

'NOBODY IS GOING  
TO WATCH MY MOVIE  
JUST BECAUSE MY  
NAME IS MS RAJU'**TRUCK DRIVER DIES AFTER WAITING FOR 5 DAYS IN QUEUE AT FUEL STATION IN LANKA**

A 63-year-old truck driver has died in Sri Lanka after standing for five days in a queue at a filling station in the country's Western Province, the 10th death reported due to prolonged waiting for fuel procurement in the debt-ridden island nation grappling with the worst economic crisis since its independence, according to a media report on Thursday. The man was found dead inside his vehicle after waiting in the queue at the filling station in Angurawatota, police said. The death toll in queues now stands at 10 and all the victims have been men aged between 43 and 84 years. Majority of the deaths reported in queues have been due to cardiac arrests, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

**MASKS NO LONGER COMPULSORY AS S AFRICA REMOVES COVID RESTRICTIONS**

South Africans heaved a sigh of relief as Health Minister Joe Phaahla announced that they will no longer be compelled to wear masks or have limitations on public gatherings as the government has lifted all remaining restrictions imposed more than two years due to the Covid-29 pandemic. Proof of vaccination at all ports of entry will also no longer be required. "Having monitored the positive direction for more than three weeks, we came to the conclusion that the peak infection, which we concluded was a limited 5th wave driven by sub-variants and not a new variant of concern, was dissipating and that there was no more any eminent risk, Phaahla said on Wednesday.

**RAPID TRANSITION TO CLEAN ENERGY COULD CREATE 1.5 CRORE JOBS**

A swift shift from fossil fuels to clean energy could lead to creation of 1.5 crore new jobs in India by 2025 and increase savings on electricity bills, a new report released ahead of the G-7 leaders' summit said on Thursday. The report, 'Creating Jobs and Cutting Bills: the economic opportunities of a clean energy transition', published by the 'We Mean Business Coalition' and Cambridge Econometrics, said India could witness eight dollars or 10 per cent reduction in per capita energy expenditure by 2025 when compared with business as usual scenario.

**WHO CONSIDERS DECLARING MONKEYPOX HEALTH EMERGENCY**

As the World Health Organisation convenes its emergency committee Thursday to consider if the spiralling outbreak of monkeypox warrants being declared a global emergency, some experts say WHO's decision to act only after the disease spilled into the West could entrench the grotesque inequities that arose between rich and poor countries during the coronavirus pandemic. Declaring monkeypox to be a global emergency would mean the UN health agency considers the outbreak to be an extraordinary event and that the disease is at risk of spreading across even more borders. It would also give monkeypox the same distinction as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing effort to eradicate polio.

**PRESIDENTIAL POLL**

# It's official: YSRCP to throw its weight behind NDA's Murmu

**After support of BJD & JMM, Murmu's victory appears to be certain even without YSRCP's backing****SNV SUDHIR**  
■ VIJAYAWADA

Despite pressure from several quarters and opposition, YS Jaganmohan Reddy-led YSRCP has decided to lend support to NDA's candidate Droupadi Murmu in the upcoming presidential polls.

A decision to support Murmu was taken on Thursday evening, YSRCP parliamentary party leader, V Vijayasai Reddy and party leader in Lok Sabha P Mithun Reddy will participate in Murmu's nomination on Friday in Delhi.

While YSRCP supremo YS Jaganmohan Reddy was supposed to participate in Murmu's nomination, the plan was later dropped to fly to Delhi to attend a pre-scheduled Cabinet meeting on Friday morning in the State secretariat.



There were also attempts to postpone the Cabinet meeting so that Jagan cab fly to Delhi to participate in the nomination activity. However, the idea was later dropped at the last minute.

YSRCP has decided to back the NDA's candidate Droupadi Murmu for president of India as for the first time in the history of India a tribal that too a woman was given such an opportunity. As a party that

has been giving importance to social justice on a large scale in the last three years YSRCP had decided to support NDA's candidate," said a communiqué from the YSRCP office.

BJD and YSRCP's votes had turned crucial after other opposition parties had decided to support Yashwant Sinha. BJD had already pledged its support to Murmu as she hails from Odisha. Interestingly Jharkhand's ruling party JMM which was part of the opposition camp too pledged support to NDA's candidate. With the support of BJD and JMM, the NDA's candidate had secured sufficient votes even without the support of YSRCP.

Jagan had dropped enough hints on his party's stance by skipping the meeting of opposition parties called by TMC chief and West

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee last Wednesday to decide on the presidential candidate.

As YSRCP's name didn't figure in the official communiqué by the TMC it was believed that Jagan's party was not invited to the meeting. Later, it was found that a letter invite was indeed sent to Jagan also but he neither attended personally nor sent his representative to the meeting. Interestingly, his party's top brass was also tight-lipped about the meeting and the letter invite from Mamata Banerjee.

TRS had abstained from the meeting citing political compulsions as it will lead to sharing the dais with Congress. However, YSRCP kept the entire episode tightly under the wraps.

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**67% voting in Atmakur by-poll****PNS ■ AMARAVATI**

Nearly 67 per cent of the 2.11 lakh voters exercised their franchise on Thursday in the by-election to the Atmakuru Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh.

State Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena told PTI here that the polling was conducted peacefully in all 279 polling stations in the constituency. Except for some minor incidents, the polling went on without any incident of violence, serious complaints, or interruption, Mukesh said. The polling process concluded peacefully, SPs Nellore district Superintendent of Police Ch Vijaya Rao said.

In Battapadu village in Atmakuru mandal, an Independent candidate T Sasidhar Reddy raised an objection over the alleged campaigning inside a polling station by the ruling YSR Congress activists. He alleged that the authorities were turning a blind eye to it and picked up an argument with the police.

Following intervention by senior officials, the issue subsided even as the polling continued unhindered.

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# Naidu can't change Vizag's destiny as AP's Exec Capital

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Rajya Sabha member, V Vijayasai Reddy yet again reiterated that none can stop Vizag from becoming the Executive Capital of Andhra Pradesh.

Talking to reporters in Vizag on Thursday, he said that even if TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu does penance upside down, he can't stop Vizag from becoming the Executive Capital of the State. Vijayasai said that it's only due to the unavoidable technical reasons that the shifting of the Executive Capital is being delayed.

He also said that his party will follow whatever party supremo Y S Jaganmohan Reddy tells them in the upcoming Presidential polls.

He also said that Naidu was politicising every issue and dam-

aging the city's reputation on many previous occasions.

He asserted that Vizag will soon become the Executive Capital of the State and the CRDA case in the court of law has nothing to do with it. On the CRDA case in the court of law, he said that it had nothing to do with shifting the Executive Capital to Visakhapatnam for which arrangements would be made shortly.

He said that to construct a compound wall along the land properties belonging to the Simhachalam temple trust board, tenders will be invited shortly.

He said for the construction of the compound wall his MPLAD funds and other CSR funds will be utilised. He also said he will continue to spend his MPLAD funds on several developmental works in Vizag.

Asserts  
that the issue is  
being delayed only  
for some technical  
reasons

# Film workers call off strike

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Telugu Film Industry Employees Federation has announced that they have called off their indefinite strike and will resume their duties from today.

Telugu film workers who started indefinite strike on Wednesday, called off their strike on Thursday after talks between the Telugu Film producer's Council and Film Industry Employees Federation were successful. According to the press note, The Employees Federation said the producers' council had agreed to raise the wages of cinema workers by 10 percent but not at least 30 percent.

Meanwhile, the Telugu Film producer's Council and Film Industry Employees Federation were agreed to hold after Mister T. Srinivas Yadav directed them to take initiative to resolve the issues before the government intervened. However, the final decision on the pay hike will be taken at the coordination committee meeting today.

# MBBS aspirants demand NEET postponement

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Thousands of MBBS aspirants have demanded the postponement of medical entrance exam NEET scheduled on July 17, saying it's 'too close' to other competitive exams, giving them limited time to prepare.

Hashtag PostponeNEETUG has been trending on microblogging site Twitter and the aspirants have also started an online petition which has been signed by over 24,000 students.

In their petition, they said the counselling of National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate)-UG 2021 ended just in March, and the 2022 edition is scheduled on July 17.

"How are we to revise such a vast syllabus in just 3 months? Moreover, other important exams like the Board Exams, CUET, JEE Mains are also scheduled around the same time. Imagine the trauma and pressure we students are having to go through with all these significant exams scheduled one after the other. Is this a fair decision?" the petition demanded.

The last year's exam was initially scheduled for August 1 but was postponed to September 12 due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"So much stress in the last days of exams. I'm losing my hope. No one wants to hear, no one wants to help us, no one wants to under-



stand us. We, the aspirants, are in great trouble. Please postpone the NEET-UG," said Sanjana Gupta, an aspirant.

According to Anubha Srivastava, a lawyer and the president of the India Wide Parents' Association, NEET and Common University Entrance Test (CUET), are happening at the same time causing inconvenience to students.

"NEET must be held after JEE MAINS so that students can prepare well. Already the session is not going to start before Feb 2023 for NEET Aspirants as the counselling will take time," she said.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) announced Wednesday that the debut edition of CUET-UG will be conducted from July 15 to August 10.

"Dear @DG\_NTA and @EduMinOfIndia please hear the plea of the students, and their small demand, it's not a unjustified wants there are many reasons also NTA announced the CUET which directly clash with NEET exam," a Twitter user said.

# CM lays stone for marquee companies

**PNS ■ TIRUPATI**

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy laid the foundation and inaugurated marquee companies in Electronic Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) at Vikrutamala village, near here, on Thursday.

Andhra Pradesh Electronics and IT Agency (APEITA) signed MoUs with POTPL Electronics a subsidiary company of TCL Corporation, Zetwerk Technologies, Techbulls, and SmartDV Technologies.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that a total of six projects with over Rs 4,000 crore investment and 20,000 jobs have come to Andhra Pradesh, of which three companies have been inaugurated and the foundation was laid to another three companies. In regard to the companies that were inaugurated, he stated that TCL company had invested Rs 1230 crore for manufacturing TV panels and mobile display units by employing over 3200 people.

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**Rs 800-cr Apache unit coming up****PNS ■ TIRUPATI**

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy participated in the ground-breaking ceremony of Hilltop SEZ Footwear India Ltd (Apache) at Inagaluru Village of Chittoor district here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the company which is an exclusive supplier of footwear to the global brand Adidas is coming up with an investment of about Rs 800 crore creating direct employment for 10,000 people ensuring 80 percent of the workforce are women. Extending all the help to the company, he said that the unit will be ready by September 2023 to start production. On this occasion, he stated that the company had started its operations in 2006 at Tada during YS Rajashekar Reddy's regime which has become a prominent unit with over 15,000 employees with 60 percent women.

# GST Council meeting next week likely to be stormy

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The GST Council at its meeting next week is likely to be a stormy affair with the opposition-ruled states aggressively pushing for the continuation of compensation

for revenue loss, while the Centre will defend such a move citing a tight revenue position.

To meet the shortfall in the GST compensation fund, the Centre has borrowed and released to states Rs 1.1 lakh crore

in 2020-21 and Rs 1.59 lakh crore in 2021-22 as back-to-back loans to meet a part of the shortfall in cess collection.

In addition, the Centre has also been releasing regular GST compensation from the fund to meet

the shortfall.

"Last year, out of the compensation cess collection, the Centre has repaid Rs 7,500 crore towards interest cost for the borrowing and Rs 14,000 crore is to be paid this fiscal.

**'DIVERSION' OF RS 14,683 CR DHFL FUNDS**

# Nine real estate companies under the CBI scanner

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

DHFL allegedly diverted funds worth over Rs 14,683 crore through nine real estate firms controlled by then chairman-cum-managing director Kapil Wadhawan, director Dheeraj Wadhawan and businessman Sudhakar Shetty, where they had financial interests, the CBI has alleged.

The role of these real estate firms -- five belonging to Shetty's Sahana Group and four others -- have come under the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) scanner in a Rs 34,615 crore scam

in Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DHFL) as it has surfaced that loans to the companies were allegedly disbursed under the instructions of Kapil Wadhawan and Dheeraj Wadhawan, officials said.

The Union Bank of India, which has approached the CBI, has alleged that Amayllis Realtors, Gulmarg Realtors and Skylark Buildcon owe Rs 98.33 crore, and Darshan Developers and Sigtia Constructions owe Rs 3,970 crore as outstanding towards DHFL. All five companies belong to the Sahana Group, the officials said. It



is also alleged that Darshan Developers and Sigtia Constructions were controlled by the Wadhawans.

The outstanding amount towards Creatoz Builders is Rs 1,192 crore, towards Township Developers Rs 6,002 crore, towards Shishir Realty

Rs 1,233 crore and towards Sunlink Real Estate Private Limited Rs 2,185 crore, the officials said.

A portion of the money was diverted to companies controlled by former promoters Kapil Wadhawan, Dheeraj Wadhawan and the Sahana Group, where they also had prima facie financial interest, the officials said. The funds were part of Rs 42,871 crore of public money raised from banks in the form of loans and subscriptions in non-convertible debentures, which were allegedly "misappropriated" by DHFL, they said.

The funds were then diverted to

DHFL group entities and the Sahana Group through fraudulent loans issued without due diligence, in the absence of adequate securities and falsification of account books, the officials alleged.

Besides the companies that have been named in the FIR, the CBI will also look into the role of the auditors of DHFL, the group companies of its promoters and Sahana Group companies, they said.

The agency will probe how large-value loans were given as Other Large Project Loans (OLPL) but shown as small loans in "Bandra Books."

**HC notice to KCR****PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Telangana High Court on Thursday issued notices to Chief Minister K. Chandrabab Naidu who is also the TRS President and some top officials regarding a PIL challenging the allotment of land to construct a TRS office in Hyderabad.

Retired government employee Maheshwar Raj filed the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging the allotment of 4,935 square yards in Banjara Hills for the TRS' Hyderabad district unit office. The petitioner said that the costly land was allotted to the TRS for a mere Rs 100 per square yard.

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# SVU, pride of AP: Governor

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Governor and Chancellor of Sri Venkateswara University (SVU) Biswabhusan Harichandan participated in the 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, and 62nd combined Convocation held in Srinivasa Auditorium in Tirupati on Thursday, in virtual mode from Raj Bhavan.

Delivering the Convocation address, Chancellor Harichandan said that SVU has seen excellent growth, going from strength to strength and rose in stature over the past 68 years, as a premier institute of higher learning in the country and that he was happy to know that it has been accredited with 'A+' Grade by NAAC and selected under Category-I grade autonomy status, as one among the top 10 Universities in India by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

"It is truly a matter of pride for our State that Sri Venkateswara University has secured a high ranking in many categories among the Universities in India and Asia and received funding and research grants from several national and international agencies and entered into collaborative research agreements through Memorandum of Understanding, to conduct research work in frontier areas of national and international



importance," said the Chancellor.

The Chancellor said that the National Education Policy-2020 has brought about a paradigm shift in the Higher Education sector in the country as an inclusive, participatory, and holistic approach with a progressive shift that can bring India to par with the leading countries of the world.

Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Chairperson, NEP-2020 drafting committee, delivered his address as the Chief Orator at the combined Convocation and said that the NEP 2020 policy consisted of three important elements such as liberal Undergraduate education, research, and educational technology and said the NEP 2020 enables multiple entries and

exit with Postgraduate programmes of one-year and two-year durations and research at Undergraduate-level with direct access to Ph.D. He said that the policy was designed with an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, and social approach to the multidiscipline system of education to ensure that India becomes a knowledge-based economy, leading the way towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. Dr. Kasturirangan appreciated the proposal of Sri Venkateswara University to set up a 'Centre of Excellence in Educational Technology', within the University, as part of NEP 2020 recommendations.

The University conferred the Honorary Degrees of Doctor of Letters on Chandra Bhanu Satpathy, a noted

Philanthropist, and Sri Narala Rama Reddy, renowned Avadhani, and Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science on Dr. Indla Rama Subba Reddy, the eminent Psychiatrist. Prof. K. Raja Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, Venkateswara University, presented the University's annual reports. Prof. R.V.S. Satyanarayana and Prof. M. Srinivasulu Reddy felicitated Chancellor Harichandan with a memento and shawl, on behalf of Sri Venkateswara University.

Prof. K. Hemachandra Reddy, Chairman, Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education, and R.P. Sisodia, Special Chief Secretary to Governor also attended the Convocation.

# CM promoting industry and trade: Amarnath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Industries, Commerce, Infrastructure and Investments Minister Gudivada Amarnath has said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is promoting industry and trade in a big way, the TDP has been trying to spoil the brand image of the state with its malicious propaganda.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Thursday, the Minister said that welfare and development are the two eyes of the government and the state government is ready to extend full support and provide all facilities to the companies willing to invest in Andhra Pradesh.



**The Minister said that welfare and development are the two eyes of the government and the state government is ready to extend full support and provide all facilities to the companies willing to invest in Andhra Pradesh**

The Chief Minister has participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of Hilltop SEZ Footwear India Ltd (Apache) which is coming up with an investment of about Rs 800 crore providing direct employment to 10,000 people. He also inaugurated marquee companies in the electronic manufacturing cluster.

He said a total of six projects with over Rs 4,000 crore investment and 20,000 jobs have come to Andhra Pradesh, of which three companies have been inaugurated and the foundation was laid to another three companies.

In regard to the companies that were inaugurated, TCL company had invested Rs

1230 crore for manufacturing TV panels and mobile display units by employing over 3200 people. Foxlink manufacturing unit that manufactures USB Cables and Circuit Boards, with an investment of Rs 1050 crore and created 1200 jobs, he said. Also, he inaugurated Sunny Opotech which manufactures camera lenses in cell phones and created employment to 1,200 people.

The Minister said Chandrababu Naidu and Lokesh have been continuously propagating false information through their tweets. He rec how Naidu cheated people of the states with fake MoUs, and capital through graphics.

## Lokesh extends Rs 25L help to family of slain TDP worker

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Thursday handed over Rs 25 lakh financial help to the family of TDP activist Jalayya who was murdered by miscreants.

When Lokesh entered Piduguralla he was accorded a warm welcome by a large number of TDP activists.

Former MLA Yarapathineni Srinivasa Rao welcomed Lokesh in Piduguralla. A large number of TDP activists took out a huge rally to welcome Lokesh.

Later Lokesh went to Ravulapuram village, consoled the family of Jallayya who was murdered by miscreants recently, and handed over Rs 25 lakh financial help to the bereaved family.



## JNTUK launches prog to plant 108 rare saplings

PNS ■ KAKINADA

JNTUK vice-chancellor Prof. GVR Prasada Raju launched a programme of planting saplings of rare species of plants at the 'Nakshatra Vanam' the place earmarked at the ECE wing of the university college of engineering at the university premises on Thursday.

The Vice-Chancellor said the Nakshatra Vanam was sponsored by Dr Rekha Palli Srinivasa Rao of Qatar and consists of 108 plants belonging to 27 rare species and representing 27 Nakshatra. Each plant will have a QR code and by scanning the code one can get the details of the plant-its Nakshatra, species, and special features.

The ultimate plan is to develop greenery all over the university campus' he added. Director evaluation Prof B Balakrishna, Director academic planning Prof Muralikrishna, Chief engineer Prof Srinivasulu, Women empowerment, and grievances director Prof M Swarooparani, engineering college principal Prof Krishnaprasad, vice-principals Prof Rathnakumari, Prof K Mira saheb, EC member D. Vijaya Lakshmi, NSS coordinator Dr. G Shyam Kumar, Mathematics head Prof v Ravindranath, Lecturers Prof Srinivasa Kumar, Dr K. Padmapriya, Dr K Rajasekhar, DEE Mohana Prasad were among those attended.

# AP Government Employees' Association office-bearers elected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vemulakonda Venkata Satyanarayana Babu (VVSN Babu) of the Medical and Health Department was unanimously elected the president of the Andhra Pradesh Government Employees Association, West Krishna (NTR district), in the elections conducted at its State office in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Only VV Satyanarayana Babu had filed the nominations

for the president post. Election officer G Nagasai announced that he was unanimously elected. All the new committee members were elected without opposition.

M Jayapal of the Commercial Taxes Department was elected as secretary and B Srinivasa Rao (Treasuries and Accounts Department) as co-president. B Vekanna (Intermediate Education Department) is the new treasurer and B Gopinadh Murthy (Commercial Taxes

Department) is organising secretary. M Kanakarao, V Sriramu, A Durgaprasad, B Saisri, K Sindhu Dev, K Satyendra Kumar, A Ramakotaiah and M Sambasiva Rao were elected as vice-presidents.

M Ramesh, TNVV Satyanarayana, A Vidhyasagar, K Srinivasa Rao, KVS Narayana, Shaik Ibrahim, Jhonsen were elected as secretaries. The new committee will continue upto June 2025.

# CM lays stone for marquee companies

Continued from Page 1

Further, he inaugurated the Foxlink manufacturing unit that manufactures USB Cables and Circuit Boards, with an investment of Rs 1050 crore, and created 1200 jobs. Also, he inaugurated Sunny Opotech which manufactures camera lenses for cell phones and invested Rs 280 crore and created employment for 1,200 people.

The Chief Minister laid the foundation for Dixon Technologies Unit which manufactures Television Sets, which came forward to invest Rs 110 crore and generate 850 jobs. Also, he laid the foundation for another unit of Foxlink India Pvt Ltd with an investment of Rs 300 crore and 1200 jobs. On this occasion, he extended full support to the companies for smooth operations. Ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Gudivada Amarnath, Narayana Swamy, MLAs Chivireddy Bhasker Reddy, B Madhusudan Reddy.



## Rs 800-crore Apache unit coming up

Continued from Page 1

Also, he stated that the same company has come forward to set up a unit in Pulivendula that employs 2000 people, is currently under construction, and is likely to start its operations from March 2023. Earlier the Chief Minister watered the sapling at

the unit site and unveiled the pylon. Industries Director Gummalla Srijana and Tony To CEO of Intelligent Group signed the MoU. Ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Gudivada Amarnath, Narayana Swamy, Industries Director G Srijana, Intelligent Group CEO Tony To, and other officials were present at the event.

## HC notice to KCR

Continued from Page 1

The HC took up the petition for hearing and issued notices to Chief Minister Chandrasekhar Rao, TRS General Secretary Srinivas Reddy, the Chief Secretary, the Chief Commissioner of Land Administration, the Revenue Secretary and the Hyderabad district Collector. They have been directed to file counters within four weeks.

The government last month allotted a plot measuring around an acre to TRS on Road No: 12 in Banjara Hills' NBT Nagar for constructing the party's Hyderabad office. This drew sharp criticism from the opposition who said that the land is worth around Rs 100 crore. The Congress had described the land allotment as daylight robbery. Its leaders questioned the allotment when the TRS already has a big office in the same area.

They were referring to the Telangana Bhavan, the state headquarters of the TRS.



## HCL Foundation seeks 5-10 acres to develop Harith Project

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Hindustan Computers Limited (HCL) Technology Foundation members Ankit and Vineeth, along with Vasavya Mahila Mandal secretary Dr. Keerthi, met NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao and urged him to allot 10 acres of land for setting up the Harith Project, here on Thursday.

The foundation members said that they were ready to build eco-friendly urban forestry and develop the ecosystem with pleasant greenery and birds as part of the Harith Project. "We develop

the project within five to 10 years and later hand it over to the government" they said.

They informed the collector that they are conducting several programmes with the support of NGOs at Kesarapalli near Vijayawada under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Two tanks were developed under the CSR and later groundwater levels increased at Kesarapalli, they added.

Later, Collector Dilli Rao praised the HCL Technology Foundation and other NGOs for cooperating with the district development.

## 67% voting in Atmakur by-poll

Continued from Page 1

The BJP alleged that its polling agent Vishnu was kidnapped from a polling station in Krishnapuram village but police denied any such thing happened. Police tried to disperse a mob of YSRC workers, gathered near a polling station in Padamatnayudu Palli. The ruling party workers initially resisted the police attempt but were later sent away from the scene. The by-election is being held to fill the vacancy caused due to the death of then Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy in February.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE		
NOTIFICATION		
No.A1/1389/2019	Dated: 22-06-2022	
The admissions for the Six Government College / Schools of Music and Dance under the administrative control of Department of Language and Culture situated at Vizianagaram, Rajamahendravaram, Vijayawada, Guntur, Nellore and Kurnool offers some of the following courses for the academic year 2022-23 will start from 01-07-2022. The Diploma and Certificate Courses offered are Veena, Karnatic Vocal, Violin, Bharatanatyam, Tabla, Kuchipudi Dance, Mridangam, Nadaswaram, Odissi and other courses. The eligibility for certificate course in the above discipline is above 10 years of age as on 01-07-2022 and diploma courses candidates should have passed certificate course in respective discipline and they should be 15 years of age as on 01-07-2022.		
R.O.No: 5822CLADVT/19/2021-22, Dt. 23.06.2022		Sd/- DIRECTOR

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# Hot cooked meals for mothers again at Anganwadi centres

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Women Development and Child Welfare Department Director A Siri has said that the department has decided to resume hot cooked meals to pregnant and lactating mothers from July 1 at all 55607 Anganwadi Centres in the state. The government of AP is implementing the YSR Sampoorna Poshana Scheme for pregnant and lactating mothers, children aged 6-36 months, and 36-72 months to address anemia and malnutrition in the state.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hot cooked meal was stopped serving at Anganwadi centres from March 23, 2020, and providing Take Home Ration (THR) to the mothers will continue till June 30, 2022. Now, the department has decided to resume hot



cooked meal including egg and milk to pregnant and lactating mothers at Anganwadi Centres from July 1, onwards along with the mid-day meal to pre-school children aged 3-6 years.

Further, the Nutrition Kits will be provided as 'Take Home

Ration' (THR) to the mothers and children of 6 -36 months under the Schemes of YSR Sampoorna Poshana and YSR Sampoorna Poshana Plus.

The WD&CW department director has issued instructions to all the project directors

**Further, the Nutrition Kits will be provided as 'Take Home Ration' (THR) to the mothers and children of 6 -36 months**

and CDPOs in the state to communicate written instructions to all the Anganwadi Workers to provide Hot Cooked Meal including egg and milk to the pregnant and lactating women at AWCs duly taking COVID-19 precautions.

# DGP urged to order probe into 'Kankipadu gambling' issue

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP politburo member Varla Ramaiah on Thursday urged the DGP of AP to order a detailed inquiry so as to nab the culprits who tried to hold the illegal casino and gambling event at Kankipadu.

Ramaiah wrote a letter to the DGP, saying that illegal gambling and casino by some people were apparently taking place with the support of the ruling YSRCP leaders. Earlier too in January 2022, several representations were made over illegal casinos at Gudivada but no action was taken.

The TDP leader said that another such illegal event was scheduled to be held on June 22, 2022, at Kankipadu near Vijayawada. The organisers in the name of Majestic Pride Casino have sent invitations to many patrons, saying: "featuring Tollywood & Bollywood dances, live acts, singing per-



formances followed by cocktails and dinner."

Ramaiah said that only after a hue and cry raised by the general public, media, and social media, the event was called off by the police saying that the event has no permission. It is highly deplorable that the Prohibition and Excise Department has issued permits for such illegal activity.

The TDP leader said that the

gambling organisers got emboldened as no action was taken with regard to the illegal Gudivada casino held in January 2022. There were rumours that ex-Minister Kodali Nani was behind that. Now, a blatant advertisement about the latest Kankipadu event has led the public to believe that the ruling YSRCP

leaders coupled with a section of erring police officials are behind these illegal events.

Ramaiah told the DGP that in an objectionable way, the police did not verify the antecedents of the applicants. Their links with illegal casino at Gudivada needs to be inquired.

It is important to publish the inquiry report on illegal casinos at Gudivada.

The TDP leader said that earlier it was reported that an official of DSP rank would probe into the Gudivada illegal casino case. Six months gone by, no inquiry report was tabled in the AP Legislative Assembly (APLA). Only a proactive role by the police with regard to the illegal casinos would restore faith and trust among the public.

# VCCI women's wing gets new body

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The efforts of the Vizagpatnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), Women's Wing over the past year were presented at the 4th Annual General Body meeting held on Thursday.

The efforts of the VCCI, Women's Wing over the past year were presented by the outgoing President, Dr. Hema Yadavalli followed by Honorary secretary, Sandhya Godey, and the treasurer, Vani Kancharla.

Some of the highlights of the previous year are igniTe, a seminar on Digital Transformation, and the Natural Living Expo. Both the events were huge successes

**The hugely successful Natural Living Expo will now be conducted twice a year based on popular demand.**

and very well received by the people of Visakhapatnam.

The VCCI parent body president, Veeramohan, honorary secretary, Ravi Godey, treasurer, Williams, VCCI Youth Wing president, Divya Abhilash, and special invitee, Aarti Saxena, Additional Commissioner of Customs

welcomed the new Head Board members of the VCCI Women's Wing Jeeja Valsraj as the President, Sandhya Godey as vice president, Anila Narla as honorary secretary, Kavita Khara as the treasurer and Hema Yadavalli as the immediate past chair.

President of VCCI, Women's Wing, Jeeja Valsraj, launched an initiative on Traffic Discipline Awareness. As part of this initiative, members of VCCI, Women's Wing, will be conducting sessions promoting Traffic Discipline Awareness in schools and colleges of Visakhapatnam. The hugely successful Natural Living Expo will now be conducted twice a year based on popular demand.

# RINL conducts fire mock drill at plant level



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), Visakhapatnam Steel Plant conducted a plant level mock drill on Thursday to test the On-Site Emergency Preparedness at an imaginary fire at Final Gas Cooler - 3 areas of Coke oven and Coal Chemical Plant Department, in which the emergency services like CISF Fire wing, Medical services, Gas Safety, Maintenance, safety department, Environment Management Department, CISF (Security), HR dept, etc have participated.

During the Mock Drill, the fixed and mobile fire fighting installations such as High range fire monitor systems,

Foam Flooding systems, Fire Tenders, etc were put in operation and other communication facilities like Emergency Manual Call Point and siren system were used.

As part of the Mock drill, CISF Security personnel carried out the rescue operation and rescued the affected persons from the spot using self-contained breathing apparatus and other emergency response devices.

Joint Chief Inspector of Factories, J Shiva Shankar Reddy, and Inspector of Factories, P Chinnna Rao, witnessed the Mock Drill, gave their suggestions, and applauded the efforts and preparedness of the VSP team in conducting the mock drill.

# U-19 cricket selection trials on June 25

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna District Cricket Association (KDCA) will conduct selection trials for Under-19 boys at Indra Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) stadium here on June 25. The selection trials scheduled on June 19 were not conducted due to rain.

KDCA secretary M Ravindhra Chowdary said in a press release on Thursday that all the interested players should attend the selection trials at 7am.

The players who were born after September 1, 2003 (1-9-2003) are eligible to take part in the trials. They should bring the original and a photocopy of the birth certificate, he said.



# Runs, rallies highlights of International Olympic Day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Several educational institutions, sports associations and clubs conducted runs and rallies on the occasion of International Olympic Day, in Vijayawada on Thursday. However, the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) and NTR District Sports Authority neglected the day.

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) 52nd division corporator Ummadi Venkateswara Rao (Chanti) inaugurated a torch rally at the SKPVV Hindu High School in Kothapet. Sports stars of the school and teachers took part in the rally. Speaking on the occasion, Venkateswara Rao said that the State government should encourage talented sportspersons.



Physical education teacher MV Satya Prasad, boxing coach K Moses, senior PET T Srilatha and others were present.

International Olympic Day celebrations were held at PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College in Vijayawada and Principal Dr M Ramesh inau-

gured the Olympic Day run. He explained the importance of International Olympic Day.

PB Siddhartha College Dean Prof. Rajesh C Jampala, director Baburao and Physical Education Department head Anumula Chinababu attended the programmes.

KRVR International Sports Club organised the Olympic Day Run at KV Kandirika in the city and AP Olympic Association secretary KP Rao flagged off the rally. As many as 70 Judocas (Judo players), national players and coaches enthusiastically participated in the rally.

Andhra Pradesh Judo Association secretary N Venkat, judo coach E Srinu and others were present.

# CM claiming credit for electronic units brought by TDP: Lokesh

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Thursday strongly criticised Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for claiming 'false credit' for the achievements of former CM Chandrababu Naidu.

Nara Lokesh said that many electronics companies came to Andhra Pradesh following efforts made by the then chief minister Chandrababu Naidu. It was the TDP regime's goal to turn AP into an 'electronics hub' at that time.

In a statement here, Lokesh said that the Jagan Government had now released a poster in which it listed out electronics companies that were brought by Naidu. There was not even one company that was brought by Jagan Reddy in the past three years.

Lokesh slammed CM Jagan for making it a habit to carry out false campaigns on industrial development and investments. Every time, the YCP rule was boasting of any achievement, its ulterior motives were getting totally exposed.

# GOVT CREATING HURDLES FOR LOKESH VISITS: TDP

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP State general secretary Panchumarthy Anuradha on Thursday accused the Jagan Reddy Government of creating 'needless hurdles' for the district visits of Nara Lokesh.

Anuradha said Jagan Reddy had no right to talk about social justice when his regime was not even allowing the opposition leaders to visit the family members of slain weaker section leaders.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader said the police were serving notices on the opposition leaders only out of frustration. They were giving false excuses that loss of life, riots tensions, and law and order problems would arise if the TDP leaders were allowed to take part in the Palnadu visit of Nara Lokesh.

Anuradha pointed out that till now, over 12 leaders belonging to weaker sections were killed in the Palnadu region. Lokesh was just going to console the family members of slain Kancherla Jallaiah who was a weaker section activist. Jagan Reddy was perpetrating non-stop social betrayals in the State ever since he became the Chief Minister.

The TDP leader said that in the Macherla

assembly constituency limits, almost every family of slain BC leaders have named YCP MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy as the mastermind behind the killings. But, no action has been taken against him till now. Is this the social justice that Jagan Reddy has been doing to the backward classes and weaker sections all these days?

Anuradha asked why Jagan Reddy gave ministerial berths to BCs but put Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, Vijay Sai Reddy, and S.V. Subba Reddy above their heads. The BCs lost over 16,800 posts in local bodies after the YSRCP rule cut reservations by over 10 percent.

The TDP leader said that over Rs. 26,000 crore of sub-plan funds were diverted in the past three years, thereby causing total injustice to the weaker sections. Over 11,000 acres of assignment lands were snatched away from the weaker sections, who were eventually thrown on the roads with no shelter and livelihoods.

Anuradha slammed the Jagan rule for cancelling Videsi Vidya, Aadarana tools, and subsidies for toddy tappers, fishermen, and weavers. Residential schools, where weaker sections mostly study, were deliberately weakened.



# Renovated Sir Vizzy Aqua Complex ready for reopening in a day or two

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Here is good news for swimmers of Vijayawada city. After a two-year-long gap, Sir Vizzy (Vijaykumar Raiy) Aqua Complex is all set to be reopened. The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) authorities are getting ready for the inaugural function, which will be held within one or two days. The Aqua Complex will be open from July 1 onwards.

Sir Vizzy Aqua Complex was closed during the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 (1st wave) and later, the VMC authorities started the swimming pool modernisation works at a cost of Rs.1.40 crore. The VMC had temporarily closed the main 50-metre pool due to tile cracks on its inner side, before the lock-

**VMC carried out modernisation works spending Rs.1.40 crore**

down.

The VMC's Sir Vizzy Swimming Pool is the only one used for swimming competitions right from city level to State and national-level. Though the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) set up a swimming pool at Edupugallu of Kankipadu mandal in combined Krishna district, most of the competitions were conducted at VMC's pool.

The civic body has completed modernisation and renovation works worth Rs.1.40 crore. Both the 50-metre, 25 metre-pools, the baby pool and the entire Aqua Complex sport a new look. The outside portion of the complex has also been



beautified. The authorities have painted the complex walls with the pictures of swimmers and it is now attracting the children and the youth.

Besides, the VMC authorities have constructed a new main gate on the eastern side of the Aqua Complex in addition to the old north side gate

as per Vastu. VMC Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar has taken utmost care in modernisation and renovation of the swim-

ming pool works and he often visited and inspected the works. Under the direction of the Commissioner, the authorities have built a new gate for



entry and exit.

All the three pools covered with U cutters with blue colour are looking so good. Under the modernisation and renovation works, the VMC has built four galleries around the main 50-metre pool. They are of international standards. In addition, new tensile roofs were arranged for the convenience of the swimmers as well as their parents to sit and take rest.

## Coaches wanted

However, the authorities have not recruited qualified coaches and supporting staff to give training to the budding swimmers as well as district, State, and national-level swimmers. As of now, only two coaches are available. According to the swimmers, three to four coaches and one

lady coach are required. Also, as many as five life guards will be required, said the swimmers.

According to sources, international swimmer Tulasi Chaitanya and his disciples are giving coaching to the district, State, and national-level swimmers at the time of competitions. Vijayawada has had hundreds of State and national-level swimmers and they have no qualified coach, said the parent of a swimmer. "If the State government or VMC can appoint a qualified coach, our children can win medals at the national level," the parent added.

According to the officials, 300 to 400 swimmers have registered themselves as members at the Sir Vizzy Aqua Complex and they regularly practised before the pool closed.





# Eluru SP directs officials to check sale of black jaggery

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru district Superintendent of Police Rahul Dev Sharma has directed the police officials to check the sale of black jaggery which is one of the main ingredients in the brewing of country-made liquor and take firm steps to curb the distilling and selling of illicit liquor.



The SP held a crime review meeting here on Thursday with the officials. Speaking on the occasion, the SP directed the officials to lay focus on the villages which were categorized as A, B, and C for distilling illicit liquor. Stringent steps should be taken to curb the sale of black jaggery as it is the main ingredient to distill country-made liquor.

Those who hoard black jaggery fermented jaggery wash should be booked, the SP

directed. SP Rahul Dev Sharma also reviewed the delay taking place in investigating the grave criminal cases registered in various police stations. He directed them to expedite the investigation and file charge sheets and ensure the culprits are punished in the courts. He asked them to get the relevant documents pertaining to various cases and enclose them with the charge sheet so that the offenders would be pun-

ished.

The SP asked the officials to increase night and day patrolling and keep a vigil on the movements of those who have history sheets. The fingerprints of suspicious persons should be checked with MSCD and examine their criminal antecedents.

The SP directed the police officials to conduct visible policing, increase visits to vil-

ages and take steps to prevent any clashes in the villages. As part of the control of road accidents, vehicle inspections should be carried out on a regular basis and cases should be registered against minors for driving vehicles without licence and counselling should be conducted on them. He asked the officials to identify organisers of gambling dens and register cases against them as well.

SP Rahul Dev Sharma said that National Lok Adalat would be held on June 26 and steps should be taken to ensure that the litigants should come forward for comprising in various cases. Additional SP (Admin) K Chakravathi, DSPs GVS Paideswara Rao, K V Satyanarayana, Lata Kumari, B Srinivasulu, and CIs of various police stations were among those who were present.



## YSRCP will come to power again: Ambati

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders have exuded confidence that the party will come to power again in the next elections.

The YSRCP organised its plenary in Vinukonda on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Water Resources Ambati Rambabu said that the YSRCP is all set to come to power again in the next elections as the people of the state are with the YSRCP.

He claimed that the 'Gadapa Gadapaku' programme received an overwhelming response from the people.

He asked the YSRCP activists to take the welfare schemes, being implemented by the government, to every household. The government is implementing the welfare schemes despite financial constraints and all eligible irrespective of castes and religions are getting the benefits of the schemes.

Ambati Rambabu alleged that the TDP was making a

malicious campaign against the YSRCP. Unable to digest the implementation of many welfare schemes for the poor, the TDP had launched false propaganda to malign the reputation of YSRCP.

"The people of the state will not trust N Chandrababu Naidu. The people defeated him in his own constituency Kuppam in the local body polls. Now Chandrababu Naidu is trying to align with the Pawan Kalyan to defeat the YSRCP that is not possible", he said.

Rambabu reiterated that all

the assurances given in the election manifesto had been implemented.

He lauded local MLA Bolla Brahmanaidu for achieving the overall development of the constituency. MP Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayulu said that Rs 1300 crore was allocated for the construction of the Varikapudi project and the works for the same would begin soon.

MLAs Kasu Mahesh Reddy, Bolla Brahmanaidu, Gopireddy Srinivasa Reddy, and former MLA Makkenna Mallikharjuna Rao also spoke.

## Minister exhorts people to follow Ambedkar ideology

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Minister for Water Resources Ambati Rambabu, along with Collector L Shiva Shankar, inaugurated Ambedkar Gudi-Library at Pedamakkenna village in Sattenapalli constituency on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that there are 33 percent illiterates in the country.

He said that he is happy to note that a 27 feet high Ambedkar statue was unveiled.

He said that when he was studying 10th class Ambedkar statues were seen here and there. Now there is no village without the status of Ambedkar.

The SC and STs are getting educated and pursuing the ideology of Ambedkar.

He underlined the need of taking forward the ideology and concept of Ambedkar.



It is a good sign that IAS and IPS are coming from the underprivileged sections because of Ambedkar.

In order to encourage and help those who wish to study, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launched such schemes like 'Ammma Vodi', 'Vidya Deevana' and 'Vasati Deevana', he said and asked the eligible to utilise the opportunity.

Collector L Shiva Shankar said that a digital library would be inaugurated in 10 days. He exhorted to adopt and pursue the concepts of Ambedkar Educate, Organise and Agitate.

## Municipal workers to go on strike from July 11

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) of municipal sanitary workers and employees has announced that they will go on strike from July 11 demanding health allowance, equal pay for equal work, regularisation, abolition of CPS, and other issues. The JAC leaders said that they had already given strike notice to the Municipal Administration and Urban Development authorities.

The JAC meeting was held at the press club in Vijayawada on Thursday. The leaders discussed various issues relating to the regularisation of employees and workers, health allowance and abolition of CPS.

Later, JAC conveners P Subbarayudu and K Uma

Maheswara Rao told the reporters that the municipal workers and employees were going on strike from July 11 and the JAC meeting passed the resolution in this regard unanimously. The State government had stopped the Occupational Health Allowance (OHA) of Rs. 6,000 in January, which was implemented in August 2019, they said.

The State government should pay Rs. 21,000 to the sanitation workers per month -- Rs.15,000 as wages and Rs.6,000 as OHS, they said.

They alleged that the State government was exploiting the labourers in 28 categories in the Engineering Department, where qualified workers are not getting proper salaries. The government should with-

draw unnecessary conditions such as the production of ITI certificates for payments, they demanded.

The leaders said that the government should pay wages on the basis of three-year seniority to skilled and semi-skilled workers. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy failed to implement his election promise that he would regularise contract and outsourced workers and give them equal pay, they pointed out.

Subbarayudu and Uma Maheswara Rao alleged that the State government was cheating the contract and outsourced employees by not implementing the 11th Pay Commission Recommendations, and should give them a monthly salary of Rs.20,000 and interim relief.

Leave encashment for regular employees, GPF accounts, issue of health cards etc. are still pending, they said.

The leaders said CM Jagan had assured them that the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) would be cancelled when he came to power. The CM had been neglecting the municipal workers long-pending problems. They are playing a key role in the maintenance of cleanliness and greenness in cities and towns, they pointed out.

They said that the State government should resolve all the issues on or before July 10, or the JAC would go on strike from midnight of July 10.

JAC leaders Asula Ranganayanakulu, Madhu Babu, G Prasad and G Subbrao were present.

## Retired IAS officer Vara Prasad joins Jana Sena

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Retired IAS officer Deva Vara Prasad joined the Janasena party in the central party office in the presence of party chief K Pawan Kalyan in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief K Pawan Kalyan admitted him into the party by wrapping the party's scarf.

JSP political committee chairman Nadenalla Manohar was also present. The retired IAS officer belongs to Dindi village in the Razole constituency. He held several key positions as an IAS officer for about 30 years in the state.

Speaking on the occasion, Vara Prasad said that in the present situation AP needs



Pawan Kalyan as the development of the state is possible with him only. He said that he had joined the Janasena with the trust in Pawan Kalyan and decided to travel with him.

## Palnadu DC asks panel to submit report on industrial pollution

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Palnadu District Collector L Shiva Shankar has directed the committee, comprising officials of various departments, to study and submit a report on the industrial pollution within one week and asked the managements of industries to shut down their units temporarily till the pollution is an issue is resolved.

The Collector held a review meeting with the committee members who are from the pollution control board, RWS,

groundwater, water pollution, and waste management departments here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector told the committee to study the reported water and air pollution being generated by some chemical factories in the surrounding areas of Erikepalli village of Dacheppalli mandal. The officials of API-DC and representatives of various industries were also present.

The Collector asked the committee to thoroughly study the pollution issue and submit



a report on the steps to be taken to check the pollution. He asked them to study how

many employees were working in the industries. The measures the industries had taken to

check air and water pollution should also be examined.

"The industries in Dacheppalli mandal should be shut down temporarily till the committee submits its report. As soon as the report is received, a separate meeting will be held with the management of industries on the pollution issue", the Collector told the representatives of industries.

The Collector asked the officials to collect samples and send them for a comprehensive examination of the pollution.

Gurajala MLA Kasu Mahesh Reddy said that steps should be taken to pump water till the end of July. All the industries should collect samples through specialist consultants to gauge the levels of pollution being generated by the factories.

DRO Chinna Obulesu, Gurajala RDO Addaiah, Pollution Control board EE Narayana, RWS SE Suresh, Industries department officer Venkateswarulu, and Municipal Commissioner Sri Vidya were among those who were present.

## Bears spotted at Kalyandurg

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Close on the heels of a stray bear which created fear in Srikakulam district, two more bears were spotted in Kalyandurg and the locals are in the grip of fear.

Two bears were spotted at Dada hills on the outskirts of Kalyandurg. Some farmers video graphed the movements of the bears and sent the footage to the forest department officials. The villagers appealed to the forest department officials to

take steps to either shoo away the bears or capture them.

Meanwhile, one more bear was spotted at Vajrapukotturu mandal in Srikakulam district where a bear killed one person and critically injured five three days ago. The villagers told the media that they had spotted a bear at Tadvivada village outskirts on Thursday when they were going to the Gullapadu tank from Kalimata temple. They informed the forest officials.



## Plea to exempt Urdu medium schools from G.O.No.117

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State-level conference for the protection of Urdu medium schools has passed a resolution demanding that the State government exempt Urdu medium schools from the implementation of G.O.No.117 for rationalisation process in the government schools.

The Riyasati Urdu Teachers Association AP (RUTA) conducted a State-level conference seeking protection of Urdu medium schools in Vijayawada on Thursday.

MLCs Kattti Narasimha Reddy, T Kalpalatha Reddy and Md Ruhulla and other leaders demanded that the State government to develop Urdu medium schools in the State. MLC Ruhulla said that Urdu medium schools were largely neglected by the previous government. He said that there was a need to develop the Urdu medium schools in

all aspects..

MLC Kalpalatha Reddy said he would work for the protection of Urdu medium schools by taking the issue of G.O.No 117 to the notice of CM Jagan. RUTA founder-president Syed Hidayatulla, associate president Imam Basha and other leaders said that Urdu medium schools lagged behind in development for decades and were on the verge of closure which was very sad.

They said that as per the G.O.No 117, if there are less than 137 students in high schools, there will be no headmaster and no physical director and these schools will be merged. They said the strength of Urdu medium schools will be fewer hence the G.O.No 117 will have a huge impact on Urdu medium schools and it would be a death knell to Urdu medium education.

FAPTO chairman N Venkateswarlu and others were present.

## GMC chief inspects TIDCO housing complex

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri has directed the officials concerned to take steps to provide basic amenities to the TIDCO housing colonies.

The civic chief here on Thursday inspected the TIDCO housing complex at Adavatikkellapadu village along with the municipal and engineering officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the municipal commissioner said that the government would allocate houses to the beneficiaries in the TIDCO colonies and basic amenities should be provided to the dwellers. She asked the officials to pump drinking water to the TIDCO housing complex and supply water to the houses as a trial run. If there are any leaks and damages to the water pipes they should be repaired, she said. Since the allocation of dwelling units would be taken up soon, the officials are required to complete providing amenities at the earliest, she told them. She instructed the officials to take steps to provide power connection to every dwelling unit and complete plumber works soon.



Keerthi Chekuri directed the AE to install street lights in the colony. The process of registration of houses should be expedited, she directed the deputy commissioner. The contractor was instructed to complete the sanitation works within 10 days.

Later she inspected the main road at Swarna Bharati Nagar and directed the AE to prepare plans for the construction of a new road.

TIDCO SE Chinna Koteswara Rao, deputy municipal commissioner B Srinivasa Rao, SE D Srinivas, Corporator Smita Padmaja, EE Konda Reddy, and DEE Srinivasa Reddy were among those who accompanied the municipal commissioner.

## Police officials directed to curb illicit liquor, ganja menace firmly

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg directed the police officials to curb the illicit liquor and ganja menace stintingly. The SP inspected the Donakonda police station on Thursday. The SP inspected the police station as part of the annual inspection.

The SP inspected the rooms, the lockup, the women's help desk, the records management, the police station surroundings, and the police quarters. She examined the pending cases, criminal records, case diaries and registers within the station. She expressed satisfaction at the maintenance of

the records and the police station.

The SP inquired about the law and order situation in the jurisdiction of the station, the crimes that are most prevalent, and the steps being taken to control them.

She inquired about the progress of the cases under investigation, how the investigation is going on, etc., and gave appropriate instructions and advice in those cases. The police officers were directed to dutifully register all the details of the cases in the CCTNS.

The SP spoke to the police officials and directed them on how to stay on duty. She suggested that strict action be

taken against those who disturb the peace, that priority be given to resolving women's issues, and effective measures be taken to control unscrupulous and illegal activities, and that special surveillance is put in place to curb illicit liquor and narcotics.

Speaking with the women police, she told them to provide information on unscrupulous activities and breweries, missing cases, crimes against women and young children, cyber-crime, details of property criminals, rowdy elements, history sheeters, people with bad character, their lifestyle, and activities to the higher officials.

It was suggested that the

information should be collected from time to time and communicated to the higher officials, she said and advised the villagers should be sensitised to the cyber scams. She planted saplings on the police station premises.

Later SP Malika Garg visited the Buddhist mast belonging to the second century BC which is located at Chandavaram village. She made some suggestions to the archaeological survey officials on the steps to be taken to protect the centuries-old Buddhist monuments. DSPs Narayana Swam and B Mariyadas were among those who accompanied her.





INDIA CORNER

## Docs stage protest against proposed move to pool J-K PG medical seats

Doctors on Thursday staged a protest against the Jammu and Kashmir administration's proposed move to pool 50 per cent post-graduate seats from Government Medical College (GMC) and all seats of Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences for all-India quota this year. Accompanied by medical students, the doctors staged a protest in front of the GMC office here in support of their demand for shelving the idea until more post-graduate seats are allotted to new medical colleges in the Union Territory. "The idea, if implemented, will harm the interests of the aspiring PG candidates of Jammu and Kashmir as we have a meagre number of seats which would be further reduced," Dr Shushant Kharke, one of the protesters, told PTI. The National Conference, Congress and Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party have come forward in support of the protesting doctors and urged the administration to reconsider the proposed move in the larger interest of the people of the Union Territory.



## Merchant vessel that ran aground faces threat of sinking completely

The merchant vessel Princess Miral, which ran aground off Ullal near here is now submerged by 70 percent and is facing the threat of sinking completely as the sea is rough with high waves, official sources said. The ship agency owning the vessel is exploring ways to prevent the ship from sinking. The ship's owner is holding talks with the representative of Marcan shipping agency based here. The experts have to arrive from the Smith Salvage company of Mumbai to rescue the ship. It is learnt that the owner of the ship may try to salvage the cargo of steel coils, which is worth crores of rupees, sources said. The ship was carrying the steel coils from Malaysia to Lebanon. Due to a technical fault, a hole developed in the front part of the ship. Though the agents of the vessel tried to bring it to New Mangalore Port (NMP) or the Old Port here for repair, permission was not granted.



## Govt-appointed panel on EV fire cases to submit report this month

An expert committee set up by the road transport ministry to investigate cases of electric two-wheelers catching fire and suggest remedial measures is likely to submit its report this month, a senior government official said on Friday. Recently, there have been multiple incidents of electric vehicles (EVs) catching fire and resulting in death and causing severe injuries to people. "The expert committee (formed on battery standards and certification) is likely to submit its report this month," the official told PTI. Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had recently said companies found negligent will be penalised and a recall of all defective vehicles will be ordered after the expert panel submits its report. The government had ordered a probe in April after an e-scooter launched by ride-hailing operator Ola's electric mobility arm engulfed in fire in Pune.



# BRICS members have similar approach to governance: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BRICS member nations have a similar approach to the governance of the global economy and mutual cooperation can make a useful contribution to the post-Covid economic recovery, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

The Prime Minister said

this in his opening remarks at the virtual BRICS annual summit in presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and top leaders of Brazil and South Africa. The summit is being hosted by China as the Chair for this year.

The BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) brings together five of the

largest developing countries of the world, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global GDP and 16 per cent of the global trade. "Our mutual cooperation can make a useful contribution to the global post-Covid recovery," Modi said.

He said the structural changes undertaken in the BRICS in the last few years

increased the influence of the grouping. It is a matter of happiness that membership of the New Development Bank (NDB) has increased, Modi said adding cooperation among the member countries has benefitted their citizens.

"I am confident that our deliberations today will produce suggestions to further strengthen our ties," he said.

## First Bharat Gaurav train arrives in Nepal

PNS ■ KATHMANDU

The inaugural Bharat Gaurav train, connecting destinations associated with Ramayana Circuit in India and Nepal, arrived in Nepal's Janakpur on Thursday with 500 tourists from India. The 14-coach train, which arrived at Janakpur Dham station, was flagged off from Delhi's Safdarjung railway station on Tuesday.

The Indian government had launched this initiative to join all the major places related to Lord Ram and Sita and develop the Ramayana Circuit.

The train operating on the Ramayana Circuit will also cover the religious destination of Janakpur (Nepal) for the first time in addition to other popular destinations such as Ayodhya, Nandigram, Sitamarhi, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Chitrakoot, Panchvati, Hampi, Rameshwaram and Bhadrachalam.

The tourists will visit Janaki temple for darshan, witness a cultural programme in the premises of Janaki Temple and participate in Ganga Aarti, according to a press release from the Indian Embassy.

# India, China discuss return of stranded students

PNS ■ BEIJING

India and China have discussed the return of thousands of Indian students stranded at home for two years due to Beijing's COVID-19 bans and resumption of direct flights disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, the Indian embassy here said on Thursday.

The vexed issue of the return of the Indian students figured in the talks between Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday.

Wang recalled his meeting with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar during his visit to New Delhi in March this year and mentioned that the Chinese side attached importance to the Indian side's concerns regarding the return of Indian students and that he hoped to see early progress on this, a press release from the Indian Embassy quoted Wang as saying.

Foreign Minister Wang also referred to discussions on the resumption of direct flight connectivity between the two sides, it said.



Ambassador Rawat conveyed that the relevant agencies in India are seized of the matter and we may see progress in the matter soon, it said.

China, in recent months, began permitting some foreign students to return to the country.

On June 20, the first batch of 90 Pakistani students, stuck back home for about two years due to China's strict visa restrictions, arrived in the Chinese city

of Xian.

They are part of 250 Pakistani students China has agreed to permit to return based on their requirements while thousands more are awaiting Beijing's nod, according to the media reports from Pakistan.

Similarly, some of the stranded students from other countries including Russia and Sri Lanka are being gradually allowed to return.

In April, after repeated representations from India, China agreed to permit the return of some Indian students and asked the Indian Embassy here to collect the details of those seeking to return.

As per China's official reports, over 23,000 Indian students are studying in Chinese colleges, mostly medical courses. Over 12,000 Indian students have expressed their wish to return and their details have been forwarded to the Chinese government for processing.

China is yet to come up with a criterion to permit the return of the students as Beijing is reluctant to allow their return at once in large numbers in view of the recent COVID-19 spike in the country.

# DCGI panel to review SII applications for Covovax's use

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The subject expert committee on COVID-19 of India's drug regulator will on Friday review the applications of Serum Institute of India seeking emergency use authorisation to use Covovax among those aged two to seven years and seven to 11 years, official sources said.

The two applications were submitted by Prakash Kumar Singh, Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at Serum Institute of India (SII) on March 16 and June 1.

The expert panel in its last meeting in April had sought more data from SII following its application seeking the emergency use authorization of Covovax for seven to 11 years.

Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) had approved Covovax for restricted use in emergency situations in adults on December 28 and in the 12 to 17 years age group subject to certain conditions on March 9.

India began inoculating

children aged 12-14 on March 16. The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers getting inoculated in the first phase. Vaccination of frontline workers started from February 2 last year.

The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination commenced on March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions.

India launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1 last year. The government then decided to expand its vaccination drive by

allowing everyone above 18 years of age to be inoculated against the viral disease from May 1 last year.

The next phase of vaccination commenced from January 3 for adolescents in the age group of 15-18 years.

India began administering precaution doses of vaccines to healthcare and frontline workers and those aged 60 and above with comorbidities from January 10.



# ED asks Sonia Gandhi to depose late July

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has asked Congress president Sonia Gandhi to record her statement with the agency sometime in late July after it accepted her plea to postpone her deposition in a money-laundering case linked to the National Herald newspaper, officials said on Thursday.

She was issued a second summons for June 23 by the agency but the 75-year-old Congress leader could not keep the date as she "has been strictly advised to rest at home following her hospitalisation on account of Covid and lung infection".

Sources said the federal agency has postponed her

questioning in the case for about four weeks and she has now been asked to depose sometime in the last week of July.

Gandhi was first issued the notice for an appearance on June 8 but after she reported positive for COVID-19, the summons for June 23 was issued.

The Congress president was on Monday discharged from a private Delhi hospital where she was admitted for coronavirus-related complications. She was admitted to the hospital on June 12, days after she



tested positive for COVID-19 on June 2.

Her son and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi has been questioned by the agency in the same case for about 54 hours over five days.

The probe relates to alleged financial irregularities in the Congress-promoted Young Indian Private Limited, which owns the National Herald newspaper.

The move to question the Gandhis was initiated after the ED recently registered a fresh case under the criminal

provisions of the PMLA after a trial court here took cognisance of an Income Tax department probe against Young Indian based on a private criminal complaint filed by BJP MP Subramanian Swamy in 2013.

Sonia and Rahul Gandhi are among the promoters and majority shareholders of Young Indian. Like her son, the Congress president too has 38 per cent shareholding.

Swamy had accused the Gandhis and others of conspiring to cheat and misappropriate funds, with Young Indian paying only Rs 50 lakh to obtain the right to recover Rs 90.25 crore that Associated Journals Limited (AJL) owed to the Congress.

# Will protest if central agencies harass Abhishek: TMC

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The TMC on Thursday accused the BJP-led Centre of engaging in "political witch-hunt" as Enforcement Directorate (ED) interrogated party MP Abhishek Banerjee's wife Rujira Narula Banerjee in connection with a coal pilferage scam.

The party warned of protests if "harassment by central agencies" doesn't stop.

ED on Thursday quizzed Narula Banerjee at its city office

in connection with its probe into the multi-crore rupees worth of coal scam, an official said.

She visited the agency's CGO complex office around 11 am, with her child in arms.

"The CBI and ED have been acting as agents of the BJP and harassing political opponents. The way Abhishek Banerjee and his wife are being harassed without any reason is unacceptable. This has to stop, or we won't sit idle. We will protest against it," TMC MP Santanu

Sen said. "This political witch-hunt by the Centre is shameful," he said.

TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh claimed that "cheap tactics" are being employed by the BJP to intimidate the TMC, which is one of the prime contenders in the elections.

Polling to four Tripura Assembly seats -- Agartala, Town, Bardowali, Surma and Jubarajagar -- is underway in 221 booths since 7 am, and it

will continue till 5 pm.

The state BJP leadership, however, denied the allegations as baseless and said ED is an independent agency devoid of any political influence.

"The BJP has nothing to do with the CBI investigation. The allegations are baseless. If they have any complaints, they can always move to the court. They had earlier also moved the court on this issue," state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said.

# AGNIPATH

# BJP has 'broken' dream of lakhs of youth: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the BJP over the 'Agnipath' scheme, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the ruling party has "broken the dream" of lakhs of youth to serve the country and asserted

that a storm will rise from their tears that will break Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "arrogance of power".

Taking to Twitter, Gandhi posted a video of a young man in tears expressing anguish over having lost the chance to join the armed forces.

"There has not been any recruitment in the armed forces for the last two years. 2018-19: 53,431; 2019-20: 80,572; 2020-21: 0; 2021-22: 0," the former Congress chief said.

"By bringing 'Agniveers' on a four-year contract, the BJP has broken the dream of lakhs of youth to serve the nation. Such a storm will rise from these tears that will

destroy the arrogance of power of the prime minister," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

Addressing Congress parliamentarians and legislators from across the country who converged at the party headquarters here on

Wednesday to express solidarity with him after he was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate, Gandhi had

alleged that the BJP government "which calls itself nationalist" was "weakening" the armed forces through the 'Agnipath' scheme.

He had also said Modi will have to withdraw the military recruitment initiative just like he rolled back the farm laws.

Several parts of the country witnessed protests after the announcement of the scheme that seeks to recruit youths between the age bracket of 17-and-half years to 21 for only four years with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for 15 more years.



## Delhi bans entry of medium goods vehicles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has issued an order banning the entry of medium and heavy goods vehicles in the national capital from November to February in an effort to curb vehicular pollution, officials said on Thursday. According to an official, entry of such vehicles will be banned from November 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023. Vehicular pollution leads to deterioration of air quality during the winter months, he added.

# Four coral species recorded for first time in Indian waters: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists have recorded four species of azooxanthellate corals for the first time in Indian waters.

The four species named Truncatoflabellum crassum, T. incrustatum, T. aculeatum, and T. irregulare were recorded from the waters of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Azooxanthellate corals are a group of corals that do not contain zooxanthellae -- unicellular, golden-brown algae. They are found in dark habitats, especially within caverns.

Their distribution is not limited to the upper layer of

ocean alone, but are known from the tropical seas to polar seas and from the intertidal zone to over 6,328 metres depth.

The study, published recently in Thalassas: An International Journal of Marine Sciences, was carried out in reef ecosystems of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) reported four species of azooxanthellate corals from the shallow water region.

The previous studies carried out on the scleractinian coral resulted in the documentation of the total of around only

10 per cent of azooxanthellate corals in comparison with zooxanthellate corals from Indian waters.

"The four species named as Truncatoflabellum crassum, T. incrustatum, T. aculeatum, and T. irregulare under the family Flabelliidae are recorded for the first time from India, the authors of the study noted.

All four specimens were previously recorded from Japan to the Philippines and Australian waters while only T. crassum was reported within the range of Indo-West Pacific distribution including the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf, they said.

The study illustrates the morphological features along with the global mapping of zoogeographic distributional ranges of the four species of flabelliids.

A 2016 study by researchers at the Institute for Environmental Research and Social Education, Tamil Nadu reported three species of azooxanthellate corals, for the first time from the rocky outcrops off Goa, mid-west coast of India.

That study noted that there were 227 species of azooxanthellate scleractinian corals belonging to 71 genera reported from Indian Ocean region.



## Prashant Kishor taunts Nitish Kumar on Bihar

PNS ■ PATNA

Jan Suraj' campaign convener Prashant Kishor on Thursday sought to puncture his former mentor Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's claims of having given a face-lift to the state's roads.

Kishor, who is touring the state as a spade-work for a full-time launch into politics, shared on his Twitter handle an image of a national highway passing through Madhuri district which reminded him of the 'jungle raj of the 1990s'.







FIRST COLUMN

INDIA AT BRICS AND G7:  
TOUGH BALANCING ACT

Navigating through China's assertiveness, Putin's Ukraine war



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India's diplomatic and foreign policy calendar has been swinging between a diverse bunch of power blocks. India had a tough challenge to attend the 14th BRICS summit held virtually under the chairmanship of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

It was a tough call, given India's frosty relationship with China over the border tensions and sharing a platform (virtually) with Russian President Vladimir Putin, now considered a global outlaw. The BRICS summit was themed on Global Development; it's actually a message China wants to send across, placing itself at the centre of economic prosperity for the globe. This position has traditionally been claimed by the US and its Western allies.

It is interesting to note how the Chinese communist party's foreign policy propaganda newspaper, the Global Times, reported on the significance of the BRICS summit. In one of its recent reports, it mentioned the most novel proposition of this summit, BRICS expansion. The presence of Putin and several new invitees is also open to various interpretations. The Ukraine crisis has seen fissures emerge in the G20; and adding new members to BRICS could make it an alternative minus US and its allies.



This could also mean an expanded BRICS overtaking G7 earlier than imagined. In some of the other paragraphs the report lays emphasis on the "Global South cooperation," the presence of India in both the US-led Quad framework and BRICS, India's exit from the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), while accepting to be a founding member of US-led Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

While China's foreign policy department officially stuck to "high-quality partnership amongst BRICS, usher in new era for global development," as the core agenda, its allied arms such as the newspaper report mentioned above was setting the real agenda for the summit.

India moves away from the BRICs summit to another important multilateral, the Commonwealth Summit which is taking place in Rwanda's capital Kigali over the weekend. Leaders of 54 countries from Asia, Africa, South America, and Europe participate in the commonwealth summit which most often has been described as a club of erstwhile UK colonies, discussing their internal affairs, rather than coming out with a significant outcome-driven agenda for world affairs.

However, this diverse group of nations also represents the confluence of developing and the developed world, the former rulers meeting the former colonies, to indulge in some creative solutions for existing and emerging problems. It is a different matter that much of the commonwealth nations except the larger and more prosperous ones have been denied access to vaccines and therapeutic remedies to counter the Covid pandemic by the powerful nations. India will be represented at the summit by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

However, one of the most eyeball-grabbing meetings will be the G7 in Schloss Elmau, against the backdrop of the Bavarian Alps in Germany next week. India has been invited for this meeting as a guest and will be represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in person. This is the fourth consecutive time India has been invited for this prestigious global policy leaders meeting.

The G7, which is a group of most prosperous nations of the world which are some of the largest donors to international bodies, together make the most influential voice for global policy directions. This year, the G7 presidency has been taken over by Germany, which will push for some coordinated policy actions on the ongoing war in Ukraine, its impact on food inflation, particularly in the developing nations, the climate crisis, the Covid pandemic, and its impact.

India has some tough balancing acts to do on multilateral platforms. *(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)*

COVID crisis led to distress employment

There is an urgent need to generate more decent and productive employment for the increasing labour force in the country



BALWANT SINGH MEHTA

The National Statistical Office (NSO) released the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2020-21 report on June 14. At a first glance, the annual survey report shows an improvement in the employment situation with rise in employment and decline in the unemployment rate during the pandemic years compared to the previous years (PLFS survey years correspond to the agriculture year July to June).

This is quite unexpected, keeping in mind the severe economic disruption after the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey results differ from several other reports, which suggest that the employment situation in the country has worsened after the pandemic. This survey report has evoked heightened interest in the findings. It calls for further investigation as to whether these results are survey anomalies or indicate the changing employment situation in the country.

This article attempts to interpret the findings from the last three annual PLFS (2018-19, 2020-21 and 2020-21) reports, and try to understand the impact of Covid-19 pandemic by analysing some key labour market indicators.

The labour force participation rate as per usual status (reference period of last 365 days preceding the survey), which is the sum of those working and those available for work or unemployed, reported highest in the four years at 41.6 per cent in 2020-21. The worker population ratio (WPR) has increased from 35.3 per cent in 2018-19 to 39.8 per cent in 2020-21, which is the percentage of employed persons in the population.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate which is the percentage of unemployed in the labour force has eased from 5.8 per cent in 2018-19 to 4.2 per cent in 2020-21. The rural-urban division shows that the rise in WPR is in rural areas, which is almost 2.5 times higher than urban areas. It is well documented that the impact of Covid-19 in the rural economy was far less than urban, which is also reflected from the survey results.

A lot of people, particularly migrants engaged in the informal sector, lost their employment during the pandemic at the urban destinations. With no means of employment in urban areas, a large number of them have returned to their native places in rural areas, where they, along with their family members especially women, are engaged in locally available activities such as agriculture and related work for survival.

The survey results further reveal that the rise in WPR is largely credited to female than male, where WPR of the former has increased by 2.54 times more than the latter. This phenomenon is more pronounced in rural areas, where the female WPR has increased almost 3.2 times more (19.0 per cent to 27.1 per cent) than their urban counterparts (15 per cent to 17 per cent) during the pandemic years.

So, the rise in employment during the



WITH NO MEANS OF EMPLOYMENT IN URBAN AREAS, A LARGE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS RETURNED TO THEIR NATIVE PLACES IN RURAL AREAS WHERE THEY, ALONG WITH THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, ARE ENGAGED IN LOCALLY AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES

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pandemic years is overwhelmingly of females in rural areas.

The industrial structure provides broad employment trends, where the employment in agriculture in developing countries like India is considered as subsistence and less productive, while employment in non-farm industrial and services is regarded as more productive. It is well documented that as the country progresses, the people move away from the less productive agriculture sector in rural areas to more productive non-farm industrial and services sectors in urban areas.

However, the industrial distribution of employment in India shows a reversal of the decades-long decline in agriculture share in recent years with more and more people moving into the farm sector in rural areas. The share of employment in agriculture has increased by 3 percentage points from 57.8 per cent in 2018-19 to 60.8 per cent in 2020-21.

This trend indicates that people are finding it difficult to get employment in non-farm sectors, and they are compelled to engage in subsistence farm activities due to the lack of other employment avenues. In rural areas, almost three-fourth (75.4 per cent) of the females are engaged in farm activities compared to around half of the male (53.8 per cent).

Thus, the rise in employment in rural areas has a huge implication on women's work, which is also reflected from increasing female's WPR. This reveals that the rise in share of employment in agriculture reflected the impact of economic slowdown and the pandemic.

The reverse migration from cities to rural areas would have only

increased the pressure on the farm sector to absorb the workers, especially females, leading to the distress employment.

The status of employment broadly indicates the quality of employment, where a regular salary is considered better quality of work than self-employed and casual labour. Regularity of work and social security benefits are associated with regular salaries, while social security provisions are generally not available for self-employed and casual labourer.

The PLFS survey reports show that the share self-employed has increased from 52.1 per cent in 2018-19 to 55.6 per cent in 2019-20, while the share of regular salaried (23.8 per cent to 21.1 per cent) and casual labour (24.1 per cent to 23.3 per cent) has declined during the last three years. This phenomenon is more pronounced in rural areas, where the share of the self-employed has increased relatively more (3.3 percentage points) than urban areas (1.7 percentage points).

However, the increase in share of the self-employed in rural areas is largely attributed to the rise in unpaid helpers in household enterprises (4.6 percentage points), while the share of own account workers and employer category has declined (-1.4 percentage points).

This indicates that the jump in female WPR in rural areas is contributed most by the increase in employment of helpers or unpaid family workers in household enterprises. A recent Niti Aayog report highlighted that the rise in 'disguised employment' or unpaid family workers is a more serious issue than unemployment in India. The decline in the share of regular salaried workers is another serious

concern, reflecting the worsening employment conditions with rise in low quality employment in recent pandemic years.

The above analysis reveals that the increase in employment in pandemic years is distress-driven and not necessarily any improvement in the overall employment in the country. This is shown in the report as an increase in terms of labour force participation rate, the worker-population ratio, and decline in the unemployment rate. It is also important to note that the share of employment in agriculture and allied activities, and especially employment of rural women, has gone up in recent years, which is mostly of distress type not productive or decent employment.

Further, the report also reveals that employment in the informal sector has increased during the pandemic years from 68.4 per cent to 71.4 per cent in 2020-21. Workers in the informal sector are for the most part not covered by any social security benefits and also not covered by the national labour laws and regulations. Such workers are most affected by any economic shocks such as the economic downturn after Covid-19.

In sum, the PLFS survey report (2020-21) indicates generation of new employment in the country during the pandemic years, but most of the new jobs are of distress or informal type, especially for females in rural areas.

In this context, there is an urgent need to generate or provide more decent and productive employment for the increasing labour force in the country, which is must to meet the SDG goal 8 targets of 'decent or productive employment for all' by 2030.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IF ANY OF THE REBEL MLAS SAYS THEY DON'T WANT ME AS CM, I'M READY TO RESIGN. I'M PREPARING MY RESIGNATION LETTER.  
—MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER  
UDDHAV THACKERAY



FORTY SENA MLAS ARE PRESENT WITH ME IN GUWAHATI. WE WILL TAKE BALASAHEB'S HINDUTVA AND LEGACY FORWARD.  
—SHIV SENA REBEL FACTION LEADER  
EKNATH SHINDE

India emerges as leader at WTO ministerial meet

India defended its right to extend subsidies to Indian fishermen, with contentious clauses removed



PK VASUDEVA

For the first time in a decade, members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), a 164-nation body, have finalised a historic deal at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12). The four-day MC12 was extended by two days as trade ministers negotiated through the night at WTO headquarters, next to Lake Geneva, and negotiations continued till June 18 morning. India was at the centre of WTO negotiations at the MC12.

India has agreed to the proposal of no export restrictions on the World Food Programme. But internal food security concerns will take precedence. There is no work programme on agriculture, which could be considered as a good outcome for India as our agri-subsidy will not face any further scrutiny.

(The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

On the trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) waiver, an agreement could be reached only on vaccines. The official said negotiations for diagnostics and therapeutics would start in six months as demanded by developed countries.

This means India's demand to include diagnostics and therapeutics in the agreement did not find favour with developed countries. In October 2020, India, South Africa, and 63 co-sponsors had made the TRIPS waiver proposal to help middle- and low-income nations get access to Covid-19 vaccines and drugs. However, the discussions reached a deadlock in the TRIPS Council, the body responsible for monitoring the operation of the agreement. The draft agreement fell short of the original

proposal and includes only vaccines.

India had called for a TRIPS waiver for vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to fight Covid-19 and future pandemics. India had held it was too late in the day if only vaccines were included because the pandemic had run its initial course. On a moratorium on customs duty on e-commerce transactions, countries agreed to extend it by another two years.

India put forth aggressive draft texts in all pillars of WTO negotiations rather than being reactive, as in the past. India brought the members together to a unanimous agreement on fisheries, health, and the future of WTO reforms, digital technology, food, and environment. India's principled stand at the WTO strengthened the voice of

the poor and the vulnerable globally.

An agreement at Geneva makes it the first trade deal since the 2013 Bali Ministerial, where members signed the WTO's first trade deal on a peace clause on public stockholding for food security purposes and a trade facilitation agreement. The consensus-driven, rule-making process at the multilateral trade organisation means even one member could thwart a deal at the last moment. After negotiations spilled over to the sixth day, 164 countries of the World Trade Organisation finally sealed a package deal in the wee hours on 18 June in Geneva with India leading the course.

In a first major agreement in nine years, the deal includes six major issues of importance for developing countries including

food security, balanced outcome fisheries subsidies, response to pandemic, and patents waiver on Covid-19 vaccines.

The deal that tested Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's negotiation skills saw several trade-offs between developed and developing countries during the two nights of marathon talks, going well past the June 16 afternoon deadline. "There is a good outcome on the issues that were long pending," Goyal said, adding that India completely protected the interests of fishermen and farmers. "All in all, it is a good package. Today there is no issue on which we have to be concerned, whether it is related to agriculture such as MSP [minimum support price], reinforcing the relevance of the public stock-

holding programme towards fulfilling the national food safety programme or PM Garib Kalyan Scheme, TRIPS waiver, e-commerce moratorium, response to Covid and fisheries," Goyal said after the deal.

India defended its right to extend subsidies to Indian fishermen, with contentious clauses removed from the text at the last minute. In turn, India agreed to an 18-month extension of the moratorium on customs duty on electronic imports that it argues favours rich nations. However, subsidies on overfishing, deep-sea fishing, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has been addressed through the proposed pact.

"On India's insistence, sovereign rights on EEZ [exclusive economic zones] have been firmly established. It is really a

big achievement," said Goyal, adding that principal stakeholders who have benefited from these "historic decisions" taken by the 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO are fishermen, farmers, food security, multilateralism, and trade and business, particularly digital economy and MSMEs.

Through the joint efforts of all WTO members, the MC12 has made breakthroughs on a number of key issues, demonstrating that the multilateral trading system can play a key role in addressing global challenges, she said.

Goyal said India today battled on the front foot rather than being fearful on various issues, be it environment, startups, MSMEs or gender equality. This was a result of the confidence of 'New India.'



# Industry has enough capacity and tech know-how to make paper straws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian paper industry has enough capacity and technological know-how to manufacture paper for making paper straws and other similar products in the country, said IPMA in a statement on Thursday.

The industry's reaction came after the concerns raised by several FMCG companies recently that the paper required for making straws is not available in India, necessitating imports, and that it will take time to have enough domestic capacity to meet the demand.

The government's ban on single-use plastics, including plastic straw, is going to be effective from July 1, 2022.

The FMCG companies operating in small packaged fruit juices and dairy products have sought an extension in the deadline till proper infrastructure for producing paper straws locally is developed, saying importing such straws is not economically viable.

Terming it as "factually incorrect", the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) President A S Mehta said a "wrong impression" is being created that presently there is no Indian paper mill that can manufacture the



required paper for making paper straws and opposed any extension of the deadline on this pretext.

"Actually, there are several paper mills in India that are already manufacturing the base paper, meeting all the requisite technical parameters, for making paper straws. Any additional paper requirement for making paper straws can also easily be met by Indian paper mills," he said.

FMCG companies require about six billion paper straw sticks per year.

"With an average weight of 2-3 gram per such straw, the total requirement of paper will be around 12,000-18,000 metric tonnes per year, that is about 1,000-1,500 metric tonnes per month. This can very well be catered to by Indian paper mills without any difficulty," said IPMA.

In fact, to meet the growing domestic demand, many domestic converters have put up units to manufacture paper straws and are procuring the base paper from Indian paper mills, with a few even export-

ing the paper straws to other countries as the demand for paper straws has exponentially increased globally, Mehta added. Additionally, some large corporates and many MSME units for manufacturing paper straws are expected to be operational shortly to cater to the increased demand in the country.

Any demand for extension of the deadline should not be done on the pretext of inadequate domestic availability of paper, which is factually incorrect," said IPMA.

## Titan's women ethnic wear brand Taneira eyes Rs 300 cr revenue in FY23

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Titan Company's women ethnic wear brand Taneira eyes about multi-fold growth in revenue at Rs 300 crore in current fiscal year, and Rs 1,000 crore by FY27. Launched in 2017, Taneira is the latest in-house brand from Titan. It aims to tap the huge ethnic apparel segment. The brand will predominantly focus on the saree business which is a Rs 50,000 crore market growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6-8 per cent, a top company official said.

"We are small right now and are recovering from the Covid impact. We have great expansion plans going forward. In the current fiscal we expect revenue of about Rs 250-300 crore but our ambition is to make Taneira a Rs 1,000 crore brand by FY27," Taneira Chief Executive Officer Ambuj Narayan told PTL. The company has 25 stores across Delhi, Noida, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Jamshedpur, Vadodara, Lucknow and Kolkata. "We are in process to increase the number to 50-60 stores by this year and over the next 3-4 years it will be further ramped up to 125 Taneira retail stores chain that will cover the majority of tier-I and tier-II cities.

## 'Indian economy to grow by 7-7.8 pc in FY23 despite global headwinds'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy can grow by 7-7.8 per cent this fiscal on the back of better agriculture production and a revitalised rural economy amid global headwinds mainly due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, eminent economists said.

Eminent economist and BR Ambedkar School of Economics (BASE) Vice-Chancellor NR Bhanumurthy said at present Indian economy is facing multiple headwinds largely from external sources.

Noting that global inflationary pressures and the Russia-Ukraine war have brought in risks to the economy, which is otherwise strong with all the domestic macro fundamentals being well managed, he said unlike advanced economies, India's Covid stimulus measures, especially the fiscal policy interventions, are less inflationary and rather growth-enhancing.

"With better agricultural production and revitalised rural economy India should touch 7 per cent growth in the current year despite global headwinds," Bhanumurthy said. Echoing similar views,



eminent economist and Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID) director Nagesh Kumar said the high-frequency indicators point to a robust growth momentum carrying through 2022-23 with a real GDP growth somewhere between 7-7.8 per cent.

French economist Guy Sorman said India could be severely impacted by the high cost of energy and fertiliser imports.

"However, because India is still, largely an agricultural economy, the social impact of slower growth will be tempered by city workers going back to their village. "This could increase agri-

cultural production and grain exports," Sorman added.

The World Bank has cut India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7.5 per cent as rising inflation, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical tensions taper recovery. India's economy grew 8.7 per cent in the last fiscal (2021-22) against a 6.6 per cent contraction in the previous year.

In its third monetary policy of 2022-23, the Reserve Bank retained its GDP growth forecast at 7.2 per cent for the current fiscal, but cautioned against negative spillovers of geopolitical tensions and a slowdown in the global economy.

## MONEY MATTERS

### IIFL Finance gets board's approval to raise Rs 5,000 cr



IIFL Finance is planning to raise debt capital worth Rs 5,000 crore by issuing bonds on a private placement basis, the company said on Thursday. The bonds will be offered through public issue, subject to regulatory and statutory approvals, IIFL Finance said in a regulatory

filing. "The board of directors of the company at their meeting held today, June 23, 2022, approved the raising of funds by way of issuance of secured redeemable non-convertible debentures with the shelf limit of Rs 50,000 million, in one or more tranches," it added. IIFL Finance is a non-banking finance company (NBFC), offering products such as home loans, gold loans, and business loans, including loans against property and medium & small enterprise financing, microfinance, developer and construction finance. It also offers capital market finance, catering to both retail and corporate clients. Its subsidiaries IIFL Home Finance Ltd and Samasta Microfinance Ltd -- are engaged in providing a diverse range of loans and mortgages. The NBFC has a nationwide presence, having 3,119 branches across over 500 cities. Shares of IIFL Finance were trading at Rs 319.05 apiece on BSE, up by 1.46 per cent from the previous close.

### Volvo group launches green casting developed in India



Swedish automotive major Volvo Group on Thursday announced the launch of its first 'green casting' developed and sourced from India that will be used for its engines globally. The green castings from India will include bearing caps and bearing housing for select Volvo engines, and this is the first step, the group said in a statement. It further said these castings will be produced by Brakes India, utilising scrap, alloys, and raw materials that are 100 per cent radioactive elements free. It involves recycling 100 per cent metallic scrap generated by other industries to manufacture a usable product. The plant will operate on 100 per cent green power from solar and wind energy, it added. In line with the group's global sustainability targets and ambitions, he said, "Our aim is to create an environment that is safe and sustainable for future generations while being immersed in advanced technology that goes into making world-leading commercial vehicles. Green Casting has the potential to kick-start a revolution in the casting manufacturing process for a sustainable future".

### Steel industry needs skilled workforce like Agniveers to achieve 300 MT capacity



The Indian Steel Association (ISA) has welcomed the government's Agnipath scheme saying the industry needs Agniveers as such talent can help achieve the country's 300 MT steel production capacity target. Under the National Steel Policy 2017, the government has set an ambitious target of scaling up India's steel-making capacity to 300 million tonne (MT). "The Indian steel industry unequivocally supports the pathbreaking initiative of Government of India. Agnipath is a win-win for all. The Indian steel industry needs lakhs of trained and disciplined men and women to enable its growth ambition to achieve 300 MTPA, as per the National Steel Policy," ISA President Dilip Oommen said in a statement. Oommen, who is also the CEO of AMNS India, said there cannot be anything better than selecting the highly skilled Agniveers, trained under the Agnipath scheme, to accomplish this goal. ISA Secretary-General Alok Sahay said Agnipath is a path breaking scheme of the government. "In fact, it is a movement for Skill India-Secure India. The qualities such as dedication to nation, commitment to work, honesty and discipline in work, which Agniveers would have after 4 years under Agnipath scheme... will be immensely useful for all the employers," he said. Sahay said every sector, including steel would look for Agniveers as employees having such qualities. The Agnipath scheme for the armed forces, announced on June 14, provides for the recruitment of youths between the age bracket of 17-and-half years to 21 for only four years, with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for 15 more years.

## Statiq raises US\$ 25.7 mn in funding round led by Shell Ventures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electric vehicle charging network startup Statiq on Thursday said it has raised USD 25.7 million (over Rs 200 crore) in a funding round led by Shell Ventures.

The company will use the Series A funding to primarily invest in product engineering and network infrastructure, Statiq said in a statement.

The Series A investment will aid in accelerating efforts to scale and realise value from contract portfolio, by investing in product engineering and network infrastructure as well as reinforcing the core team, it added.

"Securing the first closing of our Series A ensures delivering on value-enhancing growth options already secured by Statiq, as we set out to build India's leading EV charging services company," Statiq Co-Founder and



CEO Akshit Bansal said.

He further said, "Shell and Statiq share a vision of actively driving the transformation towards sustainable modes of transport. Gaining Shell Ventures as an investor is a major milestone for Statiq." With an aim to provide an end-to-end ecosystem for EV chargers, Statiq said it has recently teamed up with Hero Electric and also collaborated with EV maker Ather, to enhance the combined EV charging network in the

northern states of India.

Closing this important round of funding is the next step to consolidate the company's own processes, the statement said.

"Statiq will be able to tap into a wealth of operational excellence, as well as accelerate working towards quality, safety and environmental standards that are second to none by closely cooperating with Shell group experts as we grow," Statiq Co-Founder and CTO Raghav Arora said.

## Rupee settles at all-time low of 78.32 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee on Thursday closed at its all-time low of 78.32 (provisional) against the US dollar as strong American currency and persistent foreign fund outflows weighed on investor sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 78.26 and finally settled at its all-time low 78.32, unchanged from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee declined by 19 paise to settle at an all-time low level of 78.32 against the US dollar. The Indian rupee erased early morning gains as safe-haven demand drove the greenback ahead of quarter-end adjustments, said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

## Sensex, Nifty rebound nearly 1 pc on gains in auto, IT stocks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back on Thursday to close higher by nearly 1 per cent on gains in banking, IT and auto shares amid mixed global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 443.19 points or 0.86 per cent to settle at 52,265.72. During the day, it rallied 694.26 points or 1.33 per cent to 52,516.79.

The NSE Nifty advanced 143.35 points or 0.93 per cent to 15,556.65.

From the Sensex pack, Maruti, M&M, Asian Paints, Bharti Airtel, TCS, Sun Pharma, Wipro, ICICI Bank and Hindustan Unilever were the major gainers.

On the other hand, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Power Grid

and UltraTech Cement were the laggards.

Elsewhere in Asia, stock markets in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo ended with gains while Seoul settled lower. European markets were trading in the red in mid-session deals.

The US markets ended marginally lower on Wednesday. "The Indian markets opened on a positive note following Asian market peers which were trading mostly in the green led by China.

During the afternoon session markets trimmed some of their gains as European markets struggled to shrug-off recession fears but managed to trade in the green," said Narendra Solanki, Head-Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi Shares & Stock Brokers.

## Urban cooperative banks need to focus on modern banking methods: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that urban cooperative banks (UCBs) need to focus on symmetric development, Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Thursday asked UCBs to undertake key reforms including hiring young talent and adopting modern banking methods in order remain competitive.

Structural changes, strengthening of human resources, computerising accounting process, hiring experts to handle surplus funds are the other reforms that UCBs need to undertake in order to compete with nationalised and private banks, he said.

By implementing these reforms, the UCBs should make themselves more irrelevant in the current times, the



minister said and assured that cooperative banks will not be treated like a "second grade citizen".

"There are 1,534 urban cooperative banks, 54 scheduled urban cooperative banks, 35 multi-state cooperative banks, 580 multi-state cooperative credit societies, 22 state cooperatives. We have a wide presence but it is uneven.

... We need to properly work on symmetric development of urban cooperative banks," Shah said addressing an event here.

Since cooperative banks are the only banks that lend to the lower strata of the society, there is a need to set up at least one UCB in every town in the country, he said and directed the National Federation of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies (NAFCUS) to focus on symmetric development of UCBs across India.

"Symmetric expansion will help us remain in the competition. Successful banks should also come forward and contribute to this," he said. Presently, the role of urban cooperative banks is negligible in the total banking sector in terms of deposit and advance payment, he added.

# Indian media, entertainment industry to grow at 8.8%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian media and entertainment industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of 8.8 per cent and reach Rs 4.30 lakh crore by 2026, according to a report by global consultancy firm PwC.

The growth would be paced by digital media and advertising through deeper penetration of the internet and mobile devices in the domestic market, along with traditional media, which will hold their steady growth, the report said.

TV advertising is expected to reach over Rs 43,000 crore by 2026. It will make India the fifth-largest TV advertising market globally, after the US, Japan, China and the UK.

The Indian media and entertainment industry is

expected to be around Rs 3.14 crore in 2022, registering an overall growth of 11.4 per cent, as per the PwC's Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2022-2026.

India's OTT Video services are expected to become a Rs 21,031 crore industry in the next four years by 2026, in which Rs 19,973 crore would come from subscription-based services and Rs 1,058 crore from Transactional VOD (video on demand).

"It is subscription services that are driving this rapid growth, accounting for 90.5 per cent of revenue in 2021 and set to account for 95 per cent in 2026," it said.

The population size and widespread use of mobile-led Internet video will underpin rapid growth in the OTT mar-



ket over the forecast period. In particular, uptake of 5G will permit low-latency services such as OTT video streams, greatly boosting the sector.

"As infrastructure improves in the long term, the scale and diversity of the population will lend itself to a wide range

of platforms," the report added.

TV advertising would grow up to Rs 43,568 crore in 2026 from Rs 35,270 crore in 2022, registering a growth of 23.52 per cent.

"After several years of rapid expansion, India's TV adver-

tising market was hit by the COVID-19 recession in 2020, causing a 10.8 per cent decline over the 2019 levels. This proved to be a temporary setback. With the country's return to economic growth in 2021, this segment grew by 16.9 per cent to Rs 32,374

crore," it said. India's internet advertising market is set to increase at a 12.1 per cent CAGR to reach Rs 28,234 crore by 2026.

"Given India's mobile-first Internet access market, the mobile sector dominates the country's Internet advertising market, accounting for 60.1 per cent of total revenue in 2021, rising to 69.3 per cent by 2026," the report said, adding that "display advertising dominates the mobile sector, accounting for 90.7 per cent of revenue in 2021 though its share will fall to 88.9 per cent of the total in 2026".

The 'Music, Radio & Podcast' segment grew by 18 per cent in 2021 to Rs 7,216 crore and is set to rise 9.8 per cent CAGR to reach Rs 11,536 crore by 2026.



## Euphoria Star Hunter Schafer Joins The Hunger Games Prequel

**E**uphoria star Hunter Schafer has joined the cast of *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. According to Variety, she will appear opposite Tom Blyth and Rachel Zegler in the studio's attempt to recapture that old Panem magic.

Schafer will play Tigris Snow, the cousin and confidante of Coriolanus Snow (Blyth), who, *Hunger Games* fans know, will one day mature into the autocratic ruler of the dystopian world of the books and films, a leader who has just a dollop of psychopathy to go along with his suave demeanor.

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes debuts in theatres world-



wide on November 17, 2023. It follows the Snow family, which has fallen from grace in a post-

war Capitol. With the 10th annual Hunger Games fast approaching, Snow is assigned

to mentor Lucy Gray Baird (Zegler), a girl tribute from the impoverished District 12.

From there, things get gladiatorial and, Lionsgate dearly hopes, so gripping that its most successful franchise will be relaunched to sequel spawning effect.

According to Variety, the prequel will be directed by Francis Lawrence, who also helmed the franchise's *Catching Fire*, *Mockingjay Part One* and *Mockingjay Part Two*. In addition to her work on *Euphoria*, Schafer co-wrote and co-executive produced a special episode for the series. Schafer is currently in production on *Cuckoo*, an upcoming horror feature from director Tilman Singer.

## Jessica Chastain Played Donald Trump's Sister For Free In Armageddon Time

**A**ctress Jessica Chastain turned down a fee for her surprise special role as former US President Donald Trump's politician sister, Maryanne Trump, in James Gray's *Armageddon Time*, but with one condition attached.

The actor said that she agreed to play a small part in the Focus Features movie, but only if her involvement was never formally announced, reports 'Variety'.

*Armageddon Time* is based on writer-director Gray's own childhood in the early 1980s at the Kew-Forest School in New York City, where Donald Trump also attended in his youth.

Co-starring Anne Hathaway and Jeremy Strong as the film's young protagonist Paul's parents, and Anthony Hopkins as his grandfather, the film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival last month where Chastain's cameo surprised audiences, reports 'Variety'.

"When James reached out to me, I hadn't read anything yet, and I was like, 'yeah, I'll do it', because he told me it's his story. I love when someone wants to tell a personal story," said Chastain, who was speaking to 'Variety' in London as part of a Paramount+ event for her new TV series with Michael Shannon, *George & Tammy*.

She says, "I committed to it way before. I actually did it for free. They sent me an offer and I said, 'No, no, put the money back into the movie.'

I'm just going to do it for free. The only thing I ask, the only thing I would like, is for it to be never announced that I am in this movie."

Chastain plays a guest lecturer at a private school where Paul matriculates mid-film.

She lectures the privileged boys and girls about the value of ambition in a Phyllis Schlafly-esque beehive. Maryanne Trump worked as a US Attorney in the 1970s in New Jersey, and was named by then President Ronald Reagan to a seat on the US District Court for New Jersey in 1983. She was named to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in 1999.

Gray told Screen Daily in 2021 that the role of Maryanne Trump was originally meant to be played

by Cate Blanchett, but the actor later dropped out of the project.

Chastain explained that her reasoning for not being announced comes down to finding herself in situations.

"Where I'm doing a one-day role somewhere and then it's, like, everywhere. At one point, I did one thing and I'm on a poster for a preview of this (project). And then if a scene doesn't work in the movie, it looks ridiculous."

"So I said, do me a favor, the

only thing I ask is don't ever say that I'm in the movie and I'll do it for free. I'm happy to be there. And that way you can cut me out, or whatever.

You can do whatever you want with your film and not feel beholden to anything. So that's why probably it was such a surprise. It was a surprise for me. I was like, 'Oh I'm in it? Cool'. But yeah, it was nice to hear that people reacted very positively in Cannes," the actress added.



**I**t took Pankaj Tripathi almost two decades to reach where he is today in the world of cinema. However, the acclaimed actor said that if he wasn't in the world of showbiz, he would have been a farmer or would have made a career in politics.

Called as one of Hindi cinema's finest actors, Pankaj is currently gearing up for the

release of his upcoming film *Sherdil: The Pilibhit Saga*, a dark humour-laced satire inspired by true events.

What would have he done if he was not into the field of acting?

He said, "Farmer... My father was that and that was my ancestral work. I would've done farming."

"Or maybe since I was a student politician I would

probably have been in politics. I don't know," he added.

The 45-year-old star debuted in 2004 with a minor role in *Run and Omkara*. His breakthrough came in the year 2012 with his antagonistic role in the *Gangs of*

Wasseyapur franchise.

He has lauded for his work in films such as *Fukrey*, *Masaan*, *Nil Battey Sannata*, *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, *Newton*, *Stree*, *Ludo* and *Mimi*. Pankaj also made a name in the web world with his work in series such as *Mirzapur*, *Criminal Justice*, *Yours Truly* and *Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors*.

However, it was not an easy ride.

"My acting journey is a long story. I had in interest in this line and after having that interest I left farming and student politics... I was unsuccessful in five-six jobs and that's how I came towards cinema. Here also it took 15-20 years.

I don't know if I am successful or not but where I am today, to reach here it took me a 15-20 years."

*Sherdil: The Pilibhit Saga*, a Reliance Entertainment film gives a peek into the adverse effects of urbanisation, man-animal conflicts and poverty leading to a bizarre practice in a village on the edge of a protected forest.

**Pankaj Tripathi Would've Been A Farmer If Not An Actor**

### FUN

#### ARCHIE



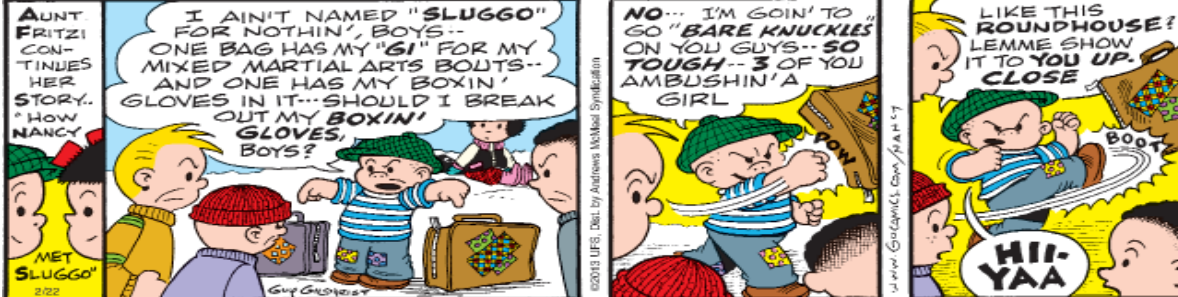
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



#### NANCY



#### GINGER MEGGS



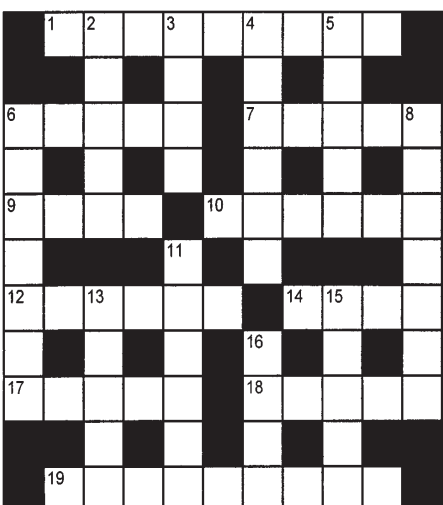
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

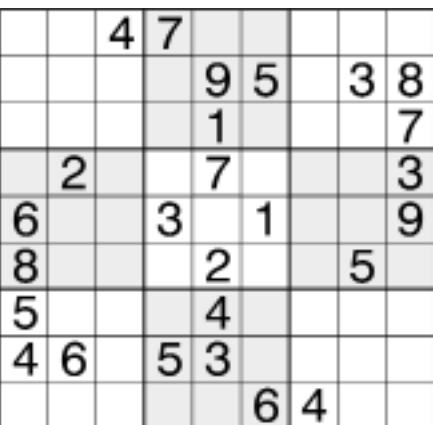
- Marked with the fingernails
- In front
- A keyboard instrument
- Painful to touch
- Something that is not to be told to anyone else
- A baby's toy
- A hired car
- Have a quarrel
- Incorrect
- Played make-believe
- Vienna is the capital of this country
- Nil
- Opposite of newest
- A large jungle cat
- By yourself
- A brother or sister born at the same time

#### DOWN

- A shout of approval
- Counts up
- Shut
- Very keen, enthusiastic



#### SUDOKU



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

#### 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.



## Time to worry about personal hygiene

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Our Hyderabad city is a hub for multi-door outdoor events. But have we ever thought about the cleanliness of the outdoor bathrooms? How important it's and what about the event's reputation?

Fear not, we live in an ultra-modern society these days and there are unique hygiene-cum-wellness offerings around the corner. To give an example, Svish on the go is the first made-in-India range of sanitizing products in the hygiene category. No one wants to use a dirty restroom, and despite their reputation, there are several proactive actions that can be taken to improve the experience of hygiene at public events.

We spoke to the co-founder Ishaan Grover, "Hygiene should be the priority in our country. Its easy to convince the youth because you'll see them giggling at various outdoor events. We think how the millennial thinks. If you're going partying, carry intimate hygiene products. To take precautions at outdoor events is to a limit."

Dodging the virus with various sanitizers and disinfectants, they realized that if one had to apply something to one's skin 10 to 12 times a day, it needed to be more personalised and eco-friendly to satisfy one's taste for aesthetics. Sanitization was a choice in the pre-COVID-19 era, but in the post-COVID, it's a must. Sadly, the market was flooded with sanitizers that were either too oily or too sticky or too smelly. There was a clear need for something that not just kills germs but also takes care of your skin and uplifts your mood.

He continued, "Sunburn concerts are one of those biggies where the crowd comes in uncountable numbers and the event management don't realise the importance of sanitation hygiene, especially for girls. Once my wife and I went partying, and we had to leave early just because my wife and

We enjoy outings and have fun. But do we think of our personal hygiene while having fun at these events? *The Pioneer* connects with the founder of Svish on the go who explains to us more about the same

a few of my friends wanted to pee and the toilet hygiene wasn't up-to-the-mark. It was an eye-opener for me then."

Svish is not just a name, it's an act too. It is derived from the word swish which means the sound of water and going forward, and ours will replace the word sanitize or the act of spraying to sanitize. In the last years, consumers shift their consumer behavior toward eco-friendly alternatives, leading to a highly dynamic market.

The founder added, "We all are aware that lack of intimate hygiene can trigger various infections. It is crucial that you take appropriate measures to keep infections at bay. Lack of awareness and timely clinical

help has contributed to such infections. We are opposing that. We can do this with the help of influencers. Both the genders should be aware, that intimate hygiene isn't just about simply cleaning but comprehensive wellbeing. It is important for us to overcome the cultural, religious, and social barriers which prevent us from open discussions and seeking optimal intimate care."

-TANISHA SAXENA

Earlier this month, two advertisements of a perfume company sparked outrage over their depiction of women and promoting rape mentality leading to an FIR against the company by Delhi Commission for Women. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also directed YouTube and Twitter to remove the ads.

Both the ads have raised eyebrows for the mentality that it seems to promote. Chills run down the spine by the sheer thought of the such advertisements broadcasted. But what supercedes all other feelings is the fact that how normalised are these?

Advertisers often make light of sexual violence towards women, mostly in the garb of innuendo, humor, or artistic expression. It is expected that the shock factor will work promotional magic for their product. Several studies have tried to look into rape myth acceptance and its equation to demographics. A piv-



## Where is DECENCY?

Advertisements by a perfume brand has led to a huge outrage all over, especially on social media. *The Pioneer* connects with an influencer, chairperson of DCW, founder of a NGO and a feminist who explains to us how these ads have defamed women

culture? I hope Delhi Police will take urgent and strict action so that an example is set. I think most people strongly objected to the misogynistic advertisement. It's just that proper systems are not there and that's why people are able to get away with creating and promoting filthy content. We had to raise the issue, and only then action was taken. So, systems should be built to create deterrence against such advertisements."

Meanwhile, Dr. Parameshwari founder, SHINE NGO from Hyderabad believes that there are several factors that lead to such mentality. She says, "These are not just advertisements but jokes that pops up every now and then on our social media that triggers a certain kind of behaviour. Incidents like these hints of the lack of sex education that is crucial to be implemented in our system. The way we deal with gender sensitive issues is definitely points out the loopholes in the system. Who is monitoring? Why these things reach at such a level? It is high time."

Many said the timing of the advert made it particularly insensitive, as it was broadcast just a week after a case in which a 17-year-old was allegedly raped by five men in the southern city of Hyderabad, the latest in a series of high-profile crimes against women and minority groups across the country.

"What disturbs me the most is that the advertisers felt confident and comfortable that a certain demographics of the population will actually enjoy a commercial that perpetuates rape culture. The idea that advertisers believe sexual innuendos targeting women make a product more memorable and appealing is cringeworthy in itself. Sexist and smutty advertising has clearly become a cog in the machine of patriarchy," tells Aparna Bhatt, a feminist.

otal research in 1997 closely examined the topic through advertising.

According to the studies, advertisements have exposed multiple images of women, beginning from a homemaker to sensitive being. There are ads that show ambitious women, young and independent girls who no longer depend on their opposite sex, who tease boys for having all the fun but at the same time fairness creams are also introduced to make them empowered. In the recent past fairness cream ads were found inappropriate and Adverting Standard Council of India took initiative by imposing guidelines for fairness creams.

It is disheartening to see that despite years of struggle, women are still projected as a sex-object.

Lifestyle influencer Ravathy. P opens up about the issue, and says, "My first and foremost issue with those ads were how did the campaign get multiple levels of approval until being taken live for such a distasteful approach. Were there not one

woman or even a man who found any issue with this whole angle of making sly sexual remarks? What got my blood boiling literally was how the women characters were portrayed. They showcased that the women looked doubtful, looking clueless and even scared in their ads. Casual sexism needs to be reprimanded and not even for the sake of fun, a woman needs to be made feel like that. I also wonder how the women in the ad agreed to play the part. This casual and 'chalta hai attitude' of the country requires immediate overhaul. Taking indirect sexual potshots at women, chiding sly remarks needs to be stopped. As a woman, all I ask for is respect. The society cannot upgrade or level up with 50% of its population, being made fun of, harassed, inundated with sexual remarks and treated with disrespect."

Delhi Commission for Women chairperson Swati Maliwal told *The*

*Pioneer*, "The advertise-

ment is disgusting. It angers me a lot. How can they get away with promoting toxic masculinity and rape



## Painful waxing? But not anymore

It's challenging to get rid of body hair. Removal of hair using the traditional method like waxing is painful, time-taking, and frequently results in redness and irritation on the skin, pain, temporary bumps, ingrown hairs, allergic reaction, bleeding, or a hefty bill.

While some women are proud of their body hair, others desire to be hairless. We go over everything from waxing to shaving to laser for smooth, flawless, hair-free skin.

Moreover, if you've tried everything and want to try something more natural, skin-friendly, and budget-friendly, then go for these home cures.

Shahnaz Husain, founder of the Shahnaz Husain Group in India shares some simple homemade hair removal masks for painless natural hair removal.

### Turmeric and Raw Papaya

Papaya includes papain, that inhibits hair growth, whereas turmeric contains antibacterial antioxidants, making it ideal for sensitive skin. Add two tablespoons of turmeric powder to a small amount of raw papaya to make a luscious pulp. Make a paste out of it and apply it all over your face

and body. Allow 15-20 minutes for it to dry before washing it. Apply this once or twice a week for a period of two to three months.

### Potato and Lentils

Potatoes have high starch content and act as a bleaching agent. This aids in the whitening of your hair and the slowing of hair growth. When combined with lentils, this mask aids in the removal of unwanted hair with no negative side effects. In a cup of water, soak a cup of lentils or moong dal overnight. Grind it to a paste the next morning. Pick a whole potato, grate it, and then squeeze the liquid out using a spoon or a piece of clean nylon cloth. Combine the juice with the lentils, along with a spoonful of honey and lemon squeeze. Allow 20 minutes for this combination to sit on your body and face.

### Corn-flour and Milk

When you apply corn-flour with milk to your skin, it instantly adheres to the hair follicles and holds them in place. When you remove the mask, all of the soft hair is pulled away. Keep in mind that this mixture may not be suitable for persons with coarse hair. To make a paste, combine half a cup of corn-flour with one small cup of

milk. Apply the paste to the entire area where you want to get rid of the hair. Allow for 20 minutes of drying time or until it is entirely dry. Remove it and pat it dry.

### Gram flour

Gram flour is one of the most effective natural cleansers for removing pollutants and unwanted hair from the face and body. Combine half a cup of gram flour with any carrier oil, such as sesame seed or olive oil, to make a paste. Mix in the curd and apply to the region where you want to get rid of the hair. Leave it for 15-20 minutes, or until it is completely dry. Now, gently massage your skin with water before washing it off.

### Alum Powder and Rosewater

Alum eliminates unwanted hair, moisturises, tones, and gives your skin a natural glow, while rose water hydrates, tones, and gives your skin a natural glow. This potent combination proves to be the ideal way to remove unwanted body hair. Use half a spoon of powdered alum and three teaspoons of rose water paste and apply on your skin. Leave it on for 45-60 minutes before rinsing it off with cool water. Don't forget to use a moisturiser or coconut oil.

### Banana and Oatmeal

Banana softens your skin while oatmeal acts as a gentle body scrubber. This not only removes all undesirable hair but also inhibits future development. Combine two teaspoons of oats with one mashed banana. Apply the mixture to the affected areas and massage gently in the opposite direction of your hair growth. Leave it for a 20-minute recovery period. After rinsing with cold water, pat the dry residue

### Oil Massage

Castor oil, coconut oil, mustard oil, tea tree oil, sesame oil, or olive oil massages can truly help reduce hair growth. When you get a hot oil massage on a frequent basis, the friction on your skin causes your hair to thin and lighten. Over time, regular massage can actually assist in sealing off the hair roots. As a result, you get a calming and rejuvenating experience in addition to reduced hair growth.

Natural home treatments don't give instant results. It will take a few months before you notice a difference. Before applying the paste to your entire arm or leg, do a patch test on a small section of your hand. After you've finished, make sure to thoroughly cleanse your skin and apply a moisturisers.





# INDIA CHOKES SL, TAKE 1-0 LEAD

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

The Indian bowlers choked the Sri Lankan women's team after Jemimah Rodrigues's vital knock on return to secure a convincing 34-run victory in the first T20 International here on Thursday.

Defending a modest 139, left-arm spinner Radha Yadav (2/22) made her presence felt right after the powerplay by dismissing the dangerous-looking Sri Lankan captain Chamari Athapaththu (16) and Harshitha Madavi (10) in three balls.

Reduced to 27 for three inside seven overs, Sri Lanka never managed to get going in the run chase, which was further derailed by some tight bowling by seamer Deepti Pooja Vastrakar in the middle overs en route to a tidy spell of 4-1-13-1.

Deepti Sharma gave India a flying start, dismissing opener Vishmi Gunaratne (0) in the second over. The senior off-spinner was at her miserly best in the powerplay and returned with figures of 3-1-9-1 to stymie the Sri Lanka's progress early on.

Deepti also took a stunning catch running in from deep square leg to give Radha her second wicket of the day.

Kavisha Dilhari waged a lone battle for the hosts with a fighting 49-ball 47 (6x4), but the Indians' top-class bowling and fielding ensured their team emerged easy winners for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The hosts needed 78 runs in the last five overs and Kavisha got going with a flurry of boundaries against Harmanpreet Kaur and Radha.

But it proved insufficient as the Indians choked the home team's run rate while denying the Islanders any six in their innings.

Shafali Varma compounded Sri Lanka's misery by dismissing Ama Kanchana (11) in the death overs to leave them tottering at 104 for five.



The second match of the series is slated for Saturday.

Opting to bat, India lost opener Smriti Mandhana (1) in the third over of the game, the 25-year-old becoming the victim of veteran spinner Oshadi Ranasinghe while looking to free her arms. She hit a tossed-up delivery straight to Chamari Athapaththu at mid-on.

Sabbhineni Meghana was out for a golden duck, sent back to the dressing room by old warhorse Ranasinghe.

Losing two wickets early and under pres-

sure in the hot and humid Dambulla, it was left to the duo of Harmanpreet and Shafali Verma to take control of the situation.

A well-settled Verma was the next to go, dismissed by Athapaththu on 31 while trying to go for a maximum.

Smart bowling by the Lankans ensured that they soon got their biggest breakthrough when Harmanpreet (22) was trapped in front of the wicket by spinner Inoka Ranaweera in the 11th over.

Ranaweera picked two more wickets to send back wicketkeeper batter Richa Ghosh

(11) and Pooja Vastrakar (14) to reduce the visitors to 106 for six in 17 overs and leave Jemimah with the task of giving the Indian total a semblance of respectability.

Coming in at five, Rodrigues, who made her comeback to the side after a while, did not succumb to the pressure and scored some crucial runs, hitting three fours and a six, with Deepti Sharma playing the second fiddle with a 17 off 8 balls.

## Blessed to have spoken to Rohit & Pant after being dropped: Jemimah

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Words of encouragement from Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant lifted Jemimah Rodrigues' spirit while she tackled a difficult phase and worked on her comeback, which began right after being dropped from the Indian women's team.

The chirpy cricketer feels she is blessed to have spoken to the likes of Rohit and Pant.

Jemimah, who was not part of India's World Cup squad in New Zealand, marked her return to international cricket with a vital 27-ball 36 not out to give India enough runs to defend in the first T20 International here on Thursday.

"My journey since the last Sri Lanka tour has not been smooth, it had its ups and downs. I have spoken to Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant, they told me these moments will define your career, they told me not to take it (being dropped from the squad before the World Cup) in a negative way," Jemimah said at the post-match press conference.

"They told me I should take up the challenge and move ahead. I am blessed to have spoken to them."

Coming in at number five, Rodrigues did not succumb to the pressure created by the Sri Lankan bowlers and scored some crucial runs, hitting three fours and a six. India posted 138 for 6 and the visiting bowlers choked the Sri Lankans to secure a convincing 34-run victory.



"I have understood my game better in the four-five months, I have become calmer, I have changed though my height remains the same," said Jemimah. "I started preparing right after I was dropped."

Coming into the middle at a crucial juncture of the innings, Jemimah said she was nervous to start with.

"This innings means a lot, I was nervous initially but the late cut boundary helped me a lot in easing things up. I am back in the side after 4-5 months or maybe more than that. I was pumped up."

Asked about the pitch, she said, "I don't know, it is more like the pitch where I stay in Mumbai. The pitches are similar, so I am used to playing in these conditions. I love this country, it is a very beautiful country. It is a privilege to come here and the love we are getting from the board is great."

# Bharat impresses, top-order fails in warm-up match against Leicestershire

PTI ■ LEICESTER

Wicketkeeper Srikanth Bharat impressed with an unbeaten 70, even as India's top-order failed to get batting practice on the first day of their warm-up match against Leicestershire here on Thursday.

Opting to bat after winning the toss, India's top guns failed to fire as the visitors slipped to 81 for five, before reaching 246 for eight at the close of play.

Bharat shone during his 158-minute stay in the middle before rain brought an early end to the day's proceedings at Grace Road.

In all, the 28-year-old batter from Andhra hit eight fours and a six while facing 111 balls. At stumps, Mohammed Shami was giving Bharat company on 18.

Skipper Rohit Sharma (25) and Shubman Gill (21) got out after getting starts. The opening duo, which is set to begin India's innings in the one-off 'fifth Test', added 35 runs for the first wicket before the latter was dismissed by fast-medium bowler Will Davis.



India's first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, who was representing the English county side alongside Cheteshwar Pujara, Jasprit Bumrah and Prasidh Krishna, held on to the catch of Gill, who found the fence four times while lasting 38 minutes.

For the addition of another 15 runs, India lost the wicket of Rohit, who hit three fours during his 64-minute stay in the middle.

Rohit's departure paved the way for Virat Kohli's arrival, and the former India captain looked to take the onus upon himself to prop up India.

In between, Hanuma Vihari (3) came on to bat at number three but departed cheaply off the bowling of Roman Walker.

Shreyas Iyer failed to open his account and walked back to the dressing room after facing 11 balls, having nicked Prasidh to the waiting hands of Pant.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja too failed to make an impact as he was adjudged lbw off the bowling of Roman Walker, who finished the day with impressive figures of 5/24.

is playing a warm-up match.

The Indian team had left for the UK on June 16.

"Yes, Ashwin has joined the team but he is still recovering. He is not fit to play the warm-up game," a source said.

The team management is hopeful that he will recover in time for the Test against England, which starts on July 1.

After the IPL, Ashwin had played a Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) league red-ball match where he had bowled 20 overs to get some long-form game time.

# Broad leaves Kiwis struggling in 3rd Test

AP ■ LEEDS

England's Stuart Broad was closing in on 550 Test wickets after striking in the first over of the match and then removing New Zealand captain Kane Williamson on the opening day of the series finale at Headingley on Thursday.

New Zealand, already 2-0 down in a three-match series, were 65 for three at lunch after winning the toss under blue skies and on a seemingly good pitch for batting in Leeds.

England were looking to make it three wins out of three under their new leadership duo of captain Ben Stokes and red-ball coach Brendon McCullum, a former New Zealand skipper.

They were without James Anderson, their all-time leading Test wicket-taker, because of an ankle injury.

But any disappointment at Anderson's absence was soon eased when his longtime new-ball partner Broad removed Tom Latham for a sixth-ball duck after he edged a delivery straight to Joe Root at first slip.

New Zealand were none for one at that stage, but Will Young and Williamson, back in action after missing the second Test in Nottingham with a bout of coronavirus, repaired some of the early damage.

Williamson, on a ground where he had played for Yorkshire, smashed Broad for four and Young cut a boundary off Test debutant Jamie



Overton, with the Surrey quick preferred to twin brother Craig as the replacement for Anderson.

Spin, however, ended a promising partnership, when left-arm Jack Leach struck with his first ball, turning and straightened a delivery past Young's bat to have the opener lbw for 20.

Young reviewed, more in hope than expectation, with replays indicating the ball would have hit the middle of middle stump and New Zealand were 35 for two inside 13 overs.

Broad then captured the key wicket of Williamson, whose fluent 31 had included five fours, when the star batsman edged a fine leg-cutter to wicketkeeper Ben Foakes as the seamer took his 548th Test wicket.

Williamson, in a rare show of emotion, ripped off his glove in disgust.

New Zealand almost lost a fourth wicket before lunch when left-hander Devon Conway, on 11, inside-edged Broad, only for Foakes to drop a difficult one-handed chance as he dived to his right.

## Maxwell earns Test recall



AP ■ COLOMBO

Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has been added to the Test squad in Sri Lanka following a spate of injuries in the camp. The development comes after Travis Head was ruled out of the fifth ODI with a hamstring injury, with white-ball captain Aaron Finch "not sure" about how the batter will hold up for the upcoming Test series.

Head sustained a low-grade hamstring injury while fielding in the fourth ODI of the series. "It's a bit more of a precaution, especially with where he fields," Aaron Finch said in the presser ahead of the final ODI. "He fields in the outfield and the ground is quite heavy and he does a lot of Ks... I'm not sure what he'll be like for the Tests but he's definitely not available for tomorrow."

Maxwell last played a Test five years ago, against Bangladesh in Chattogram, and could make a return to the XI at Galle, especially given the side injury to Ashton Agar. Maxwell, though, will have to fight off challenges from Mitch Marsh and Josh Inglis to replace Head at No. 5, should the latter not get fit in time.

# Sarfaraz's 134 propels Mumbai to 374, MP finish day 2 at 123/1

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Sarfaraz Khan completed his transformation from Mumbai cricket's resident 'enfant terrible' to 'Man Friday' with a superb hundred that kept his side ahead against Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy final, here on Thursday.

Courtesy Sarfaraz's fourth hundred of the season - 134 off 243 balls - the 41-time champions managed a fighting 374 in their first innings after beginning the day at 248 for five.

But Madhya Pradesh won't be too unhappy as they finished the second day at 123 for one with Yash Dubey (44 batting) and Shubham Sharma (41 batting) adding 76 runs for the unbroken second wicket.

The day belonged to none other than Sarfaraz, who has now scored an astounding 937 runs in Ranji Trophy in just six games and could make it 1000 for the season if Mumbai bat again in this match.

His innings had 13 boundaries and two huge sixes - one over square leg off left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya and one down the ground off off-spinner Saransh Jain.



But what stood out was how he managed the innings after Shams Mulani was trapped leg before by Gourav Yadav (4/106) in the opening over of the second day.

His batting with the tail showed his new-found maturity, which is proving to be a boon for Mumbai cricket. He chose loose deliveries for boundary, forcing MP captain Aditya Shrivastava to open the field.

The manner in which Sarfaraz has turned a corner since the 2019-20 season (928 runs back then) is phenomenal as he had disciplinary issues early in his career, which also forced him to leave Mumbai for a season.

With father Naushad Khan, who also doubles up as his coach, making him play 400 balls (nearly 67 overs including nets and knocking) a day at practice, Sarfaraz 2.0 is a battle-hardened man, the 'khadoos street fighter' that any captain would want to go to a war with.

Once he reached his fifty, he touched the lion's crest on his jersey, gesturing 'Don't worry, I am going nowhere'.

His batting isn't as pleasing to the eye as Prithvi Shaw's but highly effective. His batting is assuring. He knows how to score those runs on a track that is large-

ly two-paced and in overcast conditions with the ball doing a fair bit.

When MP skipper spread the field to stop boundaries, he still found his way to play the controlled square cut off seamer Anubhav Agarwal, which bisected the two fielders stationed at deep extra cover and deep point to the fence.

The Indian Test team's middle-order is still jam-packed but the manner in which Sarfaraz is batting, to put it in head coach Rahul Dravid's words, he is not just knocking but banging the selection door down.

Sarfaraz was involved in four small, but very effective, partnerships which could prove to be decisive if the match turns out to be an affair of one innings.

He added 40 for seventh wicket with Tanush Kotian (15), 26 for the eighth wicket with Dhawal Kulkarni (1), 39 for the ninth with Tushar Deshpande (6) and another 21 priceless runs for the final wicket with Mohit Avasthi (7).

By the time, he became Mumbai's last batter to be dismissed, he had ensured that the total is good enough for his bowlers to defend.

## Ton for dad & celebration for late Sidhu Moosewala: Sarfaraz

PTI ■ BENGALURU

"This hundred is because of my abbu (father), his sacrifices and holding my hand when I could have been down and out," a teary-eyed Sarfaraz Khan choked in front of scribes while dedicating his best century to father and coach Naushad Khan.

Those who follow Mumbai cricket closely know how tough Naushad is on his sons Sarfaraz and Mushir (also in Mumbai squad), who don't have a life beyond cricket.

So is the dream India call-up on the cards now? His eyes welled up while answering the question after his century lifted Mumbai to 374 against Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy final here.

"In our lives, it's about all those little dreams that we harbour. The dreams that we (he and his dad) have dreamt together. The nearly 2000 runs that I have scored in two seasons since my 'abbu' came back is because of my 'abbu'," he said.

When there aren't any matches, the brothers train for good six to seven hours per day under their father's supervision.

He has had disciplinary issues, has not been the establishment's favourite child, and had to migrate to UP for a

season before coming back and serving a cooling-off period before being picked for Mumbai again.

"Aap sab toh jaante ho mere saath kya kya huwa. Abbu na rahte toh main khatm ho jataa (You all know what I have gone through and had my father not been there, I would have been finished by now)."

"There has been so much of struggle and when I think how my dad dealt with all of it, I get emotional. He didn't leave my hand even once. My brother put up a status on his cell phone and I could see Abbu so happy. It made my day," he could finally manage a smile.

### A FAN OF MOOSEWALA

Asked if his thigh thump celebration was imitation of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, who was recently gunned down by a gang, he said that was the idea.

"This was for Sidhu Moosewala. I love his songs and mostly me and Hardik Tamore (keeper) listen to his songs. I did a similar kind of celebration during an earlier match also (in his memory), but then, Hotstar didn't show it. I had decided once I score another hundred, I would repeat the celebration," the burly Mumbaikar said.



# 'Nobody is going to watch my movie just because my name is MS Raju'

PNS | HYDERABAD

**7** Days 6 Nights is slated to hit the cinema today. The rom-com stars Sumanth Ashwin, Meher Chahal, Rohan and Krithika Shetty in lead roles. In this interview, MS Raju talks about the nature of the film, why he thinks its collections are going to skyrocket gradually, what is to be expected from him, and more.

"I watch not only new films but also old ones, which tend to have strong characters. While great films are being made even in this day and age, old films had a certain uniqueness. After *Dirty Hari*, I happened to catch Raj Kapoor's Hindi film *Barsaat*. In that film, Raj Kapoor is in a state of low-key depression. Even a psychiatrist can't figure him out. He is sort of whimsical. His friend is fun-loving. I was inspired by that film to write *7 Days 6 Nights*," he told.

According to the expert, any film should have a conflict plot point or the protagonist needs to be determined to do something. His experience over the years and thinking drew him to writing a story like this. He is expecting the film to grow from strength to strength at the box office as days pass.

Adding to that, "While writing the movie, I headed to Goa all alone in my four-wheeler. I kept on wandering for 4-5 days although it was strenuous and my age didn't permit the physical stress. It was fun traveling with people of different social backgrounds and age groups. Passion is what drew me to do that."

For the audience to want to see his movies, they have to be convinced that the content is strong. "Nobody is going to watch my movie just because my name is associated with it. My previous directorial would have been a sure-shot hit had it been released in theatres. I had read so many books while writing that film. I had to keep myself updated. I get along with my son's friends. I like to notice how today's youngsters behave and talk," he added.

The nature of the story of changes at the interval point. A good twist can make wonders to a film. We have seen larger-than-life heroes and villains in countless numbers of movies. The upcoming movie is a natural, believable movie and it is

going to attract the family audience, too, after a positive word of mouth emerges.

He says, "I am confident but not over-confident. To begin with, youngsters will head to theatres. Based on their feedback, the footfalls will grow from Saturday.

Going by the buzz in trade circles, my movie surely has got some craze.

Exhibitors are showing interest. I have worked with newcomers like Rohan and Meher. I have always afforded all artists, right from Mahesh Babu and Prabhas down to newcomers, the same amount of respect. Rohan has done strong situational comedy in the film. The emotional drive of the film is going to involve the audience fully. When I made *Okkadu* and *Varsham*, *Manasantha Nuvve* and *Nuvvostanante Nenoddantana*, I knew what I was doing."

He is mindful of the film's budget.

While the visual quality has to be maintained, he couldn't have gone overboard. He shot the movie in exotic locations and with aesthetic backdrops. The background score, too, is special.

His son was also present on the sets and, "My relationship with my son is professional when we are on set. He grew up

observing my work. *Tuneega Tuneega*, his first film, was a wrong move. Giants like Raj Kapoor and Rakesh Roshan have worked with their sons in Bollywood. They too must have been very professional."

Talking about his last directorial, he continued, "*Dirty Hari* had to be an adult film. After all, there was an element of an extra-marital affair in it. It was a bold move from me. But this one is youthful. There is a thin line of difference between vulgarity and peppy entertainment. Even in *Dirty Hari*, I didn't inject any element without a reason. There is no extra kissing scene. I am mindful that I have to make films for the changed audience's tastes. I can't be following the filmmaking sensibilities of the Subhash Ghai era.

These days, youngsters want to be independent and take their own decisions. The nature of the conversations between women and women has

undergone some change."

His next film is *Sathi*, which stars Sumanth Ashwin and Meher in the lead roles. It is a mystery thriller that tells the story of a husband and a wife. They come from a lower-middle-class family who live in a small town in Andhra Pradesh. When an incident takes place while they are on a pilgrimage, they make a strong decision. After *Sathi*, he will be doing a series of big films. He is planning a sequel to one of the movies he produced. It will be made on a huge scale and will be released in 14 languages.

**MS Raju's directorial 7 Days 6 Nights will be released today in theatres. The Pioneer catches up with the director who shares with us some details while making the film**



## Kamal Haasan's new gesture wins hearts

**W**hile his latest release *Vikram* continues to rule the box office, Kamal Haasan's recent gesture will win your hearts all over again. The Universal Hero, as he is fondly addressed by his fans, recently came across a video on social media that had a differently abled man singing *Pathala pathala* from *Vikram*.

The video, which is now viral, impressed the actor so much that he invited the man over to meet him. During the meeting, he expressed how much he loved his rendition of the track and his sense of music. The actor also

enrolled the man at AR Rahman's music school KM Music Conservatory to further enhance his skills.

A source further elaborates, "Kamal Haasan has a humongous fan following across the globe not just because he is a phenomenal actor but because he has built a bond with his fans over the years with gestures like these.

When he met the man he got to know that he wanted to become a music composer and that's when he immediately got him enrolled at the KM Music Conservatory. He promised to take care of the entire course fees as well."

## Pawan Kalyan launches Vishwak's next film



**A**shoka Vanamloo Arjuna Kalyanam actor Vishwak Sen's next movie, which is yet to be titled, was formally launched on Thursday in

Hyderabad's Ramanaidu studios.

Movie's director Arjun Sarja, Vishwak Sen, among others from the film fraternity, were present at the

muhurat ceremony but the main guest there was *Bheemla Nayak* actor Pawan Kalyan who launched the film.

After a four-year hiatus, Arjun Sarja, who is also veteran actor, last seen in Ravi Teja's *Khiladi*, is making his directorial debut in Telugu with this film.

Arjun Sarja's daughter Aishwarya Arjun is making her Tollywood debut with this film. Actor Jagapathi Babu will also have a lead role in the film.

The movie will be produced by Sree Raam Films International, while the music will be crooned by *KGF* fame Ravi Basur.

**A**ctor-choreographer-filmmaker Raghava Lawrence is presently starring in an action thriller under the direction of Kathiresan. Five Star Creations LLP is producing the movie, while Kathiresan is the presenter.

*Rudhrudu* is the title and the film's first look is out now. Raghava Lawrence appears



intense in the poster from a stunt sequence. As the poster suggests, the movie is going to be high on action.

Evil is not born, it is created is the tagline of the movie and Lawrence looks like an evil in the first look poster. Sarath Kumar is playing a vital role and Priya Bhavani Shankar is the leading lady opposite Lawrence.

GV Prakash Kumar provides music and cinematography is by RD Rajasekar ISC. Editing is by Anthiny, wherein stunts are by Siva - Vicky. The film is set to be released, this Christmas.

**Raghava Lawrence's action thriller releasing this Christmas**

## Tharun Bhascker, VG Sainma's film titled *Keedaa Cola*

**T**he highly talented Tharun Bhascker Dhaassayam directed two films so far and both *PelliChooopulu*, *Ee Nagarani Emaindi* were big hits. The director who is a specialist in making hilarious and youthful movies is coming up with a crime comedy this time.

It's very first feature



length production of VG Sainma. The makers in addition to announce the project have also unleashed its title. The movie has been titled intriguingly and peculiarly as *Keedaa Cola*.

*Keedaa* means a creature with six legs and

*Cola* is the name of a popular soft-drink brand. The poster sees cap of a soft drink bottle with title written on it. Indicating crime part, we can spot the blood. In the down part, we can also observe a creature. "Experience crime comedy like never before..." assures the makers.

Following the sentiment, the poster is painted yellow. It may be mentioned here that, *Pelli Chooopulu* and *Ee Nagarani* Posters were also designed in yellow colour.

Produced by Bharath Kumar, Sripad Nandiraj, Upendra Varma, Srinivas Kaushik, Saikrishna Gadwal, Vijay Kumar, the film will release in 2023.

**Ilaiyaraaja, Yuvan Shankar Raja join hands for Chay's next**



**Rashmika Mandanna turns vegan entrepreneur**

**R**ashmika Mandanna, who became a national sensation after starring in *Pushpa: The Rise*, has begun her entrepreneurial journey the vegan way.

Vegan beauty and personal care brand Plum on Thursday said that actor Rashmika Mandanna has come on board as an investor and brand ambassador. This comes at a time when the brand aims to double its annual recurring revenue (ARR) over the next 12 months, with Rashmika's pan-India presence and fan base.

In just a short span of 6 years, Rashmika has not only emerged as one of the most bankable actresses in the Indian film industry, but also an influential name

in the brand world, endorsing the top ones. With this, the actress has turned entrepreneur.

Apart from being a lucky mascot at the box office and one of the leading female stars of her generation,

Rashmika is fast emerging as a savvy businesswoman too. On the work front, Rashmika currently boasts of one of the strongest line-ups. She will be next seen in *Pushpa 2* alongside Allu Arjun, *Goodbye* opposite Amitabh Bachchan, *Animal* opposite Ranbir Kapoor, *Varisu* alongside Vijay Thalapaty and *Mission Majnu* with Sidharth Malhotra.

**A**fter the success of *Love Story* and *Bangarraju*, Naga Chaitanya has signed on to star in an intriguing film that will be directed by Venkat Prabhu. The film-makers shared a few

