 10:36 AM to 12:14 PM
Amritakalam: None
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 34°C
Humidity: 28%
Sunrise: 5:38 AM
Sunset: 6:39 PM
Updated: MAY 31, 2022 5:00 PM

BIG STORY

World staring at food crisis

Russia-Ukraine war fuels food shortage as logistics remain affected

Prices sky high

Sky-high fertiliser prices have farmers worldwide reducing planned harvests and the amount of land they're planting.

The fertiliser crisis is in some respects more worrying because it could inhibit food production in the rest of the world that could help take up the slack from stalled Ukrainian and Russian grain deliveries, according to Maximo Torero, chief economist for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

"If we don't resolve the problem of fertiliser, and trade of fertilisers doesn't continue, then we'll have a very serious problem of [food] supply next year," Torero told Reuters.

Western sanctions on Russia, a major exporter of potash, ammonia, urea and other soil nutrients, have disrupted shipments of those natural resources around the globe. China last year imposed fertiliser export curbs to protect its own farmers as global prices soared due to strong demand and high energy prices.

Russia and China exported 28% of the world's fertilisers in terms of trade value from 2016 to 2020 according to a Reuters analysis of UN Comtrade data.



SUGAR +21.8% MEAT +21.9% DAIRY +47.1% CEREALS +69.5% OILS +137.5%
FOOD PRICE INDEX +58.5%
Price increase above 2014-16 average as of Apr. 2022.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February dramatically worsened the outlook for already inflated global food prices.

The halt in Ukrainian exports following the outbreak of the conflict pushed the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index, which tracks international prices of the most globally traded food commodities, to its highest point in March since records began in 1990. Russia's

Invasion straining markets

invasion of Ukraine, a move Russia calls a "special operation" to demilitarise its neighbour, is the latest development in a growing global food crisis. While post-pandemic global demand, extreme weather, tightening food stocks, high energy prices, supply chain bottlenecks and export restrictions and taxes

have been straining the food market for two years, the recent convergence of all these factors following Russia's invasion is unprecedented and has sent food inflation rates spiking around the world. In Europe, the Consumer Price Index for food has sharply risen in all of the con-

Supplies under stress

The war has disrupted global agricultural exports from Russia and Ukraine, two grain exporting powerhouses that accounted for 24% of global wheat exports by trade value, 57% of sunflower seed oil exports and 14% of corn from 2016 to 2020, according to data from UN Comtrade. In the 8 months before the invasion, 51 million metric tons of grain passed through Ukraine's seven Black Sea ports, according to the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP). Since the invasion, much of Ukraine's current export grain stock has been stuck in the war-torn country because of damage to rail infrastructure, closed ports and Russian blockades in the Black Sea. Those blockades also mean there won't be sufficient storage available when the 2022 harvest comes in, according to the WFP.



Andrii, a serviceman of the Ukrainian Armed Forces volunteer, walks inside a grain storage damaged during a Russian military strike.

Grain storage damaged

U.S. government images seen by Reuters showed what a U.S. official said was damage to grain storage facilities in eastern Ukraine and was indicative of the severity of Russian attacks that are affecting the global food supply.

"Russia's reckless damaging of these grain silos is a clear-cut example of how Putin's war directly affects civilians in Ukraine and threatens food security around the world."

Those most at risk

Those living in poverty and in countries dependent on food imports are most at risk of suffering from the food inflation crisis.

According to the WFP, 811 million people are chronically hungry. 276 million are living on the brink of starvation and nearly 49 million live in 43 countries on the brink of famine. Many may reduce meals and the amount of calories they consume, and especially those who are forced to spend a greater portion of their income on food are at risk of being pushed further into poverty to stave off hunger.



The strain and pain

The strain can be seen in agricultural powerhouse Brazil, where some farmers are applying less fertiliser to their corn, and some federal legislators are pushing to open protected indigenous lands for the mining of potash. In Zimbabwe and Kenya, small farmers are reverting to using manure to nourish their crops.

Man surrounded by maize crops A farmer Boniface Mutize inspects his maize crop during an interview with Reuters at his farm in Domboshava, a village in the province of Mashonaland East outside Harare, Zimbabwe. Boniface Mutize, who grows maize and soybeans just outside Harare, said he has started making his own fertiliser by mixing cow dung or chicken waste with zinc. But he said he needs ammonium nitrate, which is not produced in large quantities in Zimbabwe.



Palm oil is biodiesel

Palm oil, the most widely used edible oil, is also used as biodiesel feedstock. "Exporting countries and importing countries need to have their priorities right, this is the time to temporarily reconsider food versus fuel priorities," said director general of the Malaysian Palm Oil Board Ahmad Parveez Ghulam Kadir.



What about India?

India's May ban on wheat exports delivered a fresh blow to world markets, as a scorching heat wave in the country curtailed output and domestic prices hit a record high. The impact of recent export bans has also rippled into the energy market. Cereals and vegetable oils are major components of bio-fuels, demand for which has ballooned as countries try to find alternatives to fossil fuels. Biofuels had become particularly attractive to the EU as the bloc races to reduce its reliance on Russian oil and gas. The EU, already in the midst of an energy crisis - and dependent on Russia for 40% of its gas and 27% of oil imports - produces 34% of the world's biodiesel from vegetable oils, according to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Food and Agriculture Organization (OECD-FAO).

- Palm oil 51.7%**
- Argentina soybean oil, soybean meal 39.9%**
- Russia 18.2%**
- sunflower oil 13.1%**
- wheat, meslin, rye, barley, maize, sugar 5.3%**
- sunflower seeds Ukraine 10.3%**
- poultry, eggs, sunflower oil, bovine meat, rye, maize 5.9%**
- wheat, oats, millet, sugar Kazakhstan wheat, wheat flour 3.2%**

Essar iron ore terminal handles a record 1.3 MMT cargo in April

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Essar Vizag Terminal Limited (EVTL) operating India's largest Ore Handling Complex in Visakhapatnam Port has recorded 1.3 MMT of cargo handling for April this year, a run rate of more than 14 MMT for Financial Year 22 - 23 suggesting growth of 10pc on an annualised basis.

For FY 21 - 22, EVTL has handled a cargo of 12.7 MMT. The surge in traffic marks the uptick in the Indian steel sector which has been a major contributor to India's manufacturing output.

EVTL has handled 193 vessels and 1511 rakes in FY 21 - 22. EVTL has achieved a monthly record of handling 171 rakes in March 2022. On

April 22, M/s EVTL created another milestone by successfully loading a record 1,65,000 Metric Tons (MT) of Iron ore Fines on M.V. STAR ELINI Vessel - the largest ever parcel loaded and to call at Visakhapatnam Port

"The performance of Vizag Terminal is a testimony of our commitment to offering world-class assets and services with technology at the core. Our facilities are conceptualized to give a sustainable advantage to our customers and trade. Our investments are a reflection of Essar's ESG philosophy and an approach that places people before profits," said, Essar, Operating Partner (Infrastructure), and Essar Ports, Managing Director, Rajiv Agarwal.

Violations will be dealt with strictly: Centre

PNS ■ UDUPI

Union Minister of State Shobha Karandlaje on Tuesday said those violating the High Court order, which restricts the use of hijab (headscarves) in educational institutions, should be dealt with strictly as it could lead to anti-national activities.

The High Court has already made it clear that there is no scope for hijab in the classroom. Everyone who lives here should respect the law of the land. Stringent action should be taken against those who want to violate the High Court order because it will lead to anti-social and anti-national activities, Karandlaje, who holds the agriculture and farmers' affairs portfolios, told reporters.

Her comment came a day after 12 women of the University College of the Mangalore University in Mangaluru, the district headquarter town of Dakshina Kannada, were denied entry, citing the High Court order.

Govt pushed farm sector into deep crisis: Dhulipalla

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Former TDP MLA Dhulipalla Narendra Kumar on Tuesday accused the ruling YSRCP government of pushing agriculture into a deep crisis with its endless betrayals and anti-farmer policies.

Narendra Kumar deplored that harvests and agriculture production reversed in the past three years. The farmers suffered crop losses of 26 lakh acres but the YCP Government compensated just Rs. 1,402

Cr. Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader said CM Jagan Mohan Reddy would go down in history as the most heartless Chief Minister who made farmers go through a living hell. Because of the Government's failures, the AP State stood in the top position in the suicides of farmers and tenant farmers.

Narendra Kumar deplored that paddy sold at Rs. 1,600 per quintal under the TDP rule but now it has gone down to just Rs. 1,000 under the Jagan

Mohan Reddy rule. Over 85 percent of the AP population was dependent on agriculture. The YCP rulers neglected farmers, which eventually led to an 11 percent fall in farm production.

The TDP leader said that the Government itself had officially stated over 59 lakh farmers were cultivating different crops. Despite this, only nominal crop insurance payments were being made for them. The vacancies in veterinary hospitals were not filled.

'AP to be role model in green energy'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Industries, Infrastructure, Investment, and IT Minister Gudivada Amarnath made key remarks on Telangana. He said that the Telangana movement was only for Hyderabad.

He observed that AP has no comparison with Telangana in terms of investments. Hyderabad is in autopilot mode in attracting IT investments.

SC takes up hearing...

Continued from Page 1

"Please see the committee report that there was no violation. Again a new committee was constituted to see if CRZ permissions were intact. This is for the resort which is ours which we are only demolishing and building again. The work was later stayed and now the monsoon is coming and 50 pc work is already done," said Singhi.

The Supreme Court bench of justice BR Gavai and Justice Hima Kohli postponed the

hearing to Wednesday. On May 11, NGT, acting on a petition filed by YSRCP rebel MP K Raghuram Krishna Raju, ordered an interim stay on the construction works of the proposed tourism project on Rushikonda Hill abutting the beach.

The NGT's Principal Bench in New Delhi also constituted a joint committee to look into the environmental viability of the project and whether CRZ clearances should be revisited.

Maritime Board CEO demoted

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP government has demoted AP Maritime Board CEO Muralidharan as Deputy CEO. Chief Secretary to Government Dr Sameer Sharma issued orders appointing Sagili Shan Mohan with full additional charge (FAC) of the post of APMB CEO and further posting Muralidharan as Deputy CEO of APMB.

Shan Mohan is Executive Director of the AP Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited and EO of AP High Grade Steels Limited. The GO issued by the government stated that the full additional charge of CEO APMB has been given to him which would continue until further orders. The demotion of CEO to Deputy CEO became a hot topic among officials' circles.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹300
Without Skin	₹320
Broiler at Farm	₹169

EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA	385
HYDERABAD	385
VISAKHAPATNAM	410
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.85

WEF president thanks Jagan for...

Continued from Page 1

At this critical time for the world, your contributions to the strategic dialogues in Davos were vital in rallying the international community to step up collective actions on issues such as climate change, peace and safeguarding the economic recovery."

He added that the complexity of today's global challenges reinforces the essence of public-private cooperation. In bringing together over 2,500 leaders from

government, business and civil society at a time of growing global fractures, the annual meeting reaffirmed the need for cooperation and charted solutions to the world's most urgent challenges.

"Thank you for representing Andhra Pradesh with a strong voice in the Annual Meeting. I hope that your first experience in Davos has been fruitful. Participants greatly valued your contributions during the Annual Meeting.

App to monitor prices of essentials

Continued from Page 1

The CS said that through this App the availability of essential commodities, supply, and stock at various rythu bazaars can be monitored by the concerned departments including Marketing, Civil Supplies, Weights and Measures, SERP, Vigilance, and Enforcement, and regulate the prices.

Srinivasa Rao, CEO, Rythu Bazaars explained to the CS the prices available at the Ruthy Bazaar

in 13 undivided districts across Andhra Pradesh and prices in the open market on Monday, May 30th.

On the other hand from February 28 to date, 2,166 cases have been registered by the Department of Weights and Measures, Vigilance and Enforcement, and Civil Supplies during special drives on vendors selling edible oil at exorbitant prices. Of these, 1,798 cases were for selling cooking oil prices above the

prescribed MRP while the remaining 368 cases were registered for violation of the Weights and Measures Act and related regulations. In 858 cases a total compounding fee of Rs 56 lakh was imposed.

Civil Supplies Department EO Secretary Girija Shankar, Marketing Commissioner Pradyumna, DG Vigilance and Enforcement Dr. Shank Barta, Oil Fed, and other departmental officials were present on the occasion through the video link.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT
"C" Block, Vasudha Shelters, LIC Colony, Gollapudi, Vijayawada - 521223

NOTIFICATION

Name of the work: "Notice for the receipt of Application for the following posts in the Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Department, Govt of Andhra Pradesh."

- 1) Capacity Building and IEC Expert (Individual Recruitment)
- 2) Institutional Strengthening and Monitoring Expert (Individual Recruitment)

The intending candidates are requested to login to <https://rwsa.ap.gov.in> from 01.06.2022 to 07.06.2022, for submitting the Applications along with documents.

Contact Details: 9100120563, Name: V. Saraswathi. Sd/- Chief Engineer-IV, RWS&S, Vijayawada.

R.O. No: 4767/CJL/ADVT/11/2021-22, Dt. 31.05.2022

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Fake info on govt schemes posted on social media

CID files case and starts investigation

C PRADEEP KUMAR
VIJAYAWADA

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) officials the other day found fake press notes with the official emblem of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, which also contained the national emblem, and titled 'Government of Andhra Pradesh Amaravati'. The fake notice was originally in Telugu, which said that Jaganna Amma Vodi and Vahana Mitra, two welfare schemes, had been cancelled due to financial constraints. "In 2022, the benefits of Amma Vodi and Mitra would not be given to eligible beneficiaries. Issued by Andhra Pradesh Department of Information Technology and Broadcasting," said the notice.

The fake press note mentions two welfare schemes instituted by the AP government, which have a large number of beneficiaries. Fake news of this nature is likely to create



widespread panic, fear and alarm among its beneficiaries, their families and their dependents. The social media posts in which this press note was posted have not used the same in a satirical, humorous or ironical context, but there is every indication that they aimed to mislead the public. The press note contains false



information that misleads the public regarding government schemes that have a direct impact on their daily lives, and defames the State government. As this concerns a forgery involving the State emblem and using it to create panic amongst public, an FIR was registered by the CID under Section 7 of the State Emblem

of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005, Section 3 of the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950, Sections 66C of the IT Act, 2000; and Section 505(1), 464, 465, 466, 469, 471, 474 and 500 of the IPC. The investigation has been launched.

Public in general is advised not to believe such fake news and stay away from sharing or posting such fake news or fake posts, says the CID.

The CID has sent 41 A notices on Tuesday to Koganti Srinivasa Rao S/O Mallikarjuna Rao, 46 yrs, Kamma By caste, Chavali road, Vemuru village & Mandal, Bapatla district. Paruchuri Ramya W/O. Saikrishna, 31 yrs, Chowdary by caste, Nandulapeta, 3rd ward, Tenali, Guntur District. Koganti Srinivasa Rao S/O Mallikarjuna Rao, 46 yrs, Kamma By caste, Chavali road, Vemuru village & Mandal, Bapatla district.

AP will witness 'one-sided' poll: Naidu

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national president and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday asserted that the YSRCP turned into a 'gone case' because of the three-year atrocious rule of Jagan Mohan Reddy in Andhra Pradesh.

Naidu said whenever the election is held, the State would witness a 'one-sided poll'. The AP people were seething with anger and anguish over the ruthless policies of the Jagan government.

Addressing a teleconference with party main leaders, the TDP chief said he had never seen before a government like the present YSRCP regime which was facing severe public resentment in just three years. Jagan's inefficient and anarchic rule had made the YSRCP thoroughly unpopular. Its days were over now.

Naidu listed out the reasons for the 'grand success' of the party's latest Mahanadu conclave held on May 27 and 28. The TDP activists' resolve to fight it out against three years of suppression and the rising public discontent have made Mahanadu a roaring success. The general public experienced unprecedented troubles and because of the present rulers'

'Restore internet services in Konaseema'

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday demanded that the Jagan Reddy government restore internet services immediately in the Konaseema area in Godavari region.

Naidu called it 'inefficiency' on the part of the YSRCP government not to restore internet services even after a gap of one week. In a tweet here, the TDP chief said that it was painful to see 'internet shutdown' in a mostly peaceful area like Konaseema. Usually, such a shutdown would be imposed in long-term troubled areas like Kashmir. Chandrababu Naidu advised the Jagan government

mindless policies for the past three years. Chandrababu Naidu pointed out how the party activists and people came from long

to realise that in present-day human society, the internet had become almost an essential service and a basic necessity. It has become part and parcel of the common man's life. Naidu pointed out that even small traders and vendors were using the internet for their day-to-day transactions. It was not correct to continue the ban on the internet even after a week of shutdown in these days of technology-driven human society. The TDP chief asserted that the internet services should be immediately restored without any further delay. Any complacency in this regard would cause greater inconvenience to the public. It was a matter concerning lakhs of people.



distances to Mahanadu despite hurdles created by the Government. They came by making their arrangements, by their own autos, tractors and

lorries. All this would stand for the 'political change' that had come in every nook and corner of AP.

The TDP chief made a special mention of the help that farmers of Manduvavari Palem near Ongole had extended by giving their lands for Mahanadu. The joint efforts of Ongole leaders had contributed to the huge success of the party's historic conclave. The party leaders in every district should follow the same spirit and inspiration in future programmes.

Naidu asserted that uncontrollable crowds came to Mahanadu while the ruling YCP bus yatra witnessed empty chairs. First, they held 'Gadapa Gadapaku YCP' but changed it to 'Gadapa Gadapaku Govt' due to lack of public response. As there was no response still, they started the bus yatra once again. The whole State had seen how the YSRCP bus yatra too had failed miserably.

The TDP chief asked the party leaders to continue the 'Badude Badudu' programmes everywhere. The membership drive should also be speeded up. Groupism would not be tolerated at any level in the party. Village-level leaders should be ever vigilant over the deletion of voters' names.

Forum demands Govt junior colleges in every mandal sought

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Forum of Registered Teachers Organisations (FRTO) has sought the government to start government junior colleges in every mandal of AP State. FORTO State honorary president Oteru Srinivasulu Reddy, chairman Karanam Harikrishna and secretary general Samala Simhachalam called for immediate action in the wake of the government's announcement

to set up a new junior college in every mandal.

The leaders said that as part of the new national education policy, the government has made it a rule to stay in one place up to Plus Two.

They further said that for this, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy repeatedly announced at the Department of Education review meetings that Plus Two education would be provided in one high school in each man-

dal center, and FRTO welcomed the decision of the CM.

They said that however, no action would be taken to set up colleges even though it was just a few days before the start of the new academic year.

They said that if colleges were set up in the same schools where the students were studying till the 10th standard, students would not have to go to other places for higher education.

Lokesh seeks judicial probe into row over APPSC posts

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Tuesday urged the Governor to order a judicial inquiry into the government's fraud in the Group-I interview selections held by the AP Public Service Commission (APPSC).

Lokesh said that hundreds of meritorious candidates got a raw deal and total injustice as a result of irregularities in APPSC Group-I selections.

In a statement here, the TDP MLC warned that their

party would expose Jagan Reddy's 'Sarkaru Vaari Paata' (auction of Group-I posts). The Government should clarify why over 326 candidates were selected in digital valuation as against just 124 in manual valuation. The Governor should get it thoroughly investigated.

Nara Lokesh pointed out that the Jagan Government had told the court that digital valuation was carried out in total transparency. In such a case, why were there many discrepancies and variations? Has any magic taken place in



digital valuation? Lokesh said the names of over 202 candidates, who

were selected previously, were missing from the latest selection list. What reliable answer could the Government give on this aspect? Was there any Jagan drama in selection of Telugu medium candidates? Over 142 Telugu medium candidates got selected in digital valuation as against just 47 in manual valuation.

Condemning the YCP policies, Lokesh asked whether the differences in digital and manual valuations were aimed at benefitting some vested interests. Over

75 candidates were selected for the sports quota. But, this number was reduced to 48 by taking eight months for completing manual valuation which should have taken just three months.

Nara Lokesh said at every instance, it was clear that the Group-I selections were full of irregularities. The Governor should focus on the Government-sponsored frauds in the selections. Justice should be done to the deserving candidates who got a raw deal because of the differences in valuation.

Collector felicitates UPSC ranker

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao on Tuesday felicitated UPSC examination 309 ranker Mohammed Abdul Rawoof at the collectorate. The UPSC examination results were declared on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Dilli Rao wished that Rawoof should secure the top positions in the administration. Collector has suggested the UPSC ranker try to alleviate poverty and eradicate inequalities in the society.

Expressing happiness with

achieving rank, Abdul Rawoof said he had worked as the Manager in Nabard for two years and later decided to quit the job and prepare for the UPSC examinations. He said he got the rank on the third attempt and thanked everyone who helped him in achieving the success. He said he has achieved success with the blessings and support of his parents Md Iqbal and Gausia Begum, both state government officials.

APNGOs Association leaders K Vidya Sagar, P Ramesh, J Swamy, and others attended the felicitation programme.



No development under YSRCP rule: CPI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna has alleged that there has been no development since the YSRCP came to power three years ago, and asked the ruling party why the party leaders were organising celebrations. "Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has pushed the State into a debt trap," he said.

At a press conference at Dasari Bhavan in the city on Tuesday, Ramakrishna said that if the government did anything good for the people, they were bound to celebrate, but that was not the situation in the State. The State government had imposed several burdens on the people such as increasing house tax and prices of essential goods, petrol and diesel, he said. "These burdens are just like daily finance-based interests," he added.

"The State government claims that Rs.1.42 lakh crore was directly given to the beneficiaries of welfare schemes. But, at the same time people are robbed by the government in the name of various taxes, increasing prices etc.," he pointed out.

Ramakrishna also said that none of the projects was completed. "Not only in irrigation, in other sectors also, no project was completed in the last three years," he added.



CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna addressing a press conference at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

RYTHU SANGHAM CONDEMNS ATTACK ON TIKAIT

VIJAYAWADA: Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham president V Krishnaiah and general secretary P Jamalalaih have condemned the attack on national rythu leader and BKU chief Rakesh Tikait, who played a key role in the farmers' protest organised in Delhi. Anti-social elements, allegedly aligned with the BJP and the RSS, attacked Tikait who was attending a seminar in Bengaluru with another leader Yudhaver Singh. V Krishna and P Jamalalaih urged all those who believe in democracy to condemn the attack. They are suppressing the agitations by attacks on the national leaders, they said. BJP and RSS activists purposely attacked Tikait and Yudhaver Singh, they added. Later, the rythu leaders demanded that the police should register a case on the attackers and take appropriate action while protecting the leaders.

"Polvaram project is the life-line of Andhra Pradesh. The State government has set aside the entire project and is neglecting the displaced families," he

alleged. Special Category Status (SCS), Kadapa Steel Plant, Visakha Railway Zone and special package for backward districts are still pending with the

Central government. The State government never questioned the union government though, he said. Ramakrishna said that the State government was keeping silent while the union government was speeding up the Visakha Steel Plant's privatisation process. The CM never took a step to discuss the issue with the union government, he said.

Ramakrishna criticised that while foreign investors met Telangana minister KTR, no one met CM YS Jagan in Davos. In the last three years, no investors or projects came to the State, he said, and added that the Chief Minister had failed.

"There is nothing to tell the people. That's why the government conducted a bus yatra. The administration is in the hands of Y Vijaya Sai Reddy, Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and YV Subba Reddy," he said. He asked where social justice in the State was.

"The Left parties will announce the future course of action with the cooperation of all parties, financial experts and ideologists after conducting a meeting," Ramakrishna said. CPI State secretariat member P Harihar Reddy and Vijayawada city secretary Donepudi Sankar were present.



Session on body conditioning held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Body conditioning is a broad term that refers to a wide range of physical activities and exercises that train the whole body. Body conditioning exercises include full-body workouts that activate the entire body and exercises that simultaneously use multiple major muscle groups. To introduce this new physical activity, GITAM Deemed to be University organised a special session here on Tuesday,

which was led by an experienced instructor and professor from the Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw (Poland).

During the interaction with GITAM students, she explained biomechanics and the assessment of the load on the musculoskeletal system caused by the selection of inappropriate exercises.

She also briefed how the total body conditioning exercises would help improve cardiovascular health.

'Role of women police, secretaries vital'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijay Krishna T, Crime Control Station Inspector and Anti-Human Trafficking Unit in-charge, Palnadu district, has said the role of women police, secretaries and NGOs is very crucial and the District Anti-Human Trafficking Unit is working at its best to prevent human trafficking.

A one-day orientation programme was held at the Rural Police Station in Narasaraopet on Tuesday, in collaboration with HELP Organisation and the District Anti-Human Trafficking Unit on the 'Role of Women Protection Secretaries in Prevention of Human Trafficking'.

Vijay Krishna, who was the chief guest of the programme, said it was more important to prevent crimes than to register and prosecute after the crime was committed. The Women



Protection Secretaries could prevent trafficking from families of vulnerable communities if they identified those who were poor and were at risk, and

counsel and protect them.

Ch Vijay Kumar, District Child Protection Officer, suggested that the women protection secretaries identify the

underprivileged families that were facing various vulnerable situations through the village volunteers under their purview and bring their problems to the attention of the District Child Protection Department.

District Child Line Coordinator K Sameer Kumar explained about the 1098 Toll-Free telephone services set up for children and asked them to create awareness about the service among the villages.

Ram Mohan.NVS, Secretary HELP, acted as resource person and facilitated training sessions on issues of trafficking and created enough awareness to the participants.

HELP Programme Manager V Bhaskar Rao, District Legal Probation Officer Vasanti, District Child Protection Unit protection Officer Vijay Kumar Battula and human trafficking district unit personnel participated in the meeting.

Black spots inspected on State, national highways

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna district police, in association with the Roads and Buildings Department, National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and the Transport Department, inspected the accident-prone areas (black spots) on the State and national highways near Hanuman Junction and Gannavaram on Tuesday.

The officials made the visit and inspec-

tion in the backdrop of accidents taking place frequently in these areas. The officials have identified some black spots and assessed the reasons for the mishaps and death of people.

District Superintendent of Police Siddharth Koushal has instructed the police officials to take measures to check accidents on the highways.

He said reckless driving and sudden crossing of highways by local villagers were the main reasons for accidents. He

instructed the police to install barricades in the black spots to caution the people about the accident-prone areas.

He said accidents were also taking place in the turnings and curves and asked the officials to install sign boards and markings.

He further ordered the construction of speed-breakers and preventing parking of vehicles on the highways. He made it clear that vehicles must be parked in the parking areas only.

Health camp marks Super Star Krishna's b'day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the occasion of actor Krishna's Birthday, actor G Mahesh Babu, in association with Andhra Hospitals, organised a multispecialty health camp in Burripalem on Tuesday. The camp was led by Andhra Hospitals. All specialties including General Medicine, General Surgery, Paediatrics, Cardiac and ENT were covered. An awareness session was



also conducted, which addressed common adult, paediatric health problems, heart diseases, viral infections during summer etc.

All specialty consultations and investigations were done, and medicines distributed to patients. Dr PV Rama Rao, Chief of Children's

Services and Director, Andhra Hospitals, said it was the 30th camp so far in the village. A total of 200 children and adults attended the camp. Dr Rama Rao felt very happy that Andhra Hospitals held this mega camp. Dr Poojitha, Dr Nagendra, Dr Priyanka, Dr Pavan Kumar, Dr Ramesh and other team members, nurses, lab technicians and pharmacists helped in the camp.

Will 'Konaseema' issue crystallize Dalits' political identity?

Dalits, despite being considered as the crucial vote bank by various political parties, have always been at the receiving end of disdainful neglect and brutal suppression. They bear insults at the hands of political parties that are dominated by upper castes. Social aggression by people belonging to forward castes negatively impact Dalits. Due to the precarious conditions in which they live, they cannot even react to various forms of aggressions. They lack proper education, money power, and political representation; hence, they cannot come out of their dismal situation. Facing cruelty of upper castes, they live largely at the mercy of landlords and businessmen.

History is replete with horrendous incidents that left the legacy of a great personality like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has been tarnished by the violent opposition to the renaming of the Konaseema district after the architect of the Constitution. The protesters torched the house of AP Minister P. Viswaroop. This one development has made Dalits furious. They now want to know why such objections are being raised only in the case of using Ambedkar's name, though the state government renamed several districts after other prominent personalities. They are now in deep distress and are reassessing their present position in society. They are now looking at the prospects of Dalits having a separate political identity for themselves to temper the domination by people belonging to forward castes.

All the incidents of atrocities and aggression on Dalits that took place during the last four decades in Andhra Pradesh, right from Karamchedu to Amalapuram, reflect the attitude of supremacy adopted by forward sections in society

Dalits with nightmarish experiences. In Andhra Pradesh, Dalits have had haunting experiences with the highly objectionable attitude shown by upper castes. Be it Rayalaseema, central coastal belt, or north coastal belt; Dalits have been at the receiving end of violence and suppression everywhere. Major communities and principal political players in Andhra Pradesh are no different. After the Telugu Desam Party emerged victorious in 1983, Dalits were attacked by upper castes in Padirikuppam of Chittoor district, following which the then NTR government faced criticism for not protecting the lives of Dalits. The TDP retained power in the mid-term polls of 1985 by securing more than 200 seats out of the 294-member house in the undivided AP in the backdrop of NTR's reinstatement following his dethronement in the previous year. On 17th July of that year, five Dalits were brutally murdered in Karamchedu village of Prakasam district with the involvement of the Kamma community, whose face, NTR, was the ruler of the state then. The incident drew nationwide attention. The AP Congress, in order to better its political prospects, wanted to bring then prime minister Rajiv



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

Gandhi to Karamchedu, but he refused to come. Similar incident of upper castes' aggression on Dalits took place in Neerukonda village of Guntur district in 1986 in which one person was killed. This issue got politicised so much that Rajiv Gandhi paid a visit to Neerukonda. During the Congress regime, a very big incident took place in Tsundur village of Guntur district in which five Dalits were killed and their bodies thrown into a drain. These gory killings took place at the behest of the

person, there is controversy over his caste considering that he rubs shoulders with Kapu politicians. Dalits have been used by all the three major communities viz. Kammass, Reddys and Kapus for political purposes. Still, there was row over the naming of the Konaseema district after Dr. Ambedkar. The ruling YSRC appears to be maintaining a studied silence over the stir against renaming of the district. In the backdrop of the 2024 elections, political realignment is likely. A few senior leaders of the Dalit community are of the considered view that the combined force of Kapus and Dalits may be able to influence the electorate. One section in the Kapu community has appealed to its flock to support Jana Sena Party (JSP) president & film actor Pawan Kalyan this time. The ruling party may scuttle the move. Dalits really need a Moses-like character to lead them to political safety. They might be ready for the Exodus, provided they are led by a credible personality. In the 1994 elec-

tion, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) made a futile effort to become a strong political force in undivided AP. Its national president Kanshi Ram had focused his attention to make his party a formidable force in AP. But sensing trouble from Kanshi Ram, principal political parties in AP made a joint effort to stop BSP in its tracks. The BSP could secure its deposit in only one seat in the entire state. Kanshi Ram then blamed BSP's plight on political parties and the media. It is very strange to see that all prominent Dalit leaders have preferred to join various parties that are professing to work for Dalit empowerment, but are least bothered about the functioning of the Republican Party of India (RSP) that was founded by none other than Dr. Ambedkar. Dalits, despite constituting a formidable vote bank, do not have a strong leader. Hopefully, their present quest for political identity would throw up a leader who can lead them to the Promised Land.

Rs 36.45 crore disbursed to ryots under PMKS in Eluru

PNS ■ ELURU

As many as 1.82 lakh farmers in Eluru district have been disbursed Rs 36.45 crore under the 'Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi' scheme. A programme was held here in the CR Reddy Degree College auditorium on the occasion of the disbursement of PMKSN benefits to the farmers by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday. The farmers in the Eluru district received Rs 36,45,44,000 under the PMKSN scheme. Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh released a replica of the cheque in this regard. Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in a programme organised in Simla on Tuesday and credited the amount into the bank accounts of the farmers virtually. Speaking on the occasion,



Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had credited Rs 21,000 crore into the accounts of farmers across the country today. The benefits of welfare schemes are directly transferred into the bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries doing away with the mediators, he said. He informed that Rs 1.50

lakh is being extended to the beneficiaries for the construction of houses under PMAY scheme in urban areas and Rs 1.80 lakh in rural areas. The PM Cares scheme is extending help to the Covid orphaned children, the Collector said. DMHO Dr.Ravi, Agriculture JD Y Ramakrishna, and LDM M Venkateswara Rao explained the benefits being

provided under various schemes. Joint Collector P Arun Babu, JDPI CEO B. Ravikumar, DRDA PD K. Srinivas, Eluru RDVO Panchala Kishore, DPVO Balaji, DMHO Dr. B Ravi, Agriculture JD Ramakrishna, LDM Venkateswara Rao and ICDS PD Koteswari were among those who were present.

Minor girl allegedly raped by volunteer

PNS ■ BAPATLA

In a shocking incident, a village volunteer allegedly has raped a 15-year-old minor girl at Ravinutala village in Korishepadu mandal. The victim has been admitted to the Government General Hospital.

Though the incident took place on Sunday, it came to light only on Tuesday. Police said that the victim is studying in 9th Class and she was alone as her parents went to the fields to work. Taking advantage of her parents' absence, the accused Ravipati Kotaiah sexually assaulted. He allegedly raped her repeatedly. The accused Kotaiah is a married man. The victim collapsed with severe bleeding after the sexual assault. She was admitted to the RIMS hospital for treatment. The police registered a case against the accused Kotaiah under POCSSO Act.

Put an end to 'illegal' soil extraction from tanks: Nakka

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) politburo member and former minister Nakka Ananda Babu went to Pyaparru and Enturu villages in Chinagadela and Modukuru mandals to inspect the 'indiscriminate' extraction of soil from the tanks. This led to a minor scuffle between activists of TDP and YSRCP when the latter tried to prevent the TDP leaders from reaching the tank. Talking to the media, Nakka Ananda Babu said that some people, with the patronage of ruling party leaders, resorted to illegal mining of soil. The activity is said to have been going on for the last 28 days. The soil is being shifted through hundreds of tractors and lorries, but the officials are not taking any action to stop the illegal mining, despite the villagers complaining to them. The ruling party leaders are plundering the



natural resources and siphoning money, he alleged. The sand extraction in the tank was carried out up to 15 feet in depth with the con-

tinuance of mining officials, the former minister alleged, and said that he would file a private case against the illegal activity.



Health Minister seeks CDTL services for AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Health Minister Vidadala Rajini has sought the services of the Central Drug Testing Laboratory (CDTL) in Andhra Pradesh also. The Health Minister held a meeting with the state and Central government drug control officials in the APITC towers at Mangalagiri in which Deputy Drug Control of India Dr. A Ramakrishnan attended. Speaking on the occasion she asked Ramakrishnan to ensure that the Andhra

Pradesh state also receives CDTL services. She urged the CDTL officials to extend cooperation to the state officials. She said that good results could be yielded if both state and central drug officials work in a coordinated manner. She underlined the need of making blood available in blood banks. She asked the DCGI officials to provide information to the state officials in respect of clinical trials so that flaws could be avoided in clinical trials.

"It is the responsibility of all to ensure that the clinical trials are conducted as per the government's guidelines", she said. Rajini said that the officials in the state drug department should be imparted training by the Central Drug Standard Control of Organisation with international standards. Responding to the appeal of the Health Minister, deputy drug control of India Ramakrishnan assured to extend Hyderabad's CDTL services to AP also.

Officials directed to mitigate potable water scarcity

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Mayor Kavati Shiva Manohar Naidu directed the engineering officials to take steps to do away with the drinking water scarcity in some of the localities in the city. The Mayor inspected the Sampatnagar, Parvatipuram, Ramachandrapuram, and Rajendranagar colonies here on Tuesday and reviewed the drinking water scarcity in the area. He directed the officials



to collect samples of drinking water being supplied to the colonies and

send them for testing. The leaks in the drinking water pipelines should be plugged.

The silt in the drainages should be removed, he instructed them. The officials told the mayor that a reservoir would come up soon in the Kobbari thota area. If the construction of the reservoir is completed the drinking water scarcity would be resolved in the locality. SE Dasari Srinivas, DEE Venkataramana, AE Sethupati, and others were among those who accompanied the mayor.

Tirupati Railway Station to be upgraded with Rs 299 crore

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

MP M Gurumoorthy has said that the Railway Board has approved the Rs 299 crore proposal of the South Central Railway (SCR) for major upgradation of Tirupati Railway Station. In a statement here on Tuesday, the MP said the demand for upgradation of the Tirupati railway station which facilitated lakhs of pilgrims coming for Srivari darshan had been ignored all along, adding that he had several times voiced the demand in Parliament for upgra-

duction of Tirupati railway station with international standards and also represented to the Union Railway Minister. The MP stated that as per the master action plan of SCR, the up-gradation included the development of a basement, ground plus three-floor railway station on the southern end and similar ground plus three-floor development on the northern side. As a result, finally, the Railway Board had directed the SCR to take up the upgradation on a war footing to facilitate the devotees coming from all over the country and also overseas.

Relatives of murder victim go on fast

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The family members of slain Adinarayana embarked fast upon death in front of the District Collector's office. The agitation entered the second day on Tuesday. Achyuta Adinarayan of Yerragondapalem village was murdered by miscreants two months ago. The family mem-

bers embarked on an indefinite fast in front of the Collector's office demanding the suspension of the then CI Deva Prabhakar, VRO, surveyor and RI. They also demanded protection for their lives. The Arya Vysya associations extended their solidarity with the family members of Adinarayana.



Lineman attacked

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

A junior lineman of the electricity department suffered a bleeding injury in an attack on him at Karakuva village.

Police said that the victim Odia John Naik is working as a junior lineman. He went to the house of one of the consumers Kadiyam Satish to disconnect the power supply since he failed to pay the electricity tariff. When he tried to disconnect the power supply to the house, Satish and his family members attacked the lineman with stones and hit him. He suffered bleeding injuries. The electricity department officials lodged a complaint with the police on the attack. The lineman Naik was admitted to the government hospital for treatment. Talking to the Pioneer the lineman said that he went to the house to disconnect the power supply as part of his duty and he was attacked by the family members. He appealed to the higher officials to take firm action against the accused and take steps to ensure that such incidents do not take place in the future.

Police crack jewellery theft case, 54 kg silver recovered

BHIMAVARAM: The police cracked the theft in Sashi jewellery by arresting two interstate thieves and seized 54 kg silver ornaments.



SP Ravi Prakash told the media here on Tuesday theft took place in the Sashi Jewellery at Rudi village in WG district on May 7 in which silver ornaments and cash were stolen. The police arrested Mittal Tejaram Mali alias Mukesh and Nagendra Sahani and recovered 54 kg of silver ornaments worth Rs 37.80 lakh. Mukesh belonged to Rajasthan state. When the duo tried to flee after noticing the police at Bhimavaram town railway station, the police held them and during the interrogation confessed the crime.

Prakasam SP Malika inspects accident-prone areas

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg on Tuesday inspected some of the black spots and directed the officials to take measures to curb accidents. She directed the police officials to lay special focus on black spot areas to prevent road accidents in the district. The SP inspected the black spot areas where frequent road accidents occur from Maddipadu Growth Center to Singarayakonda on NH-16 and analyzed the risk factors. She

also reviewed with local police and other departmental officials on measures to be taken to prevent accidents and conveyed various suggestions to them. The SP also inspected the black spot at Maddipadu mandal, Growth Center, stopped the bikes of those doing triple driving, conducted counselling for them, and explained to them the traffic rules. Similarly, motorists were made aware of the dangers of not wearing a helmet, or seat belt and were made aware of road safety rules. The SP also

checked the license, registration number, and choice number of the bike. Malika Garg directed the police officials to construct speed breakers, erect signs and warning boards, metal fencing, convex mirrors, radium blinkers, and radium stickers at turns to control the speed of vehicles in areas with black spots, a warning board at 50 meters, and a convex mirror. She directed the police officials to identify the need for flyovers and underpass bridges in the areas and prepare and send

proposals, as well as take steps to remove the branches of trees that have fallen on the roads. The SP suggested that the CIs and SIs should visit each accident site and send a report on the causes of accident and take preventive measures of the accident. Similarly, immediately after the accident, the police along with other department officials should visit the spot. She also directed the officers to upload the complete details within 24 hours through the I RAD app.



INDIA CORNER

No plans to ban or curb exports of basmati, non-basmati rice: Govt official

The government has no plans to ban or impose curbs on export of either basmati or non-basmati rice as the country has sufficient supplies and prices are under control, a senior government official said on Tuesday. The comments come amid reports of regulating overseas sale of rice after the government banned wheat exports and capped shipment of sugar at 10 million tonnes in the ongoing 2021-22 marketing year (October-September) as a precautionary step to check local prices. "There is no move to regulate export of any kind of rice. There is enough supply in our godowns and even with private traders. Domestic prices are also under control as of now," the official told P.T.I. India, the world's second largest rice producer after China, had exported non-basmati rice worth USD 6.11 billion in 2021-22, up from USD 4.8 billion in 2020-21, according to official data. The country exported non-basmati rice to over 150 countries in 2021-22.



Delhi court summons Congress leader D K Shivakumar in money laundering case

Delhi court on Tuesday summoned Congress leader D K Shivakumar and others in a money laundering case lodged against him in 2018 after taking cognisance of the charge sheet. Special Judge Vikas Dhull directed Shivakumar to appear on July 1. The court gave the order after taking cognisance of a charge sheet filed by ED through its Special Public Prosecutor Nitesh Rana against Shivakumar and others in the case. Shivakumar, who is the president of the Congress' Karnataka unit, was arrested by the ED in the case on September 3, 2019 and was granted bail by the Delhi High Court on October 23, 2019. The case is based on a charge sheet filed by the Income Tax Department against them last year before a special court in Bengaluru on charges of alleged tax evasion and 'hawala' transactions worth crores of rupees.



ED grills Farooq Abdullah for over 3 hours in JKCA scam case

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday questioned National Conference president Farooq Abdullah for over three hours in connection with a money laundering case linked to alleged financial irregularities in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association. The Lok Sabha MP from Srinagar reached the ED office at Rajbagh here around 11 am. Before going inside the ED office, the former chief minister linked his questioning by the ED with the forthcoming assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. "I won't say much (about the summons) ... there are elections to be held and they will trouble us till then," he said. He looked relaxed while leaving the office after being grilled for nearly three-and-a-half hours but refused to take questions from the media waiting outside. On May 27, the ED had summoned Abdullah to its Srinagar office in connection with the case.



'Modi's schemes improved quality of people's lives'

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pro-people initiatives especially the thrust on social welfare alleviated the people's hardships and improved the quality of their lives, Union Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting and Fisheries L Murugan, said on Tuesday. The benefits accruing from the numerous schemes of the Modi government are manifold and they touched upon the lives of the poor, ryots and other sections, making a positive impact, he claimed. "Gone are those days when people experienced difficulties in obtaining a LPG connection. Now the connections can be got by merely sending an SMS," the Minister said while speaking at a function held here to mark the completion of eight years of the BJP-led government at the Centre.



About 32 lakh households in Tamil Nadu have benefitted from the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.

About 32 lakh households in Tamil Nadu have benefitted from the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. This apart, 1.27 crore drinking water connections have been provided in the state under the Jal Jeevan Mission, Murugan said. "Today the Prime Minister released the 11th

instalment of financial benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme to the farmers, enabling the transfer of Rs 21,000 crore to over 10 crore beneficiary farmer families," the Union Minister said while inaugurating a farmers meeting here. The Jan Dhan bank account scheme, the housing for all and developmental projects were

PM Modi lauds youth for choosing to be 'job creator'

PNS ■ GANDHI NAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday virtually interacted with a beneficiary of the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana hailing from Mehsana in Gujarat and appreciated him for choosing to be a "job creator" instead of becoming a "job seeker". The beneficiary, Arvind Patel, told the prime minister that he had availed a loan of Rs 7.20 lakh to expand his business of setting up decorative pavilions for marriages and other events in and around Mehsana in north Gujarat. "Earlier, my business was limited and only eight people used to work for me. Then, I took the loan under the PM MUDRA Yojana to expand my business and purchase more decorative items. Now, I have hired 12 persons for my business," Patel told the prime minister during the virtual interaction.

Rail Minister asks WB govt to rise above politics

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Tuesday urged West Bengal government to rise above politics on the issue of commissioning welfare projects for the poor and claimed that not a single resident of the state has got the benefit of Centre's Ayushman Bharat Yojana. Vaishnaw, who was speaking at the 'Garib Kalyan Sammelan' here as part of similar meets across the country, also said that majority of the farmers of the state are yet to get the benefits PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana. "Why has Ayushman Bharat Yojana not been implemented till now in Bengal? Why are most of the poor farmers of the state not getting the money channelled into their Janadhan accounts despite being eligible? The West Bengal government owes an explanation on these issues," Vaishnaw said. "There can be different governments in different states



secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. Beneficiary states have to bear 40 per cent of the expense for it. The scheme is yet to be implemented in West Bengal, which had officially launched its smart card based 'Swasthya Sathi' scheme in December, 2016. The 'Swasthya Sathi' scheme is a basic health cover for secondary and tertiary care up to Rs five lakh per annum per family and covers all pre-existing diseases. The entire premium is borne by the West Bengal government and no contribution is taken from the beneficiary. There is no cap on the family size and parents of both the spouse and all dependent physically challenged persons in the family are covered under the scheme. The rail minister said while 30 crore families has been provided affordable housing units in the country under the PM Awas Yojana, in Bengal only 42 lakh were allotted houses under the project.

Cong's Rajeev, Ranjeet file papers for RS polls

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Congress leaders Rajeev Shukla and Ranjeet Ranjan on Tuesday filed their nomination papers for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections from Chhattisgarh. The two leaders were accompanied by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, Congress's state in-charge P L Punia and some state ministers when they filed their nominations for the June 10 biennial polls. Journalist-turned-politician Rajeev Shukla (63), who hails from Uttar Pradesh, has served as the Rajya Sabha member thrice in the past. Ranjeet Ranjan is a former Lok Sabha member from Bihar. The opposition BJP in Chhattisgarh has accused the ruling Congress of betraying and insulting people of the state by nominating candidates

from "outside" for the Rajya Sabha polls. Asked about BJP's claim, Chief Minister Baghel, while talking to reporters in the Assembly premises, said, "It (BJP) has also fielded leaders from outside their home states. I don't want to give old examples. The Congress is a national party and has been sending its leaders to the Rajya Sabha from different states. It is not happening for the first time." "It is true that people were expecting that someone from Chhattisgarh will be nominated, but if it did not happen this time, we will do it next time," he added. The Janata Congress Chhattisgarh (JC), which has three MLAs in the 90-member assembly, on Tuesday announced that former MLA Dr Haridas Bharadwaj will be its candidate for the Rajya Sabha elections.

Odisha: Four BJD candidates file nomination papers for RS polls

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Four candidates of the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha filed their nomination papers on Tuesday for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections. All the candidates of the regional party filed their papers in presence of some ministers and party MLAs before the Returning Officer at the Odisha Legislative Assembly premises. Senior party leaders Prasanna Patasani and Prasanna Acharya were also present when the BJD candidates filed their nominations. The tenure of three incumbent Rajya Sabha MPs from Odisha - Nekkanti Bhaskar Rao, Prasanna Acharya, and Sasmit



Patra - will expire on July 1, while another seat in the Upper House of Parliament fell vacant due to the resignation of BJD's Subhas Singh. Singh resigned as Rajya Sabha MP after he became mayor of Cuttack Municipal Corporation in March this year. Sulata Deo, Manas Ranjan Mangaraj, and Sasmit Patra filed their nomination papers for the three seats to be vacant from July 1, while Niranjan Bishi will contest for the Rajya Sabha by-election.

NAXAL-HIT JHARKHAND Govt mulling night landing facilities for choppers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is exploring possibilities of setting up night landing facilities for helicopters in some of the Naxal-affected areas in Jharkhand for speedy deployment of security forces and their evacuation, officials said. Jharkhand is one of the Naxal-affected states along with Chhattisgarh and a large number of central security personnel were deployed along with the state police. Union Home Ministry officials recently held a consultative meeting on opening new forward operating bases and camps under assistance to central agencies for Left Wing Extremism Management (ACALWEM) scheme, officials said. Subsequently another meeting was held with the representatives of the Jharkhand government where the possibility of

setting up night landing facilities for helicopters were discussed. The night landing facilities for helicopters will help the authorities in speedy deployment of forces and evacuations in case of emergency situations, officials said. The Home ministry also held two review meetings with District Magistrates to review the progress of Special Central Assistance (SCA) Scheme in LWE affected areas, they said. Last year, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren had said the presence of hardcore extremists in the state was limited to only four regions of the state. The four regions were Parasnath Pahar, Budha Pahar, Tri-junction of Seraikela-Khunti-Chaibasa district in Kolhan division and some of the areas along the Bihar border, Soren had said.

Grape farmers threaten stir over wine seizure

PNS ■ AIZAWL

Grape farmers of Mizoram are up in the arms against the MNF government after the Excise Department seized locally-made wines in Aizawl. The grape growers demanded the immediate return of the seized wine bottles, threatening that it would launch an agitation against the government's action. Excise minister K Beichhua said the government did not target the locally-processed grape wine, but had to made the seizure as per the law as the wine bottles were found along with foreign liquor and beer bottles during a recent raid. Some stores in Aizawl were raided on Friday and huge quantities of locally-manufactured grape wines, known as 'Champwine', were seized along with liquor and beer. Acting on a tip-off that Korean Soju and other foreign liquors were being sold in those stores, the raids were conducted, the minister said. "We have acted as per the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Act, 2019 which prohibits sale, consumption and manufacture of alcohol. We have no choice but to seize the locally-made grape wine as it has alcohol content, and the wine bottles were also found among branded liquor," he told P.T.I.

SP stages walkout over question paper leaks

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party members on Tuesday staged a walkout from the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council over the alleged leak of question papers of competitive exams in the last five years. They alleged that an "organised gang patronised by the government" was leaking ques-

tion papers and selling them for Rs 2-4 lakh. The matter came up during the Zero Hour through an adjournment notice, when SP member Man Singh Yadav alleged that papers of competitive examinations were leaked continuously after the BJP formed government in 2017. "In the 2017 assembly polls,

BJP promised lakhs of jobs to unemployed youth, but after four months of formation of its government, the paper of sub-inspector exam was leaked," he said. "In February 2018, UP Power Corporation Limited examination paper was leaked. In July 2018, Subordinate Selection Commission paper

was also leaked. The government was not serious in holding competitive exams and it is an injustice to the examinees," he said. Now, the Uttar Pradesh Board papers have also started leaking and recently, the English question paper of intermediate class was leaked. "The government is not concerned

about the future of the youth," he alleged. Leader of Opposition Lal Bihari Yadav alleged that those sitting in big positions in the BJP government are leaking the question papers and selling them for Rs 2-4 lakh. "This is an organised gang patronised by the government," he said.



JD(S) fielded RS candidate with consent from Sonia

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Fielding former MP D Kupendra Reddy as its candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls from Karnataka, JD(S) on Tuesday claimed that Congress national President Sonia Gandhi and other party leaders had consented to support him. Expressing surprise over Congress fielding a second candidate "all of a sudden", senior JD(S) leader and former Minister H D Revanna requested the national party for support to keep the "communal forces" out of the race. "Sonia Gandhi on Friday spoke to Deve Gowda (JD(S) patriarch), following her consent we have fielded our party

candidate today. In the same way H D Kumaraswamy (JD(S) leader) has spoken to K C Venugopal (Congress General Secretary) stating that JD(S) may fall short of a few votes and requested for support, after they agreed we have fielded the candidate," Revanna said. Speaking to reporters here, Gowda's elder son said Kupendra Reddy himself had met state Congress President D K Shivakumar, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha M Mallikarjun Kharge, and other Congress leaders like R V Deshpande, B K Hariprasad and Ramalinga Reddy seeking support. "He (Kupendra Reddy) also wanted to meet Siddaramaiah and had sought his appoint-

ment...but don't know what happened, in a sudden development they (Congress) have fielded second candidate, despite not having numbers to win the seat," he said, adding that Congress leaders had not expressed any intention to field second candidate. A candidate needs 45 votes to win, and based on their strength in the Legislative Assembly, the BJP can win two seats and the Congress one, in the June 10 Rajya Sabha polls for four seats. Despite not having adequate number of votes to win the fourth Rajya Sabha seat from the State Assembly, all the three political parties in the state - BJP, Congress and JD(S) - have fielded candidates for the seat, forcing an election.

Moosewala's last journey on favourite tractor

PNS ■ MANSARA

A sea of mourners bid a tearful farewell to popular Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, who was cremated at his native village in Mansa district on Tuesday afternoon. The body of the 28-year-old singer-politician, who was shot dead on Sunday, was brought to his home in Moosa village amid tight security on Tuesday morning from Mansa civil hospital, where the post-mortem was conducted. Moosewala's family, including his parents, were inconsolable as they sat beside the body at their home. His mother was seen trying to console her husband as people from Punjab, Rajasthan and Chandigarh among other places queued up in large numbers to get a last glimpse



of the singer. The singer's favourite tractor, which had figured in many of his music videos, was bedecked with flowers for his last ride to a family-owned field for the cremation. Notwithstanding the scorching heat, mourners joined the funeral procession as Moosewala's father and moth-

er stood on the tractor with folded hands, accompanying their son on his final journey. Some of his fans wore t-shirts with Moosewala's picture printed on them. The singer's father, Balkour Singh, even took off his turban on seeing the sea on mourners. Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring

was present during the funeral procession. A heavy police force was deployed at the slain singer's residence as well as at the cremation site. People heaped praises on Moosewala for his songs and even raised slogans in his favour. "He was a good-natured man. He would never say no to anybody for a selfie. We are sad that he is not amongst us today," said a villager. Some villagers and fans expressed anger over the Punjab police pruning Moosewala's security cover just a day before he was shot dead and sought the strictest punishment for the killers. "Those who were behind the killing of Moosewala should be given exemplary punishment," said an elderly man who came from Jalandhar.

Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, known as Sidhu Moosewala, was shot dead on Sunday by unidentified assailants in Punjab's Mansa district. His cousin and a friend, who were travelling in a Mahindra Thar jeep with him, were also injured in the attack. The popular Punjabi singer had fought the recent assembly election in Punjab on a Congress ticket from Mansa and was defeated by the AAP's Vijay Singla. He was among the 424 people whose security was withdrawn or curtailed by the Punjab Police on Saturday on a temporary basis. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday announced setting up a judicial commission headed by a sitting high court judge to probe the brutal killing of Sidhu Moosewala.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Chinese chequers

Wary Pacific nations are resisting 'good brother' China's offer to expand its scope

Round one does not go to China. It failed to convince a group of Pacific island nations to sign an agreement to keep receiving security and economic cooperation from itself. They could not shed their suspicions that China was attempting to show off its 'partners' in the South Pacific to square off with the QUAD's growing presence in the Indo-Pacific. Some nations were opposed to the Chinese offer, titled 'China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision'. What raised eyebrows were the Chinese proposals to train local police, help in cyber security and sensitive marine mapping and seek access to natural resources. President of Federated States of Micronesia is credited with saying that the proposal is "the single most game-changing proposed agreement in the Pacific in any of our lifetimes" and that it "threatens to bring a new Cold War era at best, and a World War at worst". Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Fiji making the offer. He came back from Kiribati and Samoa with some minor agreements. He will be off again to Tonga, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Wang's exasperation over the distrust among the nations was apparent when he said: "Don't be too anxious and don't be too nervous." More than him, the rebuff, if that is what it is, will hurt President Xi Jinping more because he went out of his way to issue a statement telling the Pacific nations that China will be a "good brother" through thick and thin and treat them equally "regardless of size".



The only Chinese success in the region came earlier when it entered into a secret pact with the Solomon Islands where, the West suspects, China wants to set up a naval military base. China may have today failed to show a grand, multilateral agreement to the West. But persist it will, till it has something on paper. The South Pacific is not as strategic as the Indo-Pacific, and China's growing interest in that region is interpreted as the widening scope of its international ambitions. The latest QUAD meeting in Tokyo has left China bristling with indignation. US President Joe Biden frankly said they will intervene militarily to protect Taiwan. The new Australian Prime Minister, thought by China to be soft because of his labour credentials, was unusually critical of China's policies. The QUAD, coming out of the shadows of the pandemic and Ukraine, appeared cohesive in Tokyo. Part of the reason was also the deteriorating ties with China of the four individual members. It took a slew of decisions to counter China's increasingly assertive posture in the region. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework will rope in 13 regional players. And President Biden personally wooed Asean leaders in Washington. Beijing is no longer dismissive of QUAD given the tangible efforts being taken to counter-balance China. It is now anxious to have a pack of nations standing with it as it plans to convert the entire Pacific into a cold war conflict zone.

PICTALK



Aaliyah Banda, 11, places a bracelet in front of the photo of a victim of last week's school shooting, in Uvalde AP

In the cross hairs

The Opposition is gunning for Modi Government as it starts prepping for the 2024 election

Two unrelated developments on Tuesday, pertaining to politics and economics, put the ruling BJP dispensation at the Centre on the defensive. The saffron party's aggressive brand of Hindutva and controversial temple-related statements by some of its leaders of late have even stirred Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Maulana Masood Azhar into action, who recently called upon Muslims to "prepare for action" against any adverse outcome of the ongoing suits in various courts in India concerning temple-mosque complexes like Kashi Vishwanath temple and Gyanvapi mosque. The latest salvo was fired by West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee who openly said the saffron party's policies of hatred and violence will have "no entry" across India. Calling the Government "adulterated", she accused it of mismanaging the country's economy and of using Central agencies to stifle the Opposition. Criticising the Government's eight years in power, several other Opposition leaders have also been recently claiming that the people of India would ensure that the BJP's "politics of hate and violence" will be rejected in the next round of general election.



As the Opposition parties start preparing ground of the big battle of 2024, especially on the issues of economy, unemployment and rising religious intolerance, they are repeatedly targeting the Modi Government for allegedly beginning its term with false promises, culminating in failed experiments after eight years. Earlier, on April 16, leaders of 13 Opposition parties in a joint statement expressed concern over the "growing incidents of hate speech" and "recent outburst of communal violence" across the country, especially in States such as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Also, according to the Union Government's own data, India's annual per capita income at constant prices has remained below the pre-COVID pandemic level at ₹91,481 in 2021-22. In another aspect sure to bring some relief to the South Block mandarins, however, the per capita income based on Net National Income at constant price grew by 7.5 per cent in FY22 over the previous year. At current prices, the per capita income rose by 18.3 per cent to ₹1.5 lakh during the 2021-22 fiscal. For those not very savvy with Government's economic terminology, the per capita income is a crude indicator of the prosperity of a country.

Sri Lanka hopes for a rising tide

Following the worst economic crisis in Sri Lankan history, the magic of the Rajapaksa clan is on the wane. Ranil Wickeremesinghe is now the go-to man



ASHOK K MEHTA

It's Day 54 of 'Gota Go Home' protests. The protestors representing all sections of society have thinned but the resolve to get President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down has strengthened. Ranil Wickeremesinghe, a single National List seat Prime Minister rejected by the electorate, is now being opposed by protestors as 'No Deal' referring to payback by Gotabaya for Wickeremesinghe protecting the family when he was the Prime Minister.



The words 'incredible', 'impossible' and 'unthinkable' pop up in relation to the impending political demise of the Rajapaksa clan and apparent rise of Wickeremesinghe. In 2013, Mahinda Rajapaksa, the patriarch who was forced to resign last month, when asked by Al Jazeera about the Rajapaksa magic, said: "What can I do? People elect us! They can also throw us out." That is certainly their fate in or before the next elections. Gotabaya has not done what he had promised: A 15-member all-party interim Government. Instead, it is a full Government dominated by his SLPP defectors from SLPF and Tamil EPDP. Wickeremesinghe has been appointed Finance Minister (no one wanted the job), Minister for Stabilisation and National Politics.

The protestors' profile is interesting: Educated and savvy on social media, they are blocking entry to presidential secretariat, PM's residence and are arrayed on the iconic Galle Face Green. Most Colombians come to walk on a straight track along the seashore created by Charles Ward in the 19th century to keep Sri Lankans fit. Protestors want an interim Government for economic stabilisation; repeal of 20A which restored extraordinary powers to President; and early elections with a new electoral system. The draft of 21A is to be presented in Parliament shortly.

This economic crisis is the worst in Sri Lankan history. The euphoria after the triumph in the ethnic war led to reckless

spending focused on development, with China being the favoured source of funding and construction. A bankrupt Colombo is to start negotiations with IMF and World Bank for a debt relief package. For Sri Lanka, it is India's 1991 moment. IMF conditionalities will lead to more pain and hardship for the people who are enduring power cuts and shortage in food, fuel and medicines. Two immediate IMF requirements will be roll-back of tax cuts in 2019 and reduction in the defence budget, calls for which are being made since the war was won on May 18, 2009.

For former Colonel Gotabaya Rajapaksa personally, defence cuts will be most challenging. Already UN agencies have been demanding dismantling of several task forces led by Generals and equivalent, created by him. Sri Lankan Army's 100,000-force will have to take a haircut. So will the 1.93 per cent defence budget which is 12.3 per cent of Government spending. IMF will want defence spending shaved by nearly 1 per cent, which Gotabaya will be unable to do. But his successor may do it at the risk of antagonis-



WICKEREMESINGHE IS PREPARING AN INTERIM SIX-MONTH BUDGET WHILE WORKING ON DEBT RESTRUCTURING AND A MACRO-ECONOMIC PLAN. CHINA IS UNWILLING TO RESTRUCTURE ITS DEBT. WICKEREMESINGHE IS TRYING TO FORGE AN INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR ASSISTANCE

ing the military, which was placed on a pedestal by the Rajapaksas. Remember, Sri Lankans respect and revere their soldiers who terminated the 30-year-long war against LTTE.

Meanwhile, Wickeremesinghe is preparing an interim six-month budget while working on debt restructuring and a macro-economic plan. China is unwilling to restructure its debt. Wickeremesinghe is trying to forge an international consortium for assistance and has called for bridging funds. India has emerged the leader in reaching out with relief assistance guided by democratic norms and interest of Sri Lankans. This is a far cry from the IPKF era where everything Indian was suspect and abhorred. India, which has extended a \$3.5bn assistance package since January is well on its way to retrieving lost goodwill and strategic dividends won by China. Similarly, Tamil Nadu has provided assistance to the Tamil North. Further, India and Japan — once the biggest donors to Sri Lanka — have decided to jointly help the island nation. Japan was

rebuffed twice when two awarded projects — Eastern Colombo Terminal in a trilateral venture with India and Sri Lanka, and a light rail project in Colombo — were rescinded.

In ongoing debate among protestors and other Sri Lankans, the unprecedented uprising is not considered politically driven, despite goons instigated by the establishment leading the counter-attack against protestors demanding Rajapaksa's resignation. These attacks and reprisals are seen as the State creating fear and insecurity to retain power. Interestingly, Tamils have not joined the protests though on May 18, for the first time, Sinhalese took part in remembering Tamil victims of the Colombo war. This is the first positive step towards reconciliation. Wickeremesinghe has appointed a committee for protection of protestors and given them a voice on national policy in Parliament.

Social media has played a pivotal role in the demolition of the Rajapaksas. It has been credited with national awakening to the failures of politicians. The Rajapaksas are known to have used a TV channel owned by their friends to propagate their narrative. But it was ousted. India has also come under the scanner. It is being accused of supporting the corrupt Government. But India House in Colombo was quick to reiterate that it was being guided by democratic norms and the interests of the Sri Lankans. This is India's moment to seize.

Wickeremesinghe has taken the pressure off President Rajapaksa. But it can't last long. The Rajapaksas have been found out. (The writer, a retired Lt Gen, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE SHRINKING INDIAN ECONOMY

Sir — As per reports, India in the last few years is heading for economic disaster with the Wholesale Price Index inflation at 17-year high while the Consumer Price Index inflation is at an eight-year high. The report says that as many as 8,81,254 Indians have given up their citizenship since 2015 and 35,000 Indian entrepreneurs (High Net Worth Individuals) left the country between 2014 and 2020. India's labour force shrank by 3.8 million in March 2022. Unemployment rose across sectors: 76 lakh jobs were lost in industry, 41 lakh in manufacturing and 29 lakh in construction.

Between 2014 and 2021, a total of 2,783 foreign companies shut shop in India. These include General Motors, Harley Davidson, Royal Bank of Scotland, Citibank, Ford, Lafarge, Barclays, Cairn, Henkel, Metro and Holcim. India received \$80 billion in foreign investment in 2020-21, but it plummeted to \$22 billion in 2021-22. Portfolio investments were \$38 billion in 2020-21 but \$15 billion was lost in 2021-22. The NRI deposits also declined by about \$3 billion in FY2021-22. All this shows that everything is not well with Indian economy, which is shrinking day by day. It is a serious cause for concern for our country and her people.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

DON'T OVERLOOK OTHER LANGUAGES

Sir — In a multilingual and multicultural country like India, the controversy over imposing Hindi against the wishes of southern Indian States with a distinct culture and languages has been a recurring theme in the body politic of our nation. With 22 official languages enshrined in the Constitution, with diverse dialects, customs, faith and food habits, it is small wonder that any attempt to impose Hindi on southern States has met with resistance from the non-Hindi quarters. The north-south divide and the controversy over Hindi as the national language has erupted yet again snowballing into a Twitter war

Let's kill this silent killer



Tobacco is one of the leading causes contributing towards increasing the death count in India for long. It is also called a 'Silent Killer' since it spreads its tentacles very slowly and is the etiology of versatile varieties of devastating diseases, finally leading to death. A voluminous number of cardiovascular disorders like Atherosclerosis, Arrhythmia, coronary artery diseases and hypertension are the underlying lesions of tobacco consumption. India is the second largest producer and consumer of tobacco. Apart from the smokeless

forms, a large plethora of smoking regimens are practised in India for a long time. A sharp rise in the manufacture and export of tobacco has made our country to attain quite a dubious distinction.

This can be regarded as a queer achievement as it has ruined lives. In the recent past, India has marked a sharp increase in the cases of mouth cancer, which accounts for 25 per cent of the total number of such cases, and of which only 8-10 per cent are curable. The rest of the cases cause morbidity and mortality. Tobacco stimulates our Central Nervous System abruptly and entices it to consume it repeatedly in a very addictive manner, thus pushing up the mortality graph. Therefore, in order to reduce the mortality rate due to tobacco consumption, we must take an unwavering oath that we will resist every single chance of initial addiction.

Sarthak Sharma | Ujjain

between Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn and Kannada actor Sujit Kiccha.

Although nearly 40 per cent of the Indian population speaks Hindi, it'd mean limiting India if we overlooked the potential of other languages as a medium to unite the country. Take the case of films like *Pushpa*, which has a supra national footprint because of its creativity. Rather than boasting the superiority of Hindi over regional languages, one must strive on breaking the silos. Language is no barrier to capture larger audiences. Creativity knows no boundaries, and it has been aptly demonstrated by the success of regional language cinema across India.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

A MOCKERY OF INVESTIGATION

Sir — Just a few days ago, the Madhya Pradesh High Court had delivered a judgment when a student studying in fourth year MBBS course was falsely implicated in a criminal case and remained in jail for several years. Now comes the case

of Aryan Khan, who had also been implicated in a false case, maybe just for extorting money. Such witch-hunting in the name of law should be stopped immediately.

The charge sheet filed by the NCB dropping the case against Aryan because of "no evidence" is an anti-climax to the whole incident. Even during trial, it was presented as if Aryan had international drug connections. Now, the department has dropped all charges against him and it is clear that someone wanted Aryan to remain in jail for fulfilling certain malicious designs. For this botched investigation, the officers responsible should be appropriately punished so that it serves as a lesson for others. Both the above-cited cases relate to false implication of innocent citizens and are a totally mockery of investigation.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

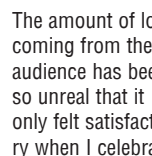
Only AAP can give an honest Government. We will end corruption in Haryana, too, after Punjab and Delhi.



AAP national convener — Arvind Kejriwal



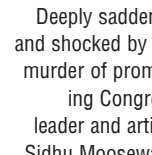
US President — Joe Biden



Actor — Kartik Aaryan



Former Australian cricketer — Dav Whatmore



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi





FIRST COLUMN

RWAs MUST SHUN THEIR SPECIESISM

Courts have a duty to take care of animal welfare



SATENDRA SINGH

A content creator from NOIDA, along with his husky dog Nawab, recently visited the famous Kedarnath shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva (also known as Pashupati, the lord of animals). Many people praised the footage of Nawab paying homage to the stone figure of a seated Nandi (the bull vahana of the god) and receiving blessings from the priest. However, a certain section got offended and filed an FIR against the pet owner (but not against the priest) for hurting religious sentiments. The pet owner, visibly anguished, said that people cannot be so bitter that they don't spare a creature that can't even defend itself.

India reveres dogs. The scriptures stress feeding animals, especially dogs, on Saturday. According to the Puranas, Indra's female dog, Sarama, is the mother of all wild creatures. Many temples have dog murals. The Pandavas erected the KilkariBhairava temple in Delhi. vehicle. The same goes for Gujarat's Goddess Hadkamai, whose vahana is a dog. The Khandoba and Mallana in the Deccan plateau and Revanta on the Eastern plateau (Bihar and Bengal), are all revered as guardian deities of animals.

While Nawab, who had visited many temples before, was getting the wrath of the more vocal, privileged and 'rational' human species, at the same time, the new government in Punjab came up with a 'tuglaqi-



farmaan' banning the keeping of pets in government accommodations. There is no precedent for such a move. The government was forced to withdraw the order within a week after a justifiable outcry from the pet community. The dust was not even settled when a prominent high-rise in Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, came up with its own set of rules banning entry of pets in green areas, parks, and basements. They also wanted people to take clearance from their RWA before owning a new pet.

Similarly, NOIDA Authority in a tweet prevented entry of animals into one of their parks. These two examples from a state having an ardent animal lover as a Chief Minister show the ignorance of laws and their weak implementation among RWAs and authorities.

Article 51A (g) of the Indian Constitution deems it a fundamental duty of all people to exhibit "compassion for living creatures," which should undoubtedly include companion animals retained by society's residents. The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), a statutory body established under Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, mandates in its 2015 circular that the general body cannot frame bye-laws or amend them in a manner that is at variance with the laws of the country.

Recently, the High Court of Kerala in People For Animals v. State of Kerala (2021), has held that those clauses in the bye-laws of RWAs that seek to prevent owners/occupiers of residential apartments from keeping pet animals of their choice in the residential apartments owned by them, or accessing the elevators and common facilities (which include parks) in the apartment buildings, are illegal, unconstitutional, and unenforceable in law.

The RWAs' colonial mindset stems from the concept of speciesism -a prejudice or attitude bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of another one'. The Kerala High Court has lashed out at this anthropocentric view of RWAs that 'humans alone are seen as morally worthy and privileged to enjoy the bounties that nature has to offer. The court has a duty under the doctrine of parens patriae to take care of the rights of animals, since they are unable to take care of themselves as human beings.' Thankfully we have judiciary but the states should step up to set up active State Animal Welfare Boards.

(The writer is a medical doctor, teacher, disability rights activist and pet lover. The views expressed are personal.)

Rays of hope emerge in a chaotic scenario



SUDIP TALUKDAR

Two entirely dissimilar movies, challenging the tinsel town's dominant narrative, burst in upon public consciousness, representing a paradigm shift

India has seldom experienced a more chaotic or acrimonious phase than what it is going through at present. Stone pelting mobs, sectarian violence, widespread protests, temple versus mosque issues, reports of love jihad, etc., shook up the political landscape, becoming a regular feature of public discourse. All these disquieting developments came not long after prolonged and often frustrating bouts with Covid-19 pandemic, when the nation had barely settled down. Successive waves of the contagion, the most devastating since last bubonic plague between 1896 and 1914, ravaged the land, killing hundreds of thousands in India, besides driving the largest mass migration across the nation, disrupting life and the economy.

Even as the global scientific community racked its brains to track, pinpoint and tackle the elusive virus gone rogue, haunting images of homeward bound, tired and hungry mill hands, labourers and daily wagers, with families in tow, on foot and available modes of transport, shocked the nation. Entire cities and localities too, placed under a strict clampdown and shorn of human presence never looked more deserted or forlorn. The silence of the dead settled over the landscape, resembling a huge dystopian world. The survivors who lived with impaired lungs and acute debilitation and the uninfected too, had to contend with the unprecedented shutdown of society, shops, cinemas, restaurants, transport, school, colleges and industries, which virtually brought the economy to a grinding halt.

Bollywood too, which served as an opiate of the masses, with its make-believe themes and visual extravaganzas, retreated behind a wall of silence, shamed by a welter of scandals, allegations of exploitation of women and involvement with the drug mafia or the underworld, charges of nepotism, which surfaced in the wake of Sushant Rajput and Disha Salian's mysterious deaths, etc. Big-budget movies suffered colossal disasters at the box office, one after the other, which production houses conveniently blamed on the pandemic, even though life gained some semblance of normality with its gradual retreat. A rehash of themes based on a staple of love, songs, dance, actioner those lifted from Hollywood, could no longer hook the already jaded audience, which viewed with disgust several skeletons tumbling out of its cupboard.

Then something radically different happened to lift the pall of gloom that had settled over the nation. Two entirely dissimilar movies, challenging the Tinsel Town's dominant narrative of sex, sleaze, skin and violence, burst in upon public consciousness, representing a paradigm shift in the world of Indian cinema. One from a non-conforming, Bollywood side stream with its brutally raw content, highlighting atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits and their exodus, a story long buried by the



IF THE KASHMIR FILES CREATED HISTORY, THEN RAJAMOULI'S RRR HAD A MUCH BIGGER IMPACT ON PUBLIC PSYCHE, ESTABLISHING BENCHMARKS IN EXCELLENCE. SET IN THE BRITISH INDIA OF 1920S AND SHOT ON AN EPIC SCALE, THE MOVIE ROSE TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST HITS IN INDIAN CINEMA, EARNING IN EXCESS OF ₹1,100 CRORE WORLDWIDE

(The writer is strategic affairs analyst and author. The views expressed are personal.)



mainstream media, but which needed to be told viscerally, and another from the Telugu film industry, showcasing revolutionary fervour and its heroic resistance to British oppression, on a scale never attempted before. These bold new initiatives, tied to Crown's occupation of the country, or the outcome of gross blunders committed by the country's first political dispensation, offered a welcome relief from mindless movies.

Post-pandemic, The Kashmir Files (TKF) turned into one of the biggest box office bonanzas unexpectedly, along with RRR and KGF-2, jolting the conscience of the nation as never before. Arthur Koestler, British essayist par excellence, had pertinently observed: "The most savage battles have always been fought for ideas." And so, a very vocal segment of the intelligentsia, never at ease with the idea of Bharat, jumped into the fray, questioning the harsh reality of half a million Kashmiri pundits being driven out at gunpoint, despite overwhelming evidence. Millions of moviegoers, who had practically abandoned cinema, flooded theatres to watch TKF, giving it a huge shout out for content and thematic excellence. Sick and tired of the industry's belittling Indic values, culture and way of life, they dealt it a stinging slap.

Ram Gopal Varma, a veteran film-maker, had tweeted: "All present and future film makers will have to refer to Vivek Agnihotri's Kashmir Files as the new benchmark while making their next film, because the shock wave it has created will divide Bollywood into two eras which is Pre-Kashmir Files and Post Kashmir Files." Having won accolades for

addressing highly disturbing issues regarding PM Shastri's death in The Tashkent Files, Agnihotri turned his attention to the factors behind the Kashmir exodus, something about which the nation has never been very comfortable. The director based his low budget venture on years of ground research and thousands of interviews with the actual victims, his sights fixed on setting higher norms of realism in movie making. He completed the shoot despite a thousand odds, buoyed up by the conviction of being on the right track.

If The Kashmir Files created history, then Rajamouli's RRR had a much bigger impact on public psyche, establishing benchmarks in excellence. Set in the British India of 1920s and shot on an epic scale, the movie rose to be one of the greatest hits in Indian cinema, earning in excess of Rs 1,100 crore worldwide. What is noteworthy is that the cinematic Tsunami is conquering hearts and minds not only in India, but globally as well. Scores of reviewers and audiences in the US and elsewhere, including Hollywood film makers and critics, are actually going bonkers over the insanely entertaining story, turning into overnight fans of Junior NTR, Ram Charan and Rajamouli. Some have even asserted that it has outclassed the Marvel series, which has nothing comparable to offer.

However, one of the most enduring and haunting images from the RRR is the song mark 'Komuram Bheemudo,' which for the first time ever, makes the audiences feel the agonizing pain of revolutionaries undergoing horrific tortures, even for the most trifling transgressions. The valiant

band withstood extreme privations at the notorious Cellular Jail in the Andamans and elsewhere. Barindra Ghosh, an accused in the Alipore Bomb Case and Sri Aurobindo's younger sibling, had detailed these experiences in The Tale of My Exile. NTR's iconic smile in Bheemudo, even after being mercilessly whipped at the rack, at the instigation of the British governor and his evil wife (Alison Doody), reminds you of the unparalleled sacrifice of Khudiram Bose, the youngest and the most fearless of revolutionaries, who died laughing, undaunted by the prospect of imminent hanging. The movie and the song have sparked a massive patriotic fervour. Both Bheem and Ram, the fictional characters' namesakes, are an integral part of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

A section of reviewers in India and the US, have however dismissed the British characters in RRR as 'cartoonish,' completely missing the director's point of view, projecting them as inherently vicious, cruel, racist and overbearing, which is what they were as oppressors, treating Indians as low life. Incidentally, Doody played the second lead opposite Harrison Ford in Steven Spielberg's landmark movie, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, betraying him for the sake of Nazis. Rajamouli firmly rejects the British notions of superiority even in cultural matters, which he powerfully highlights in 'Naatu-Naatu.' On the very verge of being thrown out of the venue, both Ram and Bheem rise to the occasion, challenging the occupiers in their own stronghold, with a mesmerizing display of their perfectly synchronised moves, which is a huge hit with the ladies!

POINT COUNTERPOINT

AFTER RAM TEMPLE IN AYODHYA, ALL (HINDU) PILGRIMAGE CENTRES ARE ONCE AGAIN WAKING UP.
—UP CHIEF MINISTER
YOGI ADITYANATH



MUSLIMS SHOULD PREPARE FOR ACTION AGAINST ANY ADVERSE OUTCOME OF SUITS ON KASHI AND GYANVAPI.
—JAISH-E-MOHAMMAD CHIEF
MAULANA MASOOD AZHAR

The never-ending saga of question paper leak in two Telugu States

Journalists, whenever they encounter the Ministers who flip out over adverse reports in newspapers, are reminded of some anecdote or the other. One of the anecdotes that came to the mind of a journalist after seeing the coverage of leakage of Secondary School Certification (SSC) question paper leak in Andhra Pradesh is that of a tipsy man refusing the offer of a friendly arm to lean on. The anecdote is, 'I am not so drunk that I can't walk without your help,' he said. And then, after pausing to think for a moment, rephrased his refusal: 'I'm not so inebriated as to be incapable of unassisted perambulation'. It is hardly an improvement in clarity, though it might have raised a laugh.



K SRIRAMULU

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

phrases whenever they are driven to the wall. In most of the cases since 1978, the Ministers of Education have reacted guardedly whenever the media highlighted question paper leaks. The cub reporters now may not know the significance of the word 'scoop'. It means gaining upper hand over the media rivals by securing a news story and publishing it. But, in the past securing a scoop was such a thrilling experience that a reporter always cherished the memory of it for long.

In 1978, the then Minister of Education Bhavanam Venkatram (Reddy) even went to the extent of blaming the newspaper of plotting to 'destabilise' the Congress (I) government headed by M Channa Reddy. But the Chief Minister did not agree with

Despite the leak of SSC question paper, some believe that the Andhra Pradesh government cannot be faulted for the arrest of Narayana Educational Institutions' head P Narayana, holding him guilty of playing a role in the leak. However, it is felt that the Chief Minister should have used his political sagacity to avoid allegations of 'political vindictiveness'.

his Cabinet colleague and it helped the cub reporter save his skin. The then District Collector A V S Reddy's report clinched the issue and led to the arrest of some workers of the government press. This story was recalled only to

hit the nail on the head that there is no end to the saga of question paper leak in the united Andhra Pradesh or now in the residual State of Andhra Pradesh. It is easy to be wise after the event. In the latest episode of question paper leak, the Andhra

Pradesh government cannot be faulted in ordering an investigation, but the way the founder of Narayana Educational Institutions, P Narayana, was arrested raised many questions. The TDP's reaction to the arrest of Narayana is understandable; for, he was the Cabinet colleague of former chief minister and Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu. The YSRCP government could have avoided the allegation of 'political vindictiveness' had it shown some political sagacity. The leak of Intermediate question paper in 1997 came as a bolt from the blue. It came after Naidu usurped the chief ministership after dislodging his father-in-law N T Rama Rao. Naidu became a bundle of nerves when reports appeared that the

entire set of question papers was bought by brokers for Rs 15 lakh. He reportedly instructed the then Vijayawada police commissioner D T Nayak to speed up the investigation and make some arrests. Taking the clue, the founder of Chaitanya Educational Institutions, B S Rao, was arrested and remanded in judicial custody. The then minister for education G M C Balayogi tendered his resignation owning moral responsibility for the question paper leak. But Naidu rejected his resignation and even exonerated him. Later, a total of 21 persons were arrested. Till date, nobody knows what happened to the case. When the opposition Congress criticised the TDP government, the then ruling party leaders countered it by enlisting the series of question

paper leaks that happened during the Congress regime. When the SSC question papers leaked in 1978 during the Congress regime under the leadership of M Channa Reddy, the District administration was allowed to monitor the investigation into the incident. The supervision by the District Collector had made it difficult for the then Janata Party leaders to criticise the government. None can guarantee that there will be no question paper leak in future. During the last 35 years, in every question paper leak case, successive governments, after arresting a few persons responsible for the leak, thought that security needs to be tightened, while plugging the sources of leakage. Still, question papers leak time and again.

MONEY MATTERS

Coffee Day Global back in black, posts Rs 65.40 cr in Q4 FY22

Coffee Day Global Ltd, which owns and operates popular coffee chain CCD, has posted a net profit of Rs 65.40 crore for the fourth quarter ended on March 31, 2022. It had posted a net loss of Rs 94.81 crore in the January-March quarter in FY21 and a net loss of Rs 94.81 in the October-December quarter of FY22. Its revenue from operations during the quarter under review was up 5.43 per cent to Rs 148.71 crore from Rs 141.04 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last fiscal. Café Coffee Day (CCD) average sale per day were up 11.58 per cent to Rs 17,140 during the quarter as against Rs 15,361 in January-March last fiscal year. The average sale per day in October-December of the coffee house chain was at Rs 17,401 crore. During the quarter under review, its same-store sales growth was up 4.9 per cent. However, year-on-year, its cafe outlet count was down by 13.46 per cent as the number of operational stores came down to 495 in Q4/FY22.



NTPC Nabinagar plant's unit-3 to begin commercial operation from midnight

State-owned NTPC on Tuesday said commercial operation at unit-3 of 660 megawatt (MW) capacity of Nabinagar Power Generating Company Limited (NPGCL) will begin from midnight. In March, NTPC had announced completing the trial operation of the said unit at NPGCL power plant located at Nabinagar in Bihar. There are two more units of similar capacity which are already operational at the 1980-MW power plant. "Unit-3 of 660 MW capacity of Nabinagar Power Generating Company Limited (wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited) is hereby declared on commercial operation with effect from 00:00 hours of June 1, 2022," NTPC said in a regulatory filing. With this, the commercial capacity of NTPC Group will touch the 69016.68-MW mark, it said. NTPC, under the Ministry of Power, is the country's largest power generating company.



JSL supplies 155 tonnes steel for stainless steel FOB in Srikakulam

Jindal Stainless Limited (JSL) on Tuesday said it has supplied 155 metric tonnes of steel to Indian Railways for its stainless steel foot-over-bridge project in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh. According to the company, the said infrastructure is the second stainless steel (SS) foot-over-bridge (FOB) in India after Naupada FOB in Andhra Pradesh. "Contributing to a sustainable and corrosion-free railway infrastructure, JSL supplied 155 metric tonne SS for another stainless steel FOB at Srikakulam unveiled on Tuesday," the company said in a statement. The SS grades for the coastal railway infrastructure have been approved by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) of the Indian Railways, JSL said. Industry expert Mukesh Kumar, who heads the Steel Research & Technology Mission of India (SRTMI) said corrosion of carbon steel in coastal areas is a major challenge due to the presence of salt-laden environment.



Sugar production rises 15 pc to record 35.24 mn tons so far

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sugar production in India, the world's largest producer and second-largest exporter, rose 15 per cent to a record 35.24 million tonne till May 30 in the ongoing 2021-22 marketing year on higher output in Maharashtra and Karnataka, according to the data released by cooperative body NFCSFL on Tuesday.

Sugar production stood at 30.63 million tonne in the year-ago period. The sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

The sugar output achieved so far is much higher than the total output of 31.12 million tonne in the entire 2020-21 marketing year. According to the data by the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSFL), another 4-5 lakh tonne of sugar is expected



to be produced by the end of the current marketing year.

Of the total sugar manufactured, sugar output in Maharashtra -- the country's leading producing state -- rose to 13.68 million tonne till May 30 of the current marketing year, compared to 10.63 million tonne in the year-ago period. Sugar production in

Uttar Pradesh, the country's second-largest producer, however, remained lower at 10.22 million tonne so far this year against 11.01 million tonne in the year-ago period. The production in Karnataka rose to 5.92 million tonne from 4.25 million tonne, the data showed. Till May 30, crushing operations were still on in about 50-

The sugar output achieved so far is much higher than the total output of 31.12 million tonne in the entire 2020-21 marketing year.

odd mills, mostly in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.

The government has capped sugar exports at 10 million tonne in the ongoing 2021-22 marketing year as a precautionary step to ensure enough availability of the sweetener during the festival season in October-November.

Markets halt 3-day rally; Sensex falls 359 pts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity benchmarks declined on Tuesday after a three-day rally, with the Sensex falling 359.33 points amid selling in index majors HDFC, Reliance Industries and Infosys. Investors were cautious ahead of release of GDP data, while a jump in crude oil prices also weighed on market sentiment, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex went lower by 359.33 points or 0.64 per cent to settle at 55,566.41. During the day, it tanked 556.6 points or 0.99 per cent to 55,369.14.

The broader NSE Nifty declined 76.85 points or 0.46 per cent to end at 16,584.55.

From the Sensex pack, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Sun Pharma, HDFC, Infosys, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank were the major laggards.

Mandatory 6 airbags to hit small car market adversely: Maruti Suzuki

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) wants the government to reconsider the proposal to make six airbags mandatory in passenger vehicles, saying the norm will adversely hit the already shrinking small car market and may even impact jobs in the auto sector going ahead.

The auto major noted that the regulation would largely impact the cost-sensitive entry-level car segment -- which has been facing headwinds and witnessing dwindling sales over the last three years -- making it even more difficult for two-wheeler users to upgrade to small cars.

Earlier this year, the road transport ministry said it will make it mandatory for car-makers to provide a minimum of six airbags in motor vehicles that can carry up to 8 passengers for enhanced



safety of occupants from October this year.

In an interaction with PTL, MSI Chairman RC Bhargava said the cost of the entry-level cars has already gone up considerably due to the implementation of various regulatory norms in the past few years, including the BSVI emission regime from April 1 2020. With prices going up, the sales of small cars have

been impacted especially in the non-metro markets across the country, the veteran industry leader noted.

He cautioned that with the implementation of the six airbag regulation the prices will further go up leading to further shrinking of the domestic small car industry.

"So, the fear is that due to this (six airbags) the market will become smaller.

Israel, UAE sign free trade deal, first with an Arab country

PNS ■ JERUSALEM

Israel and the United Arab Emirates signed a free trade agreement on Tuesday, the first of its kind that Israel has concluded with an Arab country.

The UAE agreed to normalise relations with Israel in a US-brokered deal in 2020, the first of the so-called Abraham Accords that Israel eventually concluded with four Arab nations. Since then, the two countries have boosted cooperation in a number of economic sectors.

"Israel & the UAE just signed a historic Free Trade Agreement - the first of this scope to be signed between Israel & an Arab state," Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett tweeted. "This was



the fastest FTA to be signed in Israel's history."

Mohamed Al Khaja, the UAE ambassador to Israel, called it "an unprecedented achievement."

"Businesses in both countries will benefit from faster access to markets and lower tariffs as our nations work together to increase trade, create jobs, promote new skills and deepen cooperation," he tweeted. Dorian Barak, president of

the UAE-Israel Business Council, predicted that bilateral trade would exceed \$2 billion this year, rising to \$5 billion in the next five.

"Dubai is fast becoming a hub for Israeli companies that look to South Asia, the Middle East and the Far East as markets for their goods and services," he said. "Nearly 1,000 Israeli companies will be working in and through the UAE by year's end. It's unprecedented."

Fiscal deficit for 2021-22 at 6.7 pc of GDP, lower than earlier estimate: CGA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fiscal deficit for 2021-22 worked out to be 6.71 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), lower than 6.9 per cent projected by the Finance Ministry in the revised Budget Estimates, according to government data released on Tuesday.

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for 2020-21, the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) said that the fiscal deficit in the absolute terms was Rs 15,86,537 crore (provisional). The revenue deficit at the end of 2021-22 was 4.37 per cent. For the last financial year, the government had initially pegged the fiscal deficit at 6.8 per cent of the GDP in the budget presented in February 2021.

IIFL Foundation launches Rajasthan's first agri drone

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IIFL Foundation on Tuesday said it has launched an agricultural drone at Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology (MPUAT), Rajasthan in order to boost research work.

"This is also one of India's first agricultural drone initiatives by a CSR foundation," the IIFL Foundation claimed in a statement.

The custom built agricultural drone has been given to MPUAT for research and educational purposes, it said.

The 2-meter wide, battery powered drone can spray over an area of 1 acre in less than 3 minutes. An android phone is mounted to its wireless remote that allows easy navigation.

The structure comprises 6 arms, 6 propellers and 4 spray-



ing nozzles which can easily cover large farm areas in a few hours that takes a day or 2 for manual spraying, it said.

The drone was launched by MPUAT Vice Chancellor Narendra Singh Rathod, IIFL Foundation Director Madhu Jain, RNT Medical College (Udaipur) Principal Lakh-

Poswal, at the instructional farm in MPUAT's campus, Udaipur, in presence of Farmers.

This is IIFL Foundation's second drone initiative after the successful launch of Maharashtra's first drone-based last-mile vaccine delivery in Palghar district.

Power Grid Corporation acquires MTL for over Rs 9 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) on Tuesday said it has acquired Mohanlalganj Transmission Limited in Uttar Pradesh for over Rs 9 crore. Incorporate in June 2021, Mohanlalganj Transmission Limited (MTL) is the project SPV (special purpose vehicle) to establish an intra-state transmission system, PGCIL said in a BSE filing. "...it is informed that PGCIL pursuant to its selection as the successful bidder under tariff-based competitive bidding, has on May 30, 2022, acquired MTL," it added. The entity was

acquired for an aggregate value of about Rs 9.11 crore, including 10,000 equity shares along with assets and liabilities of the company as of the acquisition date.

In major blow, EU bans imports of most Russian oil

PNS ■ BRUSSELS

In the most significant effort yet to punish Russia for its war in Ukraine, the European Union agreed to ban the overwhelming majority of Russian oil imports after tense negotiations that exposed the cracks in European unity.

From the moment Russia invaded on Feb. 24, the West has sought to hit Moscow's lucrative energy sector to cut off funding for its war. But any such move is a double-edged sword, especially in Europe, which relies on the country for 25% of its oil and 40% of its natural gas. European countries that are even more heavily dependent on Russia have been especially reluctant to act.

In a move unthinkable just months ago, EU leaders agreed late Monday to cut around 90% of all Russian oil imports over the next six months. In response to the EU's decision, Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, took to Twitter, saying: "Russia will find other importers." Russia has not shied away from withholding its energy supplies, despite the economic damage it could suffer as a result.

Fortis Healthcare plans to add around 1,500 new beds in 3 years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fortis Healthcare Ltd plans to add around 1,500 new beds to its network to take the total to around 5,000 beds in the next three years, according to company officials.

The company has also lined up a capex of Rs 400 crore for the ongoing fiscal which will be divided equally on maintenance and growth programmes.

The healthcare chain is continuing with its portfolio rationalisation programme aligning with its focus on cluster approach to grow both organically via brownfield expansion and inorganically in geographies of Delhi-NCR, Maharashtra, Bangalore and Kolkata, Fortis Healthcare Ltd Managing Director and CEO Ashutosh Raghuvanshi told analysts.

"Our plans to add 1,200 beds in the existing facilities over the next few years are well underway," he said.

Elaborating on the new

beds addition programme, Fortis Healthcare CFO Vivek Kumar Goyal said at present the company had 4,000 beds and the target is to reach around 5,000 beds in the next three years.

Stating that the company's "1,300 to 1,500 brownfield-bed expansion is online", he said, "Out of this 1,500, 600 beds is a ramp up of the existing facility... the bed capacity we have built but we have not operationalised the bed. We are opening up the bed as per the market condition..."

The balance, he said, will be a "sort of brownfield" where the company is building new towers in existing facilities.

Goyal said in the current financial year Fortis expects to increase its operational bed by around 250 beds, adding, "there is one contract where we have come out in Dehradun, there will be a reduction of bed facility. So, overall around 200 beds increase should be there by the year-end."



Essar Ports handles 1.3 MMT cargo in April; eyes strong growth

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Essar Ports on Tuesday said its Vizag Terminal is set for strong growth this fiscal as the facility recorded around 1.3 million metric tonne of cargo in April. This has been achieved at a run rate in excess of 14 MMT for FY23, suggesting growth of around 10 per cent on an annualised basis.

The surge in traffic marks the uptick in the domestic steel sector, which has been a major contributor to India's manu-

facturing output, it said.

Essar Vizag Terminal Ltd (EVTL), which operates the country's largest iron ore handling complex, handled 12.7 MMT cargo in the last fiscal. It also handled 193 vessels and 1,511 rakes, as per the company. "EVTL has recorded 1.3 MMT of cargo handling for April '22 i.e. a run rate in excess of 14 MMT for FY22-23, suggesting a growth of 10 per cent on an annualised basis," the company said in the statement.

ONGC sees 11 pc rise in oil production, 25 pc in gas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reversing the declining trend of the past few years, ONGC said its crude oil production will rise 11 per cent and natural gas output will jump 25 per cent after newer discoveries in the western and eastern offshore start producing.

In an investor presentation post FY22 earnings, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) said crude oil production will rise from 19,545 million tonnes in the financial year ended March 31 (2021-22) to 19,88 million tonnes this year and 21,588 million tonnes in the next year.

The output will climb to 21,701 million tonnes in 2024-25 (FY25).



Similarly, gas production will rise from 20,907 billion cubic meters in 2021-22 to 21,097 bcm in current fiscal

and 24,387 bcm in the next. In FY26, the output will reach 26,124 bcm.

The output increase will be

aided by projects to bring gas, found on both the east and the west coast. ONGC is betting on discoveries in KG-DWN-98/2

in the Bay of Bengal to do most of the heavy lifting, while the Cluster-8 marginal fields in the western offshore will supplement the production.

ONGC said it is also implementing the fourth phase of the redevelopment of the Mumbai High oil and gas fields, which will increase the recovery factor from the five-decade-old mature fields.

India's dependence on imports to meet its crude oil needs has, in recent years, risen to 85 per cent as output from domestic fields continued to decline. ONGC, the biggest crude oil and natural gas producer in the country, has over the years seen a steady decline in production from its mature and aging fields.

Arjun Kapoor on OTT debut: It has to be different from what I'm chasing in films

Actor Arjun Kapoor says he is not pursuing the idea of venturing into the streaming space aggressively as he is content with the kind of work he is getting in the films now.

Arjun's last three films -- Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar (Prime Video), *Sardaar Ka Grandson* (Netflix) and *Bhoot Police* (Disney + Hotstar) have premiered on OTT, but he has not yet starred in any series as of now.

"I've been continuously shooting. The time constrain has been there which has not allowed me to seek something immediately. Right now, there are offers coming up to me but I need to figure out what excites me," the actor told PTL.

Arjun, 36, said he is hopeful to find a starkly different concept for his debut in the long-form storytelling.

"What I will do on OTT, I can't do that in theatres. So, it has to be very specific. It has to be different from what I'm chasing in films. Sometimes you have to keep waiting to find something exciting," he added.

The actor is currently shooting for suspense drama *The Lady Killer* co-starring Bhumi Pednekar. The film, directed by Ajay Bahl of *Section 375* fame, is being shot across Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

"I've started shooting for a special script *The Lady Killer*. I'm so excited about that. It's been amazing working with Bhumi and Ajay sir. It's very visceral and real," the actor said. His other projects include Mohit Suri-directed *Ek Villain Returns*, scheduled to be released on July 29, and Vishal Bhardwaj's son Aasmaan Bhardwaj's feature directorial debut *Kuttey*.

The actor has finished filming for the both the movies and is looking forward to audience reaction.

"*Ek Villain* is a proper Mohit Suri musical action thriller. It has got all the trappings of being a big screen entertainer. It's a well shot and well executed film. Mohit has worked really hard in presenting me in a different way so I'm really interested to see how people react to that," he said about the film, also starring John

Abraham, Tara Sutaria and Disha Patani.

Without divulging details about the plot of *Kuttey*, Arjun said the film is set in the same milieu and has a tone similar to that of Vishal Bhardwaj's *Kaminey*.

"All I can say is 'Baap ne Kaminey banai thi bete ne Kuttey banai hai' (Father had made *Kaminey* and son has made *Kuttey*), the actor quipped.

"If you have enjoyed Vishal Bhardwaj's *Kaminey*, I'm absolutely sure you will get entertained by Aasmaan's *Kuttey*. It's set in that milieu, that tone and madness," he added.

Kuttey also features Tabu, Konkona Sen Sharma, Naseeruddin Shah, Radhika Madan, Kumud Mishra and Shardul Bhardwaj.



what's brewing?

Brahmastra makers reveal the first look at major characters

Brahmastra team on Tuesday released the first looks of megastar Amitabh Bachchan, Nagarjuna Akkineni and Mouni Roy from the much-anticipated fantasy adventure movie.

The special video, also starring Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, was shared by the director of the film Ayan Mukerji and Dharma Productions on the ninth anniversary of the filmmaker's blockbuster hit *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*.

Set to a rousing background score and loaded with VFX, the 32-second-long clip teases the world of *Brahmastra Part One: Shiva*.

The teaser features high-octane action sequences as well as emotional moments.

While details of Bachchan and Akkineni's characters are



under wraps, it is known that Roy, known for TV show *Naagin* and films like *Gold* and *Made in China*, will be playing the antagonist in the movie.

Brahmastra Part One: Shiva will release theatrically in Hindi,

Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada on September 9, 2022. It is a joint production of Star Studios, Dharma Productions, Prime Focus and Starlight Pictures. The first trailer of the film will come out on June 15.

Leslie Mann, Tim Robbins exit Amazon series *The Power*



Leslie Mann and Tim Robbins are no longer part of *The Power*, a global thriller drama series from Amazon Studios.

Both roles will be recast in the show which is based on Naomi Alderman's best-selling novel of the same name, reported Deadline.

Mann was cast as the lead Margot Cleary-Lopez in October 2019 and Robbins boarded the project in

Rainn Wilson's place who was initially cast as male lead Daniel Dandon. *The Office* star Wilson had left the show after filming was delayed in the wake of the pandemic-induced shutdown.

When Robbins signed on, the role of Daniel was switched from a series regular to a recurring guest star. It will remain that way as the part is being recast.

The Power is set in a world where all teenage girls across the globe suddenly develop the power to electrocute people at will.

They soon learn they can awaken the power in older women as well, and soon enough every woman in the world can do it. And then everything is different.

Democrat Margot Cleary-Lopez is the mayor of Seattle and a rising star in the political world, and Daniel Dandon is the self-righteous Republican governor of Washington state and a constant thorn in her side.

The 10-episode series is produced by Sister and directed by Reed Morano of *The Handmaid's Tale* fame.

Varun Joshi is excited and proud to play a gay character onscreen

TV actor Varun Joshi, who was previously seen as an antagonist in TV shows like *Kundali Bhagya*, *Kumkum Bhagya* and *Yeh Hai Mohabbatein*, is happy about essaying a gay character in the upcoming movie *Shashank* which stars Aarya Babbar.

He says, "I'm excited and proud to play a gay character onscreen. I feel they are the most creative and kind souls on earth. I'm seriously against the theory of showing them as comic characters and challenging their lifestyle in our society. I feel movies and shows can be a great medium to educate people of our society to respect the third gender."

Varun continues to reveal his role in the movie and adds, "I'm playing an important character of a gay in the



movie. He is rich and villainous. The movie is based on

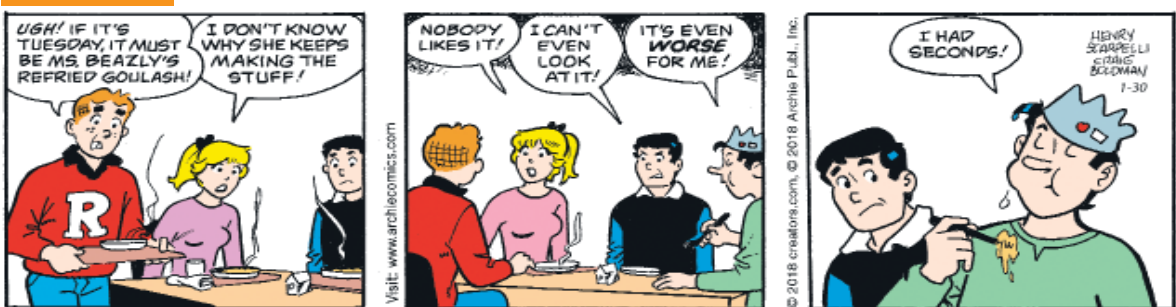
the struggles, successes and downfalls in life based on actors and their phases of life. It was a challenge to play such a tough character but I tried my best to relate and play the role. I feel as an actor it's my responsibility to show the talent onscreen and entertain the audience."

Shashank is directed and helmed by Sanoj Mishra. Varun says, "I'm really blessed to work under such an amazing director. I have always been keen to be associated with him. He was very supportive during the shoots and helped me to understand the character that needs to be delivered."

Varun has also acted in shows like *Bepannah*, *Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana* and *Vighnaharta Ganesh*.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



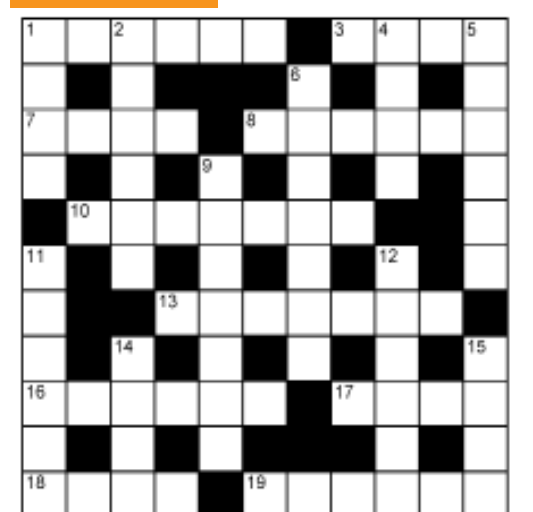
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 4 9 5 3 8 7 6 2 1
 1 7 2 4 5 6 8 9 3
 8 3 6 9 2 1 5 7 4
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 2 4 7 6 3 8 1 5 9
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Rules
 • Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
 • The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- 1 A written communication
- 3 Bathe
- 7 Touch lips with someone
- 8 Concealed
- 10 A sale where people make bids for things
- 13 Rocks in space that burn up when close to the Earth
- 16 An animal with a shell
- 17 Mix up with a spoon
- 18 Very impolite
- 19 A university award

DOWN

- 1 Enjoy
- 2 Very thin, soft paper
- 4 Broad



GINGER MEGGS



Use social media for a revolution: Shweta Tripathi Sharma

SHIKHA DUGGAL

All of us are exposed to reels these days, and sometimes reels go too far that it leads to pranks that have a psychological effect on all of us. Some are really tasteless videos. Addressing this, we have the new trending series *Escapce Live* and to know more about what's happening in there, we have noted our conversation with Bataawada aka Shweta Singh Tripathi. Yes, the *Mirzapur* girl.

She's strictly against horrifying reels or pranks, especially if they're online without consent. She had a lot to tell, but before getting into the depth of a sensitive subject like this, we happened to ask her when she takes resorts to the internet in her free time, and she uttered, "So, I am a fashion student, and it's natural that my internet search will lead me to the latest fashion collection from buzzing designers in town. Interiors, fabrics, and jewellery still excite me. Adding to that, there is art appreciation, and now with the advent of social media, everything is available at our fingertips. We have become one of those people who frequently check

Facebook or Twitter, even while driving or in a meeting! Not me, though. So you see, there is an imbalance being created."

She continued, "Likes, dislikes, and the number of shares is overpowering us. It's not an influential thing anymore! I have witnessed this in my mother too. She feels pressured to be on social media these days. This tool will only give you your two minutes of fame, then the reality check comes in. I never check my comments section. I am not here to people-please."

The actress carries so much of OTT stardom with her that we assumed this series was just another god-damn web show for her, but she proved us wrong and says, "There was an optimistic side to this project that led me on board for it. I am here in Bombay and we can see someone dancing in the fields of Karnataka, a woman making laddoos in Banares, or a young girl singing outside her hut. I have access to these videos. But, don't allow these tools to take each other down. For once, let's keep the competition aside. I got my first phone when I was in college and since then I don't check it first thing in the morning. Not surprising at all. What do I do then? Well, I meditate and

chant! It's a ritual in my home."

Escapce Live does not have sarcastic humour because it is too dreary and dark. She takes us through some more insights on what social media is doing to us that she learnt from the sets too.

For example, "I saw how all of us want to live a dual personality, and we are juggling between it. 'Friends' on social media may not actually be friends! There is exposure to content that is not age-appropriate. FOMO has become a common theme and often leads to continual checking of social media sites. This web series is not all gaga, it will make you uncomfortable, and it's just how I wanted it to be."

Recently, popular social media influencer Sofia Ansari, with a massive fan following of nine million users, has been suspended from Instagram. The actress retorts, "The content that is being made online should solely depend on the content creator. Respect the boundaries, but at the same time, why was Sofia popping up on your feed or why were you following her? Because you are interested in that content! Why deny it? If she had multiple shares on her videos, it meant you had given her your vote willfully. Was she harming anyone with her videos, or tak-

ing down someone or spreading negativity? That's the question of the hour. Reporting a woman's Instagram isn't a big deal at the moment, just FYI. What's happening around the country? And what are we doing about it? You can take it with a pinch of salt too. Use this tool for a revolution."

Talking about pranks, she signs off by saying, "Continuous pranks are no less than harassment. Pranks scare you sometimes, which is a negative emotion. So, I am not a fan of pranks at all. Practical jokes are okay, but pranks aren't a good feeling. The prank itself is non-consensual, and even if you put it online, followers aren't going to give you that inner happiness. This is not a thrill because some pranks can go horribly wrong. We know of some."

Social media pranks are like the new trend that we get to see every time we scroll on social media. In context to this, *The Pioneer* gets in touch with the *Mirzapur* girl, Shweta Tripathi Sharma, who shares with us how she's been against these pranks.



today. Potato chips were accidentally invented when an annoying customer kept asking a restaurant to make his French fries thinner and crispier. George Crum, the chef, sliced them wafer-thin as a joke, but the guy loved them and the

potato chip was born.

Since being in a business is not just a passion project and mistakes can cost us, it also becomes important for us to not let the fear of loss weigh us down, but rather build processes and systems, teams and cohorts that work seamlessly together and continuously upgrade and update themselves with whatever is needed to make an error-proof output.

We would say, stop worrying about what's going to happen next, take that step with a leap of faith and trust yourself. But, we would also say, prepare for the worst and make sure you have Plan Bs and Plan Cs in place. The essence of running a business is taking risks and having plans to ensure those risks work in your favour.

If we focus on our mistakes as an opportunity to learn, we are much more likely to not experience failure over time. As you begin to master this skill, share it with those you lead. Help your team see the importance and the difference. Create a conversation about these two important concepts in your organization. The upside of this would be, a happy, productive working environment where ideas will flow without hesitation and greatness will knock on the door every day.

Mistakes are not failures

How many of us understand the difference between a failure and a mistake? Don't we often confuse the two or consider a mistake to be the reason for failure? Perplexing right?

Mistake, is an act or judgement that is misguided or are often thought of as a failure. We, as humans, tend to make mistakes quite often. However, there are only a few instances where these mistakes lead to failure. It is believed that people often label themselves as failures when they make a mistake. It is vital that in today's world where mental health has become a major part of our well being, we understand the difference between mistakes and failures. There have been instances during the initial

stages of starting a company where minor mistakes or even major mistakes like not being able to recruit the ideal team, not being able to sustain clients, not being able to achieve the ticket size that we desire, lead us to believe that maybe this isn't meant to be. But, learning from these pitfalls and making sure that we survived each challenge that came with the mistake we made, helped us grow and become what we are today.

Mistakes should be approached with positivity and not with a failure mindset. They should be considered as stepping stones to better, error-free outcomes. It is always about trying again, re-strategizing and planning on a fresh slate all over again.

Pooja Patil (CEO) and Kajol Chavan (COO), Co-Founders of One Impact

shares, "We believe that the word failure should not be a part of the language we speak. It should be switched with 'mistakes' and craft a narrative that says Mistakes are the stepping stones to success. No, we aren't there yet, we make mistakes every day, sometimes small, sometimes big, sometimes even loss-making. But, we ensure that we cover the loss, we build beautiful things and we turn these little hurdles into experiences that make us proud of what we do."

The way we view or how we react to our mistakes and what actions we take after it plays a huge role in forming our attitude and approach in life. Certain times mistakes are a pathway to discovering new things - *Potato chips*: A story that would make it onto countless food forums

Musical evening

Music lovers of Hyderabad paid rich tributes to Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, India's proud classical musician and santoor player, who is credited with adapting the santoor, the Indian folk musical instrument, as mainline

Indian classical music. As a music composer, he is known all over India for his music composed for musical blockbusters like *Chandni*, *Lamhe* and other films. Vishwanath, the Tollywood director said, "I like Santoor instruments a lot. It

is a challenging instrument. I met him during a Hindi movie. It is a great loss." The concert began first with the Santoor recital. It was performed by Dr Shantanu Gokhale, a disciple of Pt. Shivkumar Sharma. He started with Raag

Allap And performed three compositions. Later, Sniti Mishra performed Hindustani vocals. She sang Marathi Bangra and Hindi Ghazals. Over 200 music lovers were present at the event enjoying the musical evening.



ENG 'WON'T DIE WONDERING' UNDER McCULLUM: SOUTHEE

AP ■ LONDON

Tim Southee has forecast an exciting time for England under Brendon McCullum as the former New Zealand captain prepares to go up against the reigning World Test champions at Lord's.

Thursday's opening match of a three-game series will be McCullum's first Test as England coach, with the hosts looking to him to kickstart their red-ball fortunes in much the same way he sparked a New Zealand revival when captain of his native country.

England are currently on a miserable run of one win in 17 Tests, with McCullum something of a surprise choice to succeed Chris Silverwood given his lack of red-ball coaching experience, although he will be working alongside a captain with a similar outlook in the newly-appointed Ben Stokes.

"It's exciting, obviously a great challenge for Brendon," paceman Southee, who has spent much of his career playing alongside McCullum, told reporters at Lord's on Tuesday.

Southee, who has taken 338 wickets in 85 Tests, said he expected McCullum to transfer the qualities that made him a dynamic batsman and successful captain into his England role.

"He's a great man-manager and he loves to try to get the best out of people. I'm sure he'll be doing that here as well."

"The way he played his cricket was exciting, fearless, and that's the way he is a person and I'm sure that's the way he is as a coach as well."

"It will be an exciting brand of cricket, I'm sure. They (England) won't die wondering I'd imagine if the way he goes about things is anything to go by."

'KIWI WAY'

Southee, however, played down the prospect of McCullum imparting too much 'inside knowledge' to his



new side.

"He knows us pretty well but I don't think there's too many secrets out there these days with the amount of footage and analyst stuff that's done as well."

McCullum's leadership allied to

the way New Zealand played their white-ball cricket provided the inspiration for a change in England's approach to white-ball cricket that led to a first men's 50-over World Cup title in 2019 -- when they beat New Zealand in a thrilling Super Oval final

at Lord's.

Southee, asked what it was about New Zealand cricket that was so attractive to England, replied: "I guess in New Zealand we've learnt to box above our weight for a long period of time."

Broad vows to leave 'heart and soul'

AP ■ LONDON

England veteran quick Stuart Broad has vowed to leave his "heart and soul" on the field should he earn a Test recall against New Zealand at Lord's this week.

Both James Anderson and Broad, England's two all-time leading Test wicket-takers, were controversially left out of the squad that lost 1-0 in a three-match series in the West Indies earlier this year.

But the new-ball duo could be back in the side for the first of a three-match campaign against reigning WTC winners New Zealand at Lord's starting Thursday, in what will be Ben Stokes's first match since he was appointed permanent England captain following the resignation of Joe Root.

Although the 35-year-old Broad has taken 537 wickets in 152 Tests, he said on Tuesday he was treating his return to the England squad as if he had still to make his debut.

Asked if there were any scars from being dropped by England, he told reporters at Lord's: "Not at all, I'm fine... I'm going in with the mindset to attack each week and leave my heart and soul on the field."

"I'm taking my mindset back to as though I've played zero Test cricket and have zero experience. You don't

"We're obviously challenged with just being a small country, the lack of people playing and lack of resource. Just the Kiwi way is to muck in and get the best out of what we've got. That's not going to change, we're not all of a sudden going to have a lot of



look too far ahead when you make your Test debut, you're just excited to play the next game."

"I just want to feel fresh and attack the strategy at Lord's, leave my heart and soul on this field and move on."

He added: "I've gone away completely from looking at what's going to happen in August or November. I can't control that, it's too far away. I'm just going to give everything for one week of the Test match, try and win that week, learn from it and move on to the next one."

"That could be a really good mindset for the team as well, because if we start looking and planning too far ahead you can lose that focus on what is right in front of you. Right now we have the World Test champions at our home."



Indian team to assemble in Delhi on June 5

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian cricket team will assemble here on June 5 ahead of the five-match T20 series against South Africa.

The first match of the series begins here on June 9 and South Africa will arrive here on June 2.

There will be no crowd restrictions and there will be no bio-bubble for the series though players will be tested regularly for COVID-19.

The other venues are Cuttack (June 12), Visakhapatnam (June 14), Rajkot (June 17) and Bengaluru (June 19).

"The Indian team will assemble here on June 5 while the South Africans land in Delhi on June 2," DDCA joint secretary Rajan Manchanda said. The Indian cricketers are in the middle of a much needed break post a two-month long IPL.

K L Rahul will lead the Indian team in the absence of regular skipper Rohit Sharma who has been rested for the series alongside other all format players, including Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah.

'No doubt' Benzema deserves to win Ballon d'Or: Messi

AP ■ PARIS

According to Lionel Messi, there is "no doubt" that Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema deserves to win his first Ballon d'Or award this year.

Messi has won a record seven Ballon d'Or awards as the world's best player, but saw his new club Paris Saint-Germain eliminated by Madrid in the round of 16 of the Champions League this year - after Benzema scored a hat trick in the second half of the return leg.

Benzema netted another four goals against Chelsea in the quarterfinals and three against Manchester City in the semifinals - including the decisive penalty in extra time of the second leg - before Madrid defeated Liverpool 1-0 in the final on Saturday. Benzema was also the top scorer in the Spanish league as Madrid won the title in dominant fashion.

"There's no doubt, it's very clear that Benzema had a spectacular year," Messi said in an interview to Argentine TV channel TyC Sports when asked if Benzema should get the prestigious award. "I think there is no doubt this year."

In total, Benzema scored 44 goals in 46 matches with his club this season, and equaled Madrid great Raul Gonzalez as the club's second-highest scorer with 323 goals. Cristiano Ronaldo leads that tally with 451.

While Madrid knocked out a quartet of European giants on their way to the Champions League title, Messi wasn't overly impressed with the team's style of play. Madrid needed big comebacks against both PSG and Man City and had Benzema to thank both times.



"Out of the blue they score against you, and the match changes automatically," Messi said about this Madrid team. "Madrid was not the best team in this Champions League, there were better teams."

The 34-year-old Messi is training with Argentina in Bilbao for the "Finalissima" — a friendly between the Copa America winners and European champion Italy on Wednesday. Messi could find himself going up against Benzema again at the World Cup in Qatar this year - both Argentina and France are among the main contenders - but insisted that defending champion France should be considered the favorite.

"France is an impressive team, (four years) ago we said

they could be candidates and they ended as winners. I believe the hit they took at the Euros (being eliminated by Switzerland) made them stronger," Messi said. "(Argentina) can fight anyone and will make it hard for any rival. That doesn't mean we are the favorites to be world champions or any of that. It means we will fight against anyone."

PSG SIGN NUNO

Paris Saint-Germain have triggered their €40m option to sign Nuno Mendes on a permanent deal.

The teenage left-back joined on loan from Sporting CP last summer and impressed in the French capital.

He has now signed a deal to stay there until 2026.

Red Bull reward Perez with new deal till 2024

AP ■ PARIS

Red Bull on Tuesday announced they have rewarded Sergio Perez with a fresh two-year deal until 2024, with the Mexican signing in Monaco last weekend.

The new contract gave Max Verstappen's teammate double cause for celebration after he emerged from all the chaos caused by a pre-race deluge to win the iconic Grand Prix.

"For us, holding onto his pace, race craft and experience was a no-brainer and we are delighted that Checo will continue to race for the team until 2024," said team boss Christian Horner.

Perez, 32, moved to within 15 points of world champion Verstappen in the Formula One



PEREZ MOVED TO WITHIN 15 POINTS OF WORLD CHAMPION VERSTAPPEN IN THE F1 DRIVERS' STANDINGS AFTER HIS WIN IN MONACO GRAND PRIX

drivers' standings after rising above all the mayhem on Sunday, that fine win coming after three 2nd-place finishes.

He joined Red Bull last season, claiming a win on another street circuit in Azerbaijan with four further podiums to finish fourth behind his Dutch colleague.

Perez said: "For me, this has been an incredible week, winning the Monaco Grand Prix is a dream for any driver and then

to follow that with announcing I will continue with the team until 2024 just makes me extremely happy."

Horner in his statement noted the popular Perez had done a "fantastic" job and stepped up a gear in his second year with the team.

"Time and again he has proved himself to not only be a magnificent team player but as his level of comfort has grown he has become a real force to be reckoned with at the sharp end of the grid," Horner remarked.

"This year he has taken another step and the gap to world champion Max has closed significantly, evidenced by his superb pole position in Jeddah earlier this year and by his wonderful win in Monaco just last weekend."

ISSF WC: Elavenil, Ramita & Shreya win Gold in women's 10m air rifle team event

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India opened their account at the ongoing ISSF World Cup with the trio of Elavenil Valarivan, Ramita and Shreya Agrawal claiming the Gold medal in the 10m air rifle team women competition in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Indian trio outplayed Denmark represented by Anna Nielsen, Emma Koch and Rikke Maeng Ibsen, 17-5 in the Gold medal contest. Poland won Bronze in the event.

Former world number one Elavenil, Ramita and Shreya had reached the Gold medal clash after two rounds of qualification on Monday.

The Indian trio had first topped the qualification stage



one with a combined effort of 944.4 across 90 shots. They then came second in stage two behind Denmark, to make the title round.

In men's air rifle team competition, Indian trioika of

Rudranksh Patil, Paarth Makhija and Dhanush Srikanth fell short in their Bronze medal match against Croatia.

The 12-member Indian rifle squad now finds itself at the fifth spot in the medals tally.



4-4 draw with Korea kick India out of Asia Cup race

PTI ■ JAKARTA

The young Indian hockey team dished out some impressive and fast-paced hockey in a Super 4s match against South Korea but an outright victory eluded it as a 4-4 draw pushed it out of the Asia Cup title race, here on Tuesday.

Malaysia's 5-0 win over Japan early in the day meant that an outright win became a prerequisite for India to qualify for the summit clash.

Korea will now take on Malaysia in the final on Wednesday, while India will play Japan in the third-fourth place classification match.

Nilam Sanjeev Xess (9th minute), Dipsan Turkey (21st), Mahesh Shehe Gowda (22nd) and Shakthivel Mareswaran (37th) scored for India, while Korea scored through Jang Jonghyun (13th), Ji Woo Cheon (18th), Kim JungHoo (28th) and Jung Manjae (44th).

It was a midfield slugfest between the two sides as both India and Korea tried to take upper hand in the first quarter.

In the ninth minute Nilam scored with a low flick to the right bottom corner of the Korean net past Kim from India's second penalty corner.

Two minutes from the first quarter, India conceded a penalty corner and Jang Jonghyun was bang on target to draw level for Korea.

Korea made it 2-1 five minutes later when Ji Woo Cheon chose his spot after being fed by Jungjun Lee following a defensive lapse from Pawan Rajbhar inside his own circle.

But India drew level three minutes later when Dipsan Turkey converted team's third penalty corner. Mahesh Shehe Gowda restored the lead a minute later, pushing home Vishnukant Singh's pass from a counter-attack.

Two minutes from half-time, Kim JungHoo equalised for Korea through a fine field goal from an acute angle as both the teams went into the breather locked 3-3.

India went all out and restored their lead in the 37th minute through an unmarked Shakthivel Mareswaran, who tapped in a cross from Shehe Gowda from the right flank.

A yellow card — five minute suspension — to Yashdeep Siwach three minutes from the third quarter cost India dearly as Korea equalised again when Manjae Jung deflected in a long ball from midfield.

Inter's Marotta hopes to sign Dybala

AP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan on Monday confirmed the departure of wing-back Ivan Perisic, who is out of contract, while expressing "hope" that they may recruit Paulo Dybala, who has been released by Juventus.

Perisic, 33, has been one of the key players for Inter this season and his extra-time double won them the Italian Cup against their bitter rivals Juventus.

The Croat on Monday confirmed move to Tottenham Hotspur where he would reunite with former Inter manager Antonio Conte.



Giuseppe Marotta.

"We were not in a position to be able to present him

with a better offer."

Perisic, who scored eight goals and made six assists

this season, was reportedly demanding six million euros (\$6.3 million) a season.

Inter are keen, however, to attract the 28-year-old Argentine playmaker Dybala. "Clearly, the hope is that he can play with us," said Marotta who admitted, with a smile, that he did not yet know where the "Joya" (the "Jewel" in Spanish) will play next season.

Nor did Marotta rule out a possible return to Inter for Romelu Lukaku. The Belgian striker left for Chelsea last summer for nearly 115 million euros but is unhappy with his situation at Stamford Bridge.

The transfer market does not officially open until July 1 in Italy.

PCB shifts ODI series against WI from Rawalpindi to Multan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Cricket Board has shifted next month's ODI series against the West Indies from Rawalpindi to Multan in the wake of expected protest rallies planned by opposition politicians.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan is planning protest rallies in the federal capital Islamabad, which is adjacent to Rawalpindi, in the coming days.

Khan called off a planned, opened-ended rally and sit-in last week in Islamabad after personally leading thousands of his supporters during a march on Islamabad.

The PCB had kept Multan as a back-up option and said

Monday the three-match ODI series, which is part of the Cricket World Cup Super League, will now be played as per schedule on June 8, 10 and 12.

Since the PCB is relaying the pitches at the National Stadium in Karachi and Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Multan is the only venue available to host international matches.

It will be the first time that Pakistan hosts international games during the summer and the PCB has planned to start the games at 4 pm local time. West Indies will arrive in Islamabad on June 6 and will travel to Multan on a charter flight the same day.

