

ANALYSIS 7
SUSTAINABILITY - ROAD TO
A BETTER FUTURE**MONEY 8**
EXPORTS UP 30.7 PC TO US\$ 40.19 BN IN
APR; TRADE DEFICIT WIDENS**SPORTS 11**
IT'S LIVERPOOL VS CHELSEA
IN FA CUP FINAL

VIJAYAWADA, SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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IMPORTANT TO
STRIKE A BALANCE
WITH SOCIAL
MEDIA EXPOSURE

Page 12

**LIFE INSURANCE CORP PRICES IPO AT
TOP END OF INDICATED RANGE**

Life Insurance Corp (LIC) has priced its initial public offering at the top of the indicated range, at 949 rupees (\$12.28), a source familiar with the matter said on Friday. The state-owned insurance behemoth is likely to be listed on stock exchanges on May 17. LIC did not immediately respond to an email request seeking comment. The source, not authorised to speak to the media, did not want to be identified. The price range for the issue had been set at between 902 and 949 rupees per share. LIC offered a discount to employees and retail investors of 45 rupees per share while policyholders were given a discount of 60 rupees per share.

**SCIENTISTS GROW PLANTS IN SOIL
FROM MOON FOR FIRST TIME**

Scientists have for the first time grown plants in lunar soil brought back to Earth by astronauts in the Apollo missions, a step towards producing food and oxygen on the Moon or during future space missions. The researchers at the University of Florida (UF) in the US showed that plants can successfully sprout and grow in lunar soil. Their study, published in the journal Communications Biology, also investigated how plants respond biologically to the Moon's soil, also known as lunar regolith, which is very different from soil found on Earth. This research comes as NASA's Artemis Program plans to return humans to the Moon.

**FOURTEEN PEOPLE KILLED IN NEPAL
ROAD ACCIDENT**

At least 14 people were killed and 10 others injured when a jeep carrying voters to a polling station veered off the road and fell 500 feet off a hilly road in Nepal on Friday. The accident occurred at Arkhalbas in the Syangja district. At least 14 passengers were killed and 10 others injured in the accident, police said. The jeep was carrying voters to a polling station. Local polls are being held across Nepal on Friday. Road accidents are very common in Nepal. The country is mostly covered with mountains and most roads are narrow. Bus accidents in the country are generally blamed on poor roads.

**LANKA'S NEW PM WICKREMESINGHE
ASSUMES DUTIES**

Ranil Wickremesinghe assumed office as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka for the sixth time on Friday even as Oppn parties SJP and JVP announced that they will not extend any support to him as his appointment has been made with "zero regard" to the voice of the people. The 73-year-old United National Party (UNP) leader took over as Sri Lanka's 26th prime minister on Thursday as the country was without a government since Monday when President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's elder brother and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned after violence erupted following an attack on the anti-government protesters by his supporters.

Govt files revision plea seeking cancellation of bail to Narayana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Advocate General Ponnnavolu Sudhakar Reddy on Friday filed a revision petition in a court in Chittoor seeking the cancellation of bail given to the former minister and founder of the Narayana Group of Institutions, P Narayana, on Friday.

In a midnight high drama, a court in Chittoor granted bail to Narayana in an SSC paper leak case in the early hours of Wednesday. He was arrested from his residence in Hyderabad on Tuesday morning and was brought to Chittoor by midnight to produce him before the fourth additional judicial first class magistrate court.

Magistrate BV Sulochana Rani agreed with the arguments put forth by counsel on behalf



Narayana, V R Ramakrishna, and M Chandrashekar that he has nothing to do with the day-to-day activities of the Narayana Educational Institutions and that he had resigned as its chairman long ago and granted bail to him.

Challenging the Wednesday

**Narayana was arrested
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order, the State government had filed the bail cancellation petition in the higher court on Friday. Government counsel argued that the Chittoor police had collected the technical evidence that establishes the role of Narayana in the question paper leak and sought bail cancellation.

Court had issued notices to Narayana and posted the case for hearing on May 24.

Following a complaint from Chittoor DEO on April 27, police registered a case in connection with the tenth class public exam question paper leak incident.

In the course of the investigation, Chittoor district SP Y Rishant Reddy had said that they found technical evidence to establish the role of Narayana in leaking the question paper.

The police have, so far, arrested around 69 people, including 45 teachers of whom 36 are from government schools, in connection with the paper leak. Cases have been registered under the AP Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractices and Unfair Means) Act, 1997.

Govt to procure 172 drones for land resurvey

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Members of a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Friday said that soon, the State government will procure 172 drones from the Survey of India and private agencies to conduct the comprehensive resurvey of revenue lands across the state.

Until now, the survey using drones has been completed in 2149 villages. The cabinet sub-committee on Friday reviewed the progress of the re-survey work with the officials.

The ministers said the government had received at least 9283 requests and objections and of the 8935 have been resolved. Around 18,487 stones have been used so far to demarcate the boundaries. Processing centres will be set up in all the 13 districts of the state for the smooth and seamless conduct of the resurvey.

They also said the comprehensive land re-survey will help to resolve if there are any land disputes. The vacant lands across the state will be surveyed in the best scientific manner.

CBI court permits Jagan to attend WEF meet in Davos

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Special Court for CBI cases in Hyderabad on Friday granted permission to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to visit Davos in Switzerland between May 19 and 31 to participate in the 52nd annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

During the hearing in the quid pro quo cases filed against him by CBI due to which he was barred from leaving the country, Jagan filed a petition seeking permission to visit Davos. While the CBI's counsel has opposed the petition stating Jagan may influence the witnesses in the case if he is allowed to travel abroad, the Chief Minister's counsel argued it is a State visit.

Agreeing with the argument of Jagan's counsel, the CBI court



issued orders permitting him to travel to Davos.

The high-level delegation led by Jaganmohan Reddy that will be participating in the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting at Davos in Switzerland will interact with over 35+ global companies, MNCs, high profile world leaders, and experts to hold targeted discussions on mutual

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avenues of collaboration, on areas such as sustainable manufacturing, logistics, financial and capital markets, FMCG and consumer goods, renewable energy, and technology services.

The delegation from Andhra Pradesh will participate in 13 bilateral meets across the thrust sectors and three dedicated state sessions to focus on industries, infrastructure, health, education, and skilling in the WEF event scheduled to be held from May 22 to 26.

SI shoots self dead

PNS ■ KAKINADA

A Sub-Inspector of police allegedly ended his life by shooting himself dead with his service revolver in his house located at Ramanayyapeta in the wee hours on Friday.

The deceased Muthavarapu Gopal Krishna (35) attached to the Sarpavaram police station in the Kakinada sub-division allegedly shot himself dead with his service revolver. However, the police said the exact reasons for his death are yet to be investigated and ascertained. It could not be confirmed whether it was a suicide or the revolver went off accidentally, police said.

The SI was about to leave



around 6 am Friday for Konaseema for the CM's duty. But around 5 am, he shot himself dead while his wife and two children were asleep. Additional Superintendent of Police P Srinivas said that the reasons for his extreme step were yet to be ascertained.

2

TTD restricts VIP break darshan to only protocol

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) EO AV Dharma Reddy has said that the TTD has restricted the VIP break darshan to only protocol from April 15 to July 15 on weekends Friday-Saturday-Sunday to enable Srivari Darshan to a larger number of common devotees.

The EO here on Friday said that important religious events are lined up in the coming days. He said all arrangements were made at Tirumala to ensure no inconvenience to devotees coming for Srivari Darshan. He said that steps were taken to provide buttermilk, drinking water, snacks and medical services to those who stand in queue lines and wait in the compartments. He said sun shades, cool shamianas, cool paints and carpets were erected on Mada streets.

2

MK Meena appointed CEO of AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission of India on Friday issued orders appointing 1998 batch IAS officer Mukesh Kumar Meena as the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh.

The ECI had appointed Meena as CEO after consulting the state government. Currently, Meena is the commercial taxes department secretary. He will now be relieved from all the State government duties.



Chicken turns pricey in AP as production dips

C PRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

After a lull in the past few months, chicken prices have again started rising in the State. Presently priced at Rs 315 per kg, chicken has gone off the menu of the common man. In the past 10 days, the price of chicken went up by Rs 75. Broiler chicken prices set a record and crossed the Rs 300-mark.

The sudden decline in production has resulted in the price shooting up, according to poultry farm owners. Currently, chicken prices across the State are rising due to the shortfall in production as per the consumer demand.

Breeding chicken takes a long time during the summer season due to heat. In summer, for a chicken to gain weight and be market-ready it takes more days compared to other seasons. Besides, the prices of corn, oil-free soybeans, and bran, which are used as fodder for chickens, have also gone up sharply this year.

At one stage, the price of skin-



less chicken went down by Rs 80 per kg. However, after the second wave of Covid, the price of chicken continued to rise. At one stage, it reached an all-time record of Rs 280 per kg and later surpassed and touched Rs 315. However, at the beginning of the year, the price of chicken remained below the Rs 200-mark per kg. While the price continued to be stable at Rs 215 in January, it rose to Rs 280 by March

1. But since May 1, the price of a kilo of skinless chicken rose from Rs 230 to Rs 315 on May 13.

According to the poultry farm owners in the Krishna district, the price of chicken might go up further till the rainy season arrives. The rise in poultry feed has led to an increase in the cost of production. The transportation of broiler birds has also become quite expensive, and the death of the birds dur-

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ing the transportation is also high. While demand for poultry meat is high, the breeding and transportation of birds have become challenging.

In Vijayawada, chicken shops stopped displaying price boards to ensure that the customers are not shocked. Instead, they are offering discounts ranging from Rs 20 to Rs 40 per kg.

AP gets all-time high NABARD loans of Rs 39,708 cr in 2021-22

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

National Bank For Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has disbursed loans to the tune of Rs 39,708 crore in Andhra Pradesh in Financial Year (FY) 2021-22 which was an all-time high as compared to Rs 32,844 crore in the previous year with a growth of 21 pc. NABARD also disbursed grants to the tune of Rs 35.05 crore to various NGOs, banks, institutions, and other agencies for undertaking development and promotional activities in Andhra Pradesh.

Term loan of Rs 295 crore was released to the Government of Andhra Pradesh towards the reimbursement of their share capital contribution of Rs 100 crore to Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank Ltd. (APSCB) and Rs 195

crore to 9 DCCBs - Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa, Kurnool and Anantapur.

This will help increase the maximum borrowing power of the fCo-operative Credit Institutions (CCIs) thereby enabling these Banks to expand their rural credit activities, said NABARD's Andhra Pradesh office.

NABARD extended Rs 26,282.91 crore as refinancing to the banks for short-term and long-term activities in farm and non-farm sectors. This includes the Special Liquidity support of Rs 2,700 crore provided to Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Rural Cooperative Banks (RCBs) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2

TODAY

ALMANAC


Month & Paksham:
Tithi: Trayodashi: May 13 05:27 PM
to May 14 03:23 PM
Chaturdash: May 14 03:23 PM
to May 15 12:46 PM

Nakshatram:
Chitra: May 13 06:48 PM
to May 14 05:28 PM
Swati: May 14 05:28 PM
to May 15 03:35 PM

Rahukalam: 9:00 AM to 10:36 AM
Yamagandam: 1:48 PM to 3:24 PM
Varjyam: 10:37 PM to 12:06 AM
Gulika: 5:48 AM to 7:24 AM
Amritakalam: 11:25 AM to 12:56 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM
to 12:38 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Thunderstorm
Temp: 32°
Humidity: 55%
Sunrise: 5:43 AM
Sunset: 6:31 PM
Updated: MAY 13, 2022 5:00 PM





The Yatra that busted a fake narrative!

The month-long second leg of the Praja Sangrama Yatra, culminating in a public meeting to be addressed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Tukkuguda in Rangareddy district on Saturday, will be remembered as a milestone in the political history of Telangana for many reasons. Spearheaded by BJP Telangana unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar, the Yatra shook the TRS establishment to its core, by exposing the 'Bangaru Telangana' (Golden Telangana) narrative craftily created and nurtured by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and his son KT Rama Rao.

The first and foremost fact that came to the fore is the gross negligence of the TRS government in developing Palamuru.

Contrary to the claims of the father-son duo that their reign had transformed this once dry area into lush green

fields, everyone could see busloads of migrant workers heading to Mumbai on a daily basis streamed live during the Yatra.

This migration in search of livelihood opportunities is due to the lack of development in this region. People of this region migrate not just to Mumbai and Pune but also Kurnool and other cities in Andhra Pradesh for educational and medical needs, exposing the utter lack of progress and apathy shown over the last eight years by this government towards health and education services in the state.

The success of public meetings held at Alampur, Gadwal, Makthal, Narayanpet and Mahabubnagar gave a tremendous boost to BJP cadre.

Electrifying speeches of leaders like BJP national president JP Nadda, charged up leaders and cadre to work for

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capturing power in the coming elections.

An innovative programme, christened 'Praja gosa-BJP bharosa', conducted as part of the Yatra, became a huge hit. Undoubtedly, a double-engine sarkar is the need of the hour.

In the first week itself, the Yatra scored major points against the government. By then, KCR was forced by the BJP to promise to procure paddy from farmers.

His attempts to project the Central government as a villain boomeranged and his 2-

hour sit-in at New Delhi proved to be a damp squib. The cold-shouldering by his so-called friends thoroughly exposed his bombastic claims to rally the entire opposition as a front against the BJP at the national level.

TRS working president and IT Minister KTR released an open letter to Sanjay with a bundle of lies. KTR alleged that the Centre was biased against Telangana. The issues raised by the BJP leaders debunked the government's claim to have achieved 'Bangaru Telangana'.



KISHORE POREDDY

Sanjay's letter to the Chief Minister highlighting the government's failure in waiving loans of farmers met with no response.

His demand for an all-party meeting to discuss issues faced by the farming community also fell on deaf ears.

The second week of the Yatra saw an awesome public response to the issues

raised by the BJP leaders on 'family rule', corruption, lack of healthcare, non-availability of water, power supply problems and so on.

Having sensed the mood of the public, KCR held confabulations with election strategist Prashant Kishor in Pragati Bhavan.

During the third week of the Yatra, TRS held a plenary to mark its 21st Foundation Day without a single mention of their beloved phrase 'Bangaru Telangana'. A pack of lies were presented in the form of resolutions at the plenary.

KCR made incoherent remarks during his presidential speech. On the one hand, he said that the awards received from the Union Government remained proof of the wonderful performance of the State government, and on the other hand, he alleged that the Modi government was working against the interests of the

State.

The Chief Minister did not feel shy to claim credit for the top 10 villages selected across the country under the Sansad Adarsh Grameen Yojana (SAGY).

'All top ten villages belong to Telangana,' he announced amidst applause from his cadre, hiding the fact that most of the best performing villages under the scheme come under the constituencies represented by the BJP MPs!

While the Yatra was in full swing, a series of murders and suicides rocked Telangana, exposing the sad state of Law and Order in the state. A BJP leader, 24-year-old Sai Ganesh, was forced to take his life by consuming poison, unable to bear the harassment caused by the foisting of dozens of cases against him by the Khammam police, allegedly at the behest of TRS Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar. A

mother and son had committed suicide in Kamareddy, unable to bear the harassment of TRS leaders.

The daylight honour killing of a 25-year-old Dalit, Nagaraju, in full public view in Hyderabad by his Muslim wife's family members shocked everyone.

In all the cases, the response from the government was slow in coming for obvious reasons.

The Yatra, which covered five districts, three parliamentary constituencies and nine assembly segments along 372 kilometres, received more than 25,000 petitions indicating the level of frustration among the public. The public meeting to be addressed by Amit Shah will sound the death knell for the KCR government, which failed Telangana miserably on all fronts.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)



Rajnath invited to Brahmotsavams

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has been invited to the annual Brahmotsavams at Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in New Delhi on Friday. The

annual fete commenced on May 13 and will conclude on May 21.

LAC Chief V Prasanthi Reddy, members Sanjeeva Rao, Naga Satyam, and Sabita Reddy were also present.



Rs 1 crore donated for SV Annprasadam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TVS Company Chairman Sudarshan donated Rs 1 crore to SV Annprasadam Trust on Friday. He handed over the cheque for the same to TTD EO AV Dharma Reddy at Ranganayakula Mandapam.

Later, he was rendered Vedaseervachanam by pundits and presented with Theertha Prasadam.

Over 1 lakh download Disha app

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has introduced the Disha app to boost self-confidence and courage among the women across the State, Krishna District Collector P Ranjith Basha has said. The Collector, District SP Siddharth Kaushal and ZP Chairperson Uppala Harika were the chief guests at the Disha app mega registration drive organised under the Machilipatnam Sub-Division on Friday.

On the occasion, the Collector said that as a result of the drive, conducted with the coordination of the Police Department and other related departments, over one lakh people downloaded the app on Friday.

He said that everyone should know about the benefits of the Disha app and that both men and women should download it.



The app will be of help to everyone at some or the other point of time. The Disha app that was introduced by the State government has become a model to other States in the country.

He complimented the Police

Department for taking the app to the public and giving security to the women in the State.

SP Kaushal said that providing security and safety to the women was the top agenda of the Chief Minister.

The CM designed the Disha

law, which was the first one of its kind not only in the country, but in the world, to provide speedy justice to the victims.

He said that the government had launched Disha patrolling vehicles in all the districts and Disha teams with two-wheelers

in every Disha police station to ensure safety for women at workplaces and educational institutions.

The Disha police stations, which is a unique concept introduced by the government, are discharging their duties effectively. They respond faster than Dial 100, said SP Siddharth Kaushal.

ZP Chairperson Harika said that the main problem faced by the women in society as they were subject to sexual harassment and to address the issue, CM Jagan Mohan Reddy introduced Disha.

By downloading Disha on mobile phones, it is assured that the police are with them. She said that 61.70 lakh people have downloaded the Disha app across the State.

DSP Masoom Basha, DRO M Venkateswarulu, RDO I Kishore, Disha police station DSP Rajiv Kumar, ICDS PD S Swarna, and others were present.

Pubs, bars told to instal CCTV cameras with 30-day backup

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All bars, pubs, and restaurants must install CCTV cameras with 30-day backup, Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand told their owners at a meeting here on Friday.

The Commissioner held the meeting in the backdrop of the recent case at the Pudding and Mink pub where cocaine was found during a raid.

Addressing the owners of pubs and bars Anand said, "Hyderabad is now attracting investments from abroad and from other parts of India. So we expect you to run businesses in a responsible manner upholding the city's image which is getting damaged by a few who violate rules for petty gains. The 24-hour permission for star hotels to serve liquor was given to serve international travellers and is not meant for the local public."

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

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	385
HYDERABAD	385
VISAKHAPATNAM	410
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.85

TTD restricts VIP break...

Continued from Page 1

Dharma Reddy said temporary sheds are being erected at Narayanagiri Gardens and around Srivari temple for providing relief from the hot sun to the devotees. TTD has commenced online Srivari Darshan token booking for senior citizens, physically challenged, and persons with chronic diseases from April 24 onwards in specific time slots.



All eyes on Amit Shah's public meeting

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

All eyes are now on the BJP's May 14 public meeting at Tukkuguda in Maheshwaram in which Union Home Minister Amit Shah is participating as the people are eagerly waiting to know what Amit Shah has to say.

Amit Shah's meeting is taking place after former AICC chief Rahul Gandhi's meeting at Warangal during which Rahul gave many assurances to the people of Telangana.

In this context, the TS people are expecting more from Amit Shah. Moreover, the BJP wants to prove that it is the alternative to the ruling TRS. Given this backdrop, BJP cadres, leaders, and the people are eagerly waiting for Amit Shah's meeting.

Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy has made it

clear that Amit Shah is going to call on the people to end Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's corrupt, family rule at the public meeting being held to mark the conclusion of the second phase of the Praja Sangrama Yatra. Kishan said that the BJP is planning to organise Amit Shah's meeting on a grand scale.

Kishan and Huzurabad MLA Eatala Rajender have checked out the venue of the public meeting being held at Tukkuguda in Maheshwaram on May 14 in which Amit Shah is attending as the chief guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Kishan said that KCR has been forcibly imposing his family's rule on the people of Telangana. KCR is planning to keep the entire state in the hands of his Kalvakuntla family. But that will not happen, he said.

SI shoots self...

Continued from Page 1

The deceased SI was a native of Nawabpeta of Jaggaiahpet mandal in NTR district. According to the friends of the deceased, the deceased SI had been suffering from depression for the past one month.

The usual tensions in the Police department besides the family problems might have driven him to the extreme step, sources close to him said. He is survived by his wife, a three-and-half-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son.

Superintendent of Police Ravindranatha Babu, Special Branch DSP Ambika Prasad and Sarpavaram Station House Officer Akula Muralikrishna visited the house of the deceased SI and consoled the bereaved family.

AP gets all-time high NABARD...

Continued from Page 1

NABARD has also extended Direct Refinance Assistance of Rs 666 cr to the Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank for on-lending to the individual borrowers.

Under its Special Refinance Scheme aimed to enhance credit flow to certain areas viz., in watershed and 'Maa Thota' areas, promotion of WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) activities, and support for micro food processing units, NABARD has provided concessional refinance of Rs 381 crore to the eligible institutions.

NABARD has also sanctioned Rs 2765.89 crore under RIDF XXVII towards the construction of additional classrooms in 1,553 government high schools, construction of



three medical colleges-cum-hospitals, the establishment of five multi-specialty hospitals in ITDA areas, upgrade of four rural roads and two high-level bridges across Krishna River with the financial assistance of Rs 124.67 crore.

During the year, NABARD has also released Rs 1,650.52 crore towards ongoing RIDF projects. Besides, NABARD disbursed Rs 260 crore during

the FY 2021-22 aggregating Rs 668 cr to AP Road Development Corporation (APRDC) against the sanction of Rs 1158.53 cr for widening and strengthening of 233 rural roads.

NABARD, in its State Focus Paper, has assessed a credit potential of Rs 2.56 lakh crore for Andhra Pradesh under priority sectors for the year 2022-23 which is 10 pc growth.

Ex gratia of Rs 13 lakh given to kin of lady constable

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda police has provided an ex-gratia of Rs 13 lakh to the family of a police woman who died in the line of duty. Jyotsna, a lady constable, who worked at the Jawahar Nagar police station in the Rachakonda police Commissionerate, was critically injured in a road accident and died after being treated at a hospital for 38 days. As per the directions of Rachakonda CP, Additional DCP Admin Srinivasulu has handed over the cheques of Rs 8 lakhs of ex gratia and Rs 5 lakhs from welfare fund to the family members of deceased constable on Friday.

KCR keen on national party

No succumbing to Centre's pressure

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is determined to announce the launch of a national party, and, going by what sources shared with The Pioneer, no amount of pressure from the Centre will deter him.

KCR is preparing to pull off a feat done by TDP founder N T Rama Rao in the 1984 elections. TDP was the first regional party to become the main opposition party in the 8th Lok Sabha from 1984 to 1989.

Following Indira Gandhi's death, the 1984 General Election saw the Congress win a landslide victory, with the TDP winning 30 seats and accounting for 4.31% of votes, thus achieving the distinc-



tion of becoming the first regional party to become a national opposition party.

Sources said that when KCR mentioned that they would play a key role in national politics and set an agenda for the nation, he did not mean being PM alone.

KCR has been showing all traits of NTR - be it in handling Governor, or preferring farm house, or starting a regional party, among others. It would be no sur-

prise if he aspires to be the second regional party to become the main opposition.

Sources indicated that KCR's role in national politics was on the cards and that he would announce the details towards the far end of the year. No amount of pressure from the Centre would deter him from moving forward, sources asserted.

It may be mentioned here that the Centre has decided to stop the Fiscal and Responsibility Budget Management Loans (Act) (FRBM) limits for Telangana; thus preventing the state from going for open market borrowings. That is, it is not giving permissions to go for loans. This is directly going to impact all the welfare schemes, including flagship schemes like Rythu Bandhu, Dalit

Bandhu, Bhagiratha, loan waiver and 2BHK, among others.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, during the recent plenary, said: 'It is not about building a front against this party or that party. It will be a pro-people'. He added, 'Our fight is not to dislodge anyone from power or against any political party.' KCR had recently visited many states, including Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu.

It may be mentioned here that a fortnight ago, KCR, during the TRS plenary, dropped hints about Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi (BRS). KCR said that he had received suggestions from leaders to turn the TRS into BRS, in order to float an all-India party. Prior to that, he even said that there was space in national politics.

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‘YSR MATSYAKARA BHAROSA’ SCHEME

CM disburses Rs 109 cr to fishermen

PNS ■ MURUMALLA
(KONASEEMA DISTRICT)

For the fourth year in a row, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy disbursed Rs 108.75 crore into the accounts of 1,08,755 fishermen's families crediting Rs 10,000 each under 'YSR Matsyakara Bharosa' compensating the off-season ban on marine fishing here on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the programme was initiated to support the fishermen who were struggling for livelihood during the lean period from mid-April to mid-June. He stated that the government had spent Rs 419 crore in Matsyakara Bharosa benefitting thousands of families in the last 35 months.

Recalling the plight of fishermen during the TDP regime, he said that the previous government had compensated only 12178 families by paying Rs 2,000 to each during 2014-15. Ahead of the 2019 polls, the compensation was increased to Rs 4,000 and was given to 80,000 beneficiaries, he said, adding that 'Matsyakara Bharosa' was launched in 2019 increasing the financial assistance from Rs 4000 to Rs 10,000, and the State government had spent around Rs 419 crore on this scheme alone, while the previous government had spent only Rs 104 crore in their five-year rule.

In addition to this scheme, the Chief Minister also credited Rs 108 crore into the accounts of 23,458 fishermen families in 69 villages in Kakinada and Konaseema districts who lost their livelihood for four months due to ONGC pipeline drilling. He said that the previous government had abandoned 14,824 families who lost their livelihood for



seven months during GSPC pipeline works, whereas the current government stood by them and compensated with Rs 70 crore.

With the welfare of fishermen being the priority, the Chief Minister said the government had increased the fuel subsidy from Rs 6 to Rs 9 per litre which can be redeemed instantly at the recognised petrol bunks, and stated that smart cards have been provided to the fishermen for availing subsidy. In case of accidental death, the State government enhanced the ex gratia from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh to support the bereaved family in the hard times and so far 116 fishermen families have availed the assistance. Further, to create more opportunities for the fishermen

here in the State rather than going to other states in search of livelihood and risking their lives, the Chief Minister said that nine new fishing harbours and four fish landing centres are being established at a cost of Rs 4,000 crore. Under the Fish Andhra initiative, 76 aqua hubs, 14,000 retail outlets are being set up at a cost of Rs 333 crore.

Further, the Chief Minister said that YSRCP MLAs and public representatives have started going door-to-door to convey the welfare schemes, and the promises fulfilled by the government in the last 35 months. He said that the Opposition is unable to digest the good initiatives launched by the government and thus conspiring to defame and mis-

lead people. "If there is any health disorder we can treat it under Aarogya, but only God can treat those suffering from jealousy," the Chief Minister said adding that no one might witness such an Opposition leader who objects to arresting the culprits in question paper leaks and ESI scam.

He said that Chandrababu Naidu with 40 years of political experience only trusts his son and Jana Sena leader Pawan Kalyan rather than winning the people's trust. He opined that Naidu who couldn't build his own house in Kuppam for the last 27 years, is now rushing to build one seeing the good governance of YSRCP. Recalling the hurdles created by TDP leaders in the distribution of house sites, and implementing English Medium in schools, he said that these people can be called anti-nationals. "Although they have good eyesight, they couldn't see the good initiatives being implemented by the government and God must save us from them," he added.

Ministers Pinipe Viswaroop, Jogi Ramesh, Ch Venugopala Krishna, MPs Chinta Anuradha, Vanga Geetha, Subhash Chandra Bose and officials were present.

Fishing harbour to be constructed in Nizampatnam: Minister Merugu

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Minister for Social Welfare Merugu Nagarajuna has said that a fishing harbour will be constructed at a cost of Rs 370 crore in Nizampatnam. The government is committed to the welfare of fishermen's community, he added. A programme was held here on Friday to mark the disbursement of the 'YSR Matsyakara Bharosa' scheme benefit by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for the fourth consecutive year. A replica of the cheque was released by MLC Pothula Suneetha in the programme in which MP Mopidevi Venkata Ramana and Bapatla District Collector Vijaya Krishnan participated. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the Chief Minister introduced the YSR Matsyakara Bharosa scheme after a lot of study on the lifestyle of fishermen. "Plans were formulated for the construction of a fishing harbour in Nizampatnam in the district at a cost of Rs 370 crore. The government is extending financial assistance to help the fishermen during the ban on fishing in the sea. The Chief Minister is committed to the bright future of the fishermen community in the state", the minister asserted. The minister highlighted that diesel is being distributed at a discount to the fishermen, adding that various schemes are being implemented to ensure that the fishermen are safe and prosperous. He said Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was working to implement the social justice advocated by Dr. B R Ambedkar. Nagarajuna explained that the Chief Minister was implementing several schemes for the betterment of the poor, stating that the English medium was introduced to brighten the future of the poor students. Merugu Nagarajuna assured to strive for the development of newly created Bapatla district and welcomed the creation of Repalle revenue division. MP Mopidevi Venkata Ramana said that the government is taking steps to provide subsidies on fishing boats. He advised the poor to utilize the welfare schemes being implemented for them. MLC Pothula Suneetha assured the fishermen who solely depend on fishing in the sea of extending all needed help. The welfare schemes being implemented by the AP government have stood as exemplary to the country. Collector Vijaya Krishnan said that Rs 9.66 crore was disbursed to 9,666 fishermen under the YSR Matsyakara Bharosa scheme today. All steps were taken to resolve the problems of fishermen in the state, she said and assured to resolve technical issues in disbursing the benefit to the eligible beneficiaries. Joint Collector K Srinivasulu, fisheries officer P Suresh, AD Raghunatha Babu and other officials were among those who were present.



Six RuBs constructed in Vijayawada railway division

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In yet another landmark achievement, the Vijayawada division completed the construction of six Road under Bridges (RuBs) to eliminate six manned level crossings (LC) in the busiest Golden Quadrilateral rail route in the Vijayawada-Duvvada section. The Vijayawada division completed the construction of the six RuBs in a short span of time. These six manned LC gates will be closed once the approaching roads and drainage works are finished. The RuBs would enhance the operational safety and sectional speed of both passenger and goods trains in Vijayawada-Duvvada section and ease the traffic woes of daily commuters.

The RuBs are constructed between Gullipadu and Pithapuram, Hamsavaram and Tuni, Tunni and Gullipadu, Elamanchili and Narsingapalli, Narsipatnam and Regupalem, and between Tunni and Gullipadu.



Speaking on the occasion, U Akkireddy, Sr Divisional Engineer, North, said that advanced technology was adopted in the insertion of RCC boxes in stipulated traffic blocks of just four hours. He said that manned LC gates were being eliminated by giving emphasis to the safety of passengers.

Shivendra Mohan, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, and D Srinivas Rao, ADRM, Infrastructure, congratulated E Santharam, Sr DEN, Coordination, and U Akkireddy for accomplishing the task of inserting the RCC boxes in the critical Vijayawada-Duvvada route successfully.

Guv bids farewell to his ADC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan bid farewell to his military ADC Major Sahil Mahajan at a programme held in Durbar Hall in Raj Bhavan here on Friday.

Major Sahil Mahajan, who joined Andhra Pradesh Raj Bhavan as ADC to the Governor in August 2019, was relieved from his duties on May 13, after the completion of his tenure.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Harichandan said Major Sahil Mahajan was a meticulous officer who took care of not only every aspect of safety and security of the Governor, but went beyond the call of his duty, and that he was thoroughly satisfied with his services.

The Governor made a special mention of the services of Major Sahil Mahajan during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he used to bring to his notice whenever any officer or staff member of the Raj Bhavan was found positive and ensure that they were



given proper attention and treatment.

The Governor felicitated Major Sahil Mahajan with a shawl and memento and wished him greater success in his career.

RP Sisodia, Special Chief Secretary to Governor, BC Behera, PS to Governor,

Eswara Rao, ADC (police), D Sanyasi Rao, Deputy Secretary, and TV Narasimham, Liaison Officer, also spoke about the services of Major Sahil Mahajan and wished him success in his future endeavours. Officers and staff members of AP Raj Bhavan participated in the programme.

Mother epitome of sacrifice: Chaganti

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Noted spiritualist Chaganti Koteswara Rao has said that devotion was like a mother and those who were pious would always be happy. Chaganti Koteswara Rao was invited to speak at the two-day 'Devi Vaibhavam' programme organised by the Malladi Venkata Subba Rao Charitable Trust under the auspices of Malladi Venkata Subba Rao Foundation at Gantasala Music College on Friday. It was presided over by MLA Malladi Vishnu.

Endowments Minister Kottu Satyanarayana, District Collector S Dilli Rao, former Minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao, City Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, VMC Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar and Vijayawada East YSRCP in-charge Devineni Avinash were the chief guests at the programme.

Speaking on the occasion,

Chaganti Koteswara Rao commented that worshipping a goddess meant a devotion to goddess. There was no other word equivalent to the word Dharma. The mother always uplifted those who practised Dharma. With just a glance, the goddess would feed the world. Amma was the epitome of sacrifice and consolation. He said that those who respected their mothers would reach higher positions in life.

Minister Satyanarayana said Chaganti combined the essence of divine knowledge with the routines of everyday life and to touch the hearts of the people with simple words.

MLA Vishnu said that Chaganti had made heartfelt prophecies with his eloquence and received praise from celebrities and earned the honorary title of Brahmarshi.

Deputy Mayor A Sri Sailaja Reddy, B Durga, YSRCP corporators, party activists and others were present.

Red sanders smuggling: 2 held, 31 logs worth Rs 60L seized

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The sleuths of LB Nagar zone SOT, along with Malkajgiri police, busted an interstate red sanders smuggling racket and apprehended two persons. They seized 31 red sanders weighing about 1,500 kg, 3 mobile phones and cash Rs.16,000, total valued at Rs.60,18,600. The accused persons were identified as Shaik Mohammed (arrested), Mulla Basheer Ahmed (arrested) and Murthy(abscending).

Shaik Mohammed Rafi is native of Maddunur of Kadapa district in AP. Basically he is a banana fruit business man and has been transporting bananas from AP to various states.

The other accused Mulla Basheer Ahmed is resident of Sainikpuri and native of Kurnool district.

KLU student excels at major air rifle team event

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Maddineni Uma Mahesh, a first-year student from KLU won the gold medal at the World Cup Air Rifle Team event in Germany by scoring the highest number of points. According to a press release, the Indian team won the gold medal by beating Spain 16-08.

Uma Mahesh, who won the medal, was congratulated by the university management, Chancellor SS Mantha, Pro-Chancellor Dr. Jagannadha Rao, Vice-Chancellor Dr. Saradhi Varma, in-charge Registrar Dr. Jagadish student affairs Dean Dr. Hanumantrao, faculty and students.

5 two-wheelers torched over old rivalry

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada police arrested one person in connection with torching five two-wheelers in One Town on Wednesday night. The accused was identified as R Sai Kumar (28), a resident of Lambadipet, Chittinagar in Vijayawada.

On the complaint given by P Venkateswara Rao of Lambadipet, Chittinagar the Kothapet police registered a case on Thursday and formed four teams and started investigation led by West Zone DCP K Babu Rao and ACP Dr K Hanumantha Rao.



The police found that Sai Kumar and Venkateswara Rao held grudges that led to the torching of motorcycles. A few

days earlier, there was a heated argument between the two and Sai was waiting for the right time to take revenge against Venkateswara Rao.

On May 11, while returning home after watching a late-night movie, he found the two-wheeler of Venkateswara Rao in Chittinagar. He took the petrol from the Venkateswara Rao vehicle and set it on fire. The adjacent vehicles were also burnt in the process.

The police made it clear that old rivalry led to torching of the vehicles and there was no involvement of blade batch or ganja batch.

Kishan Reddy alleges protocol violation Says TS govt insulted him by not inviting for Buddhavanam inauguration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre spent Rs 22.24 crore on the Buddhavanam Project that is being inaugurated by KTR on May 14, Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy said.

He said the TRS government had him, the Union Tourism Minister, by not inviting him to the inauguration of the Buddhavanam Project.

Meanwhile, Kishan said in a Tweet, "The Buddhavanam Project being inaugurated by Telangana Ministers near

Nagarjunasagar in Nalgonda district on May 14 is funded by the Centre. The Centre had given Rs 22.24 crore for the project." Kishan extended best wishes in another Tweet, "My best wishes to the Buddhist community on the occasion and on the eve of Buddha Purnima."

He also posted an invitation card prepared by the Telangana Tourism Department.

The invitation card named Gutha Sukhender Reddy (Council Chairman), and Ministers Guntakandla Jagadish

Reddy and Dr V. Srinivas Goud as chief guests apart from KT Ramarao.

The card named Dr Palla Rajeshwar Reddy (TRS MLC), N. Uttam Kumar Reddy (Nalgonda MP), Banda Narendar Reddy (Nalgonda ZP Chairman), Mankena Koti Reddy (MLC), Nomula Bhagath (Nagarjuna Sagar MLA), Badugula Lingaiah Yadav (MP), and K. Anusha Reddy (Chairperson, Nandikonda Municipality) as special guests.

Buddhavanam Project

Special Officer Mallepally Laxmaiah will preside over the programme and TSITDC Chairman Uppala Srinivas Guptha would be the guest of honour.

District Collector Prashanth Jeevan Patil and TSITDC MD B. Manohar Rao would also attend the programme.

Meanwhile, in another development TRS Working President KT Ramarao has served legal notices on Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar for tweeting on May 11 that Intermediate students had died due to KTR.

IIFL HFL aims to disburse Rs 7,200 cr home loans by 2025 in AP & TS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

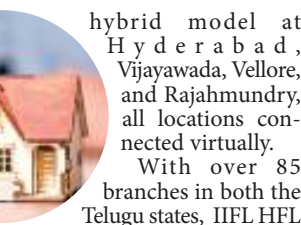
IIFL HFL, India's fastest growing digital first home finance company, has set a target to disburse Rs 7,200 cr home loans by 2025 in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. IIFL HFL has targeted to disburse over Rs 4,320 crore as home loans in Andhra Pradesh and

Rs 2,880 crore in Telangana. IIFL HFL, on Friday, organised the 9th chapter of its flagship event Kutumb; 'Andhra Pradesh & Telangana - Urgent need for Green Affordable Housing' which is the third event in collaboration with Asian Development Bank (ADB).

'Kutumb' is a knowledge

ecosystem conceptualized by IIFL Home Loan, to promote Green Affordable Housing in India, for a better understanding of green design, rating and financing options available.

The event took place in the



hybrid model at Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Vellore, and Rajahmundry, all locations connected virtually.

With over 85 branches in both the Telugu states, IIFL HFL has disbursed a total loan of over Rs 2,448 cr in the state of

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, till March 31, 2022 which is over Rs 1,491 cr in Telangana and over Rs 956 cr in Andhra Pradesh.

IIFL HFL intends to expand itself in tier 3 and 4 markets. The company has funded over 645 Beneficiary-led Construction (BLC) units with over Rs 12 cr loan disburse-

ment in Andhra Pradesh. BLC is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, to provide assistance of up to Rs 1.5 lakh per house to individual eligible families belonging to EWS categories to either construct a new house or enhance existing houses on their own.

IIFL HFL ED and CEO, Monu Ratna, said, "We at IIFL

Home Loan believe that we owe to affordable housing customers more, beyond just financial assistance, which is to provide them habitation which is sustainable and ecologically healthier. In continuation of the same endeavour we have 'Kutumb', a knowledge ecosystem which shall spark a sustainable housing revolution".



PD Act invoked against red sanders smuggler

PNS ■ KADAPA

The police have invoked Preventive Detention (PD) Act against notorious red sanders smuggler Athaullah Khan alias Akram.

SP KKN Anburajan said in a statement here on Friday that Athaullah Khan was involved in 11 red sander smuggling cases in the district. He is a native of Kattigenahalli village, Hoskote taluk, Bangalore in Karnataka state.

He had been resorting to red sander smuggling for the last four years and 11 cases had been registered against him. He was maintaining contacts with the international red sander smugglers in AP, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

He used to bring woodcutters from Tamil Nadu and fell red sander trees at Railway Koduru, Guvvala Cheruvu ghat, and Sundupalli forest areas and shift the logs to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states.

On the advice of SP KKN Anburajan, district Collector Vijayarama Raju issued orders to invoke PD Act against Athaullah Khan. The SP warned of stringent action against those who are involved in red sander smuggling.



'Debate, discuss & dissent but not destruction'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"India is built on the three 'Ds' of debate, discuss and dissent, but not destruction," Minister KT Rama Rao said here on Friday.

He was addressing mayors, chairmen, and councilors of municipalities on the government's 'Pattana Pragati' (progress of towns) programme.

"The worse thing in our country is the shouting and screaming at authorities. People have a misconception that if they are rude things will get done. If you insult officials it is like insulting yourself and your own government. Do not place cameras at meetings if you want meaningful discussions," KTR said.

KTR said that placing cameras at meetings would not be good as the authorities will get discouraged due to the fact that even minor mistakes made at meetings can go viral on social media. "Development cannot take place overnight. We will work according to our agenda. It is not right to shout at others," he said.

KTR said that Municipal Council meetings should proceed in a systematic, planned manner.

He said all municipalities should achieve their targets, including preparing new master plans, digital door numbering, constructing model markets, and providing piped water to every household by the end of this financial year.

"Before the end of March 31, 2023, every municipality should definitely have a new master plan," he said, addressing the meeting of municipal chairpersons, mayors and commissioners.

KTR directed all municipalities in the state to put in place digital door numbering, modern 'dhobi ghats', faecal sludge treatment plants, integrated vegetarian and non-vegetarian markets, and to provide piped water connection to all households.

Collector's call to put an end to sex determination tests

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the officials to take steps to curb sex determination tests and conduct raids on the scanning centres. A review meeting was held on the PC and PNDT Act implementation in the district Collector's office with the officials here on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion the Collector said that conducting sex determination tests is offence. He directed the officials to conduct raids against the sex determination centres in a big way to check the illegal scanning. On the occasion, Prasanna Venkatesh said that it was a crime to conduct foetal sex determination tests, and directed the authorities to increase vigilance to prevent them and conduct raids. In addition, a large-scale awareness campaign is needed to be organised, he told them.

The mother and child tracking details could be obtained from the child welfare department, he said, adding that in



coordination with the ICDS officials on maternal and child health care, awareness programs should be conducted at the Anganwadi Centres with medical health education instructors.

If it is found that someone has been guilty of gender testing cases, cases should be registered against those whoever they are. "The inspection team will get full cooperation from the revenue department. If there is any evidence that diagnostic tests are being conducted for sex determination criminal cases should be registered against the operators of these

scanning centres and steps should be taken to cancel the doctors' licence. The officials should lay focus on those who have two daughters and are still waiting for third childbirth", the Collector told the officials.

The Collector said that the medical authorities should focus on why caesarean operations are so prevalent and the reasons for this need to be identified. The ITDA should focus on Chintalapudi and other urban areas in this regard.

The Collector felt that the scanning tests can be conducted to check the health sta-

tus of the fetus from the time of conception in terms of health, but should not conduct to sex determination. "It is important to check whether the details of those who have been scanned at the respective scanning centres are being registered and whether they are appearing for re-examinations at the respective stages", he told the officials.

Venkatesh said the ANMs should conduct inquiries in this regard. Similarly, the respective scanning centres should look into the cases from which the cases are being registered in relation to abortion and collect their details.

POCSO Act Special Court Judge A Gravy Mary Kumari said there should be a large-scale awareness campaign on the Gender Determination Prohibition Act. She said that it should be ensured that the gender ratio should not go up. Red cross chairman B V Krishna Reddy, DMHO Dr.B Ravi, GGH Superintendent Dr.AVR Mohan were among those who were present.

Officials directed to organise 'Gadapa Gadapaku' in a big way

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector M Venugopal Reddy has directed the officials to conduct the 'Gadapa Gadapaku Mana Prabhutwam' programme in a big way, coordinating with the other departments.

The Collector held a video conference with the officials on various issues here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion he said that the Gadapa Gadapa Ku Mana Prabhutwam programme is being organised to explain to the people the welfare schemes implemented for them in the last years and elicit their opinion.

The officials should reach out to people during the Gadapa Gadapa Ku Mana Prabhutwam programme and take feedback on the performance of the secretariat system and the implementation of Navaratnalu welfare schemes and development programmes. The government has issued guidelines on conducting the programme to the volunteers, secretariat staff, mandal level officials and other officers.

The legislator from each



secretariat, volunteers, employees (excluding digital assistants), mandal level officials, mandal and constituency special officers within the relevant Secretariat should participate in the Gadapa Gadapaku programme. The Navaratnalu welfare schemes and the problems which the people inform the MLAs during the programme should be uploaded online.

The Collector directed the officials to submit to him the details of those who could not get the benefits of welfare schemes, despite they are eligible, due to technical reasons. The MPDVs in rural areas and the Municipal Commissioners in urban areas should take steps to ensure that there are promotional posters of gov-

ernment schemes, boards detailing services SLA and list notice boards for social audit in the village and ward secretariats as prescribed by the government.

The Collector asked the officials to send reports on providing basic facilities in the secretariats. The Collector directed the officials to take steps to expedite the construction process of houses in the Jagannanna colonies and also take steps for the sanction loans to the beneficiaries. Joint Collector G Rajakumari, DPO Keshav Reddy, Housing PD Sainath Kumar and Panchayat Raj SE Brahmaiah and secretariat officer Geeta Rani were among those who were present.

Cultivate reading habit, students exhorted

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has exhorted the students to cultivate the habit of reading books which helps to enhance knowledge. A programme was organised here on Friday on 'We Love Reading' in the Collector's office. The Collector distributed books to the students of ZP high school along with MLC Sheik Sabji.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that there is a need to encourage the students to read books in the libraries during the summer holidays. He said that the government is organising we love reading programme in a bid to strengthen the libraries in the state.

The Collector underlined the need to enhance the reading habit of children. He said that book reading leads men towards knowledge. "In fact, those who have mastered the subject books, as well as the general knowledge books, can grow to excel in all fields. If reading a book can be so enjoy-

able there can be no other satisfaction beyond that", he said.

MLC Sheik Sabji asked the students to cultivate the habit of reading general knowledge books from the school level itself. Reading books helps enhance the imaginative power of the mind. He said that as per a research study those who read books regularly could avoid mental health problems. The 'we love reading' should be a big movement and the teacher should take the lead in this.

DEO RS Ganga Bhavani said that with an aim of distributing books on the last school day for the academic year 2021-22 the books distribution programme was taken up. She suggested to the students that they should exchange their books with other students after reading the books. She asked the students to take new books after handing over their old books at the school. Appreciations would be given to the students who complete reading of 20 books or more, she informed.



VV Palem PS adjudged the best in AP

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The Valetivari Palem (VV Palem) Police Station in the undivided Prakasam district has been declared the best police station in the State of Andhra Pradesh for the year 2021 by the Union Home Ministry.

The VV Palem Police Station stands as the best PS in the State for its excellent performance in various aspects by providing better police services to the people. A Certificate of Excellence signed by the Union Home Minister and Union Home

Secretary has been issued for being the best police station in the state.

Speaking on the occasion, Superintendent of Police Malika Garg said it is a proud moment for a police station in Prakasam district to be the best police station in the state. The district SP advised the officers that all the police stations in the district should work competitively to provide better services to the people.

Meanwhile, Superintendent of Police Malika Garg inspected Ponnaluru police station on Friday. She enquired about various cases and inspected



records, registers, and case diaries. She also enquired about the performance of the

pending cases. She directed the station officials to register in the CCTNS the details of cases.

She directed the state officials to expedite the investigation on the missing cases, POCSOA, offences against women, illicit liquor and illicit transportation of sand. She directed them to keep a vigil on the history sheeters and bad character people.

On the occasion, the SP planted saplings on the police station premises. DSP Narayana Swamy, DSB DSP B Mariyadasu, CI Papa Rao and SI Ramesh were present.

Remunerative prices promised to oil palm farmers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agriculture, Cooperatives, Marketing and Food, Kakani Govardhan Reddy, has said that the AP government will fix prices acceptable to oil palm farmers and factories. He said that the government will adopt Oil Extraction Ratio in a scientific manner to fix the price hence the farmers and factories need not worry. The minister conducted a meeting with oil palm farmers and factories in the Secretariat on Friday.

Govardhan Reddy said that the prices of oil palm will be fixed before the start of the season. He said that the previous government had left the arrears and dues to farmers and YSR



Congress government led by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is clearing the all pending dues and arrears to the farmers. He said that the government is encouraging drip irrigation and instructed

the officials to perform registration regarding the drip irrigation process.

Andhra Pradesh State Oil Foam Growers Association President B. Veera Raghav Rao said that AP is the state that produces the best quality oil palm prunes in India. He and other leaders and farmers said the government should take necessary steps to ensure viability gap funding to the oil palm which would be more beneficial to the farmers.

The meeting was attended by State Horticulture Commissioner Dr SS Sridhar, AP Oil Fed MD C Babu Rao, Additional Directors K Balaji Nayak and Y Venkateswarlu, representatives of oil palm companies and farmers.

Develop greenery on roadsides, officials told

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri directed the Assistant Director Horticulture Rama Rao to take steps to grow greenery on the sides of main roads and traffic islands to develop Guntur city as a green city.

The Commissioner visited the Narasaraopet road, Chilakaluripet road, Ponnuru road, Purchur road, Kakani road, Inner Ring Road and Amaravati Road on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, she told the officials that greenery is very important for the beautification of the city. Steps should be taken to grow greenery wherever it is possible to make the city a green and environment friendly city.



She directed the officials to take steps for avenue plantation along with main roads. The green lawn should be grown on the central dividers. The traffic islands should also be developed with greenery. Assistant Director Horticulture Rama Rao, horticulturist Chinna Rao and Supervisor Ashok accompanied her.

'Shah should come with assurances, not as political tourist'

KTR'S POSERS TO CENTRE ON BIAS AGAINST TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and IT Minister K T Rama Rao has said that BJP's national leaders only know how to tour Telangana once in a while and try to spread hatred amongst the people in the state, though they did not help fulfil a single promise made to Telangana while meeting every requirement of states like Gujarat on a war footing.

On Friday, KTR wrote an open letter to Amit Shah, ahead of the latter's arrival in Telangana.

Amit Shah will be visiting Telangana on Saturday.

KTR stated that the BJP had been spitting venom on Telangana for the past eight years. The BJP had always insulted the Telangana movement. "We will fight for the rights of the people of Telangana and demand our rightful share under the AP Reorganization Act," he said. KTR stated that the people of Telangana knew the true colours of the BJP which had not done any good to Telangana.

KTR warned the BJP about its step-motherly attitude towards Telangana and stated that people here would give a befitting reply to these unfaithful leaders. Posing questions to Amit Shah, KTR said: "BJP should tell which of the promises made under the AP Reorganization Act to Telangana were fulfilled by them. Is it not true that BJP washed of their hands when



The Telangana movement. "We will fight for the rights of the people of Telangana and demand our rightful share under the AP Reorganization Act"

TRS leaders demanded the establishment of a rail coach factory in Kazipet? But the BJP govt at the Centre has allocated a rail coach factory to Gujarat for Rs 20 crore. When you can allot a rail coach factory to Gujarat, why not for Telangana? Why this partiality towards Telangana?"

"Can you name even a single central educational institution allocated to Telangana by the NDA govt? Not a single medical college was allocated to Telangana under the NDA govt. Lakhs of students in Telangana are unable to pursue medical courses. Does this not affect Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who earlier responded to the injustice done to a medical student during the admission process in Gujarat?" asked KTR.

The Minister asked if Amit Shah could answer why Bayyaram Steel Plant was not allocated to Telangana, despite promising the same in AP Reorganization Act?

"Telangana has been the top investment destination for global firms. Yet, Telangana is not being given any industrial incentives. Why? Do you have an answer for it? Scrapping ITIR project in Telangana, denying city's rapid develop-

ment in the IT sector shows how BJP conspires against Telangana", he said.

KTR asked: "After rejecting ITIR status to Telangana, can you name at least one programme introduced by the BJP government as an alternative option for the development of the IT sector? What answers do you have for the youth of Telangana who lost opportunities in IT companies due to the rejection of ITIR? Why are you not allocating new Software Technology Parks to Telangana whose IT sector is progressing at a rapid speed?"

He asked about the Palamuru Rangareddy lift Irrigation Scheme and said, "What answer do you have for the farmers of Palamuru and Rangareddy districts who feel cheated by you for not allocating national status to the project? Instead, you have announced to give national status to Karnataka's Upper Bhadra project? This shows how partial BJP is towards Telangana farmers".

On the Krishna waters, KTR said: "For the past eight years, why are you not referring to the Brijesh Kumar tribunal to resolve the issue of 575 TMC irriga-

tion water, which is the rightful share of Telangana? Instead, you have appointed the Krishna River Management Board, which only further exploits the rightful share of water to Telangana".

KTR demanded that the number of funds allocated to Telangana in the past eight years, keeping aside the funds which the state receives constitutionally, be disclosed.

On Hyderabad, KTR asked, "Isn't it the fact that you are troubling the citizens of Hyderabad by becoming a hurdle in the construction of skyways by not allocating defence lands to the State govt? Is it not true that you are allocating crores of rupees as funds for river rejuvenation projects in BJP-ruled states and not allotting even a penny to the Musi River rejuvenation works?"

He asked, why BJP was not extending financial support to the Hyderabad Pharma City? "Why no Defence Industrial Corridor to Telangana? Why move it to a State which has zero presence of defence factories, while Telangana houses major Aerospace and defence companies? Not a single mega powerloom textile cluster was allocated to Telangana, despite Telangana leading the way for others in the textile sector", he wrote.

KTR said, "Why are you creating hurdles in procuring paddy produced by farmers of Telangana? Why did the BJP govt not allocate Turmeric Board to Nizamabad? Why did the BJP MP completely forget the promise made to the people of Nizamabad, even after writing it on a bond paper during the 2019 election?"

KTR sends legal notice to Bandi Sanjay

TRS working president and Municipal Administration Minister K T Rama Rao on Friday sent a legal notice to BJP TS unit president Bandi Sanjay for acts of libel, slander and defamation. He demanded that the BJP leader must offer an unconditional apology within 48 hours for the unfounded allegations made against him. Otherwise, a case of defamation would be filed in a court of law, he warned.

During an interaction with the public during his Praja Sangrama Yatra, Bandi Sanjay said that 27 Intermediate students had died "because of Minister KTR" and that it was unfortunate that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao "did not care to respond". The notice read, "You, (Sanjay) being a public figure enjoy wide reach and popularity amongst the general public."

Therefore, as an elected sitting Member of Parliament, you are at all times under an obligation to act in a bona fide manner and conform to a high standard of integrity. However, in the greed to derive publicity, an attempt was made to falsely imply the issue of Intermediate students' suicide upon my client".

The notice issued by the lawyer read, "In view of the false allegations made against my client and the attempts to malign his reputation, Bandi Sanjay is liable for legal action, including payment for damages and compensation. Also, to extend unconditional apology within 48 hours". The notice said that KTR had garnered immense goodwill and reputation amongst the general public both as a dedicated politician and as a dynamic individual for the various initiatives undertaken by him. In 2021, KTR sent a legal notice to Revanth Reddy for linking him to the Tollywood drugs case. The Court restrained Revanth from linking him to the drugs case.

INDIA CORNER

Deshmukh can undergo shoulder surgery in state-run hospital: Court

A special court here on Friday refused to grant permission to Maharashtra's former home minister Anil Deshmukh to undergo a shoulder surgery at a private hospital and said he could get the medical procedure done at the state-run J J Hospital in the city. Deshmukh had sought permission to be temporarily shifted to a private hospital of his choice to undergo the surgery and treatment for his dislocated shoulder. The NCP leader said he would bear the expenses. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had, however, opposed the plea and said that the J J Hospital was well-equipped with qualified doctors to perform the surgery. The court rejected Deshmukh's application and said he could get the surgery and treatment done at the J J Hospital. Deshmukh is currently in judicial custody following his arrest by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in November last year in a money laundering case.



MP govt may consider making national anthem recital compulsory at madrasas

With singing of national anthem made compulsory in all madrasas in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra on Friday said a similar step could be considered in the state. He made the statement in response to a query asked by reporters here. Speaking separately, Madhya Pradesh BJP chief Vishnu Dutt Sharma said 'Jana Gana Mana' should be recited in all educational institutions across the country. Singing of national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana' has been made compulsory at all madrasas in Uttar Pradesh starting Thursday. The Registrar of the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board issued an order to this effect to all the District Minority Welfare Officers on May 9. Talking to reporters, minister Mishra said the national anthem should be sung everywhere. "It is a good thing. It is a national anthem and it can be sung everywhere," he said.



'K'taka govt forcing anti-conversion law to divert attention from corruption'

Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly Siddaramaiah on Friday accused the BJP government in the state of trying to force anti-conversion law on the people through ordinance route to "divert attention from corruption and lack of administration." The former Chief Minister even urged the Governor to reject the 'The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion (anti-conversion) ordinance', stating that it is aimed at "harassing" minorities. The Karnataka cabinet on Thursday decided to promulgate the ordinance to give effect to the law against forceful religious conversions. The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly in December last year. However, it is pending for passage in the Legislative Council, where the ruling BJP is one short of majority.



CHINTAN SHIVIR

Sonia targets Modi, says minorities being 'brutalised'

PNS ■ UDAIPUR

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Friday launched a blistering attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, charging that it has become clear that his mantra of 'minimum government, maximum governance' means keeping the country in a permanent state of polarisation, "brutalising" minorities and "threatening" political opponents.

In her inaugural address at the party's 'Chintan Shivir' here, she urged delegates to deliberate with an open mind



In her inaugural address at the party's 'Chintan Shivir' here, she urged delegates to deliberate with an open mind and send out a clear message of strong organisation and unity.

and send out a clear message of strong organisation and unity. She said the Shivir is also an occasion to deliberate

on the many challenges ahead of us and bring organisational changes. "It is both 'Chintan' about national issues and meaningful 'aamachintan' (self-introspection) about our party organisation," she said.

Gandhi charged that it has become "painfully clear" what Prime Minister Modi and his colleagues really mean by their frequently used slogan of maximum governance, minimum government.

"It means keeping the country in a permanent state of polarisation, compelling

people to stay in a constant state of fear and insecurity. It means viciously targeting, victimising and brutalising minorities who are an integral part of our society and equal citizens of our republic," she charged. "It means using our societies age old pluralities to divide us and subverting a carefully nurtured idea of unity and diversity. It means threatening and intimidating political opponents, maligning their reputation, jailing them on flimsy pretexts using investigative agencies" Gandhi further alleged.

Population not sole criterion for J&K delimitation: CEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Population was an important but not the sole criterion while carrying out the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra said on Friday and asserted that the union territory has to be seen as "one unit" where the entire population has to be given representation in 90 assembly constituencies.

Chandra, who was an ex-officio member of the delimitation panel which gave its final order on restructuring the assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir earlier this month, also said there were "lots of problems" with the earlier delimitation and those have been corrected now. He was responding to questions on criticism from certain quarters that going by the population ratio, Kashmir Division got a lesser number of seats as compared to Jammu.

"Population is only one of the criteria of the delimitation. Besides population, there are four other criteria as per provisions of the Delimitation Act and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act which say that consideration will also have to be given to the physical conditions, and communication facilities, public conveniences and the administrative units of that area. So these are four other criteria that have to be looked into. It (population) is one of the important criteria but not the sole criteria. That one should keep in mind," Chandra told PTI. Chandra, who demits the office of CEC on Saturday, said Jammu and Kashmir should be seen as one unit. "It cannot be (seen) in different parts. It is



one single union territory. The whole population will have to be given representation in 90 constituencies. The (Kashmir) valley has been given less or Jammu (division) has been given less -- it is one whole unit comprising 20 districts and 207 tehsils. We will have to see it as one whole unit."

The Delimitation Commission on Jammu and Kashmir, formed in March 2020, notified its final report on May 5 giving six additional assembly seats to the Jammu region and one to Kashmir Valley and bringing areas of Rajouri and Poonch under the Anantnag parliamentary seat.

Jammu Division will now have 43 assembly seats and Kashmir 47 in the 90-member house. The changes will come into effect from the date to be notified by the central government. Earlier, the erstwhile assembly had 87 seats -- 46 in Kashmir, 37 in Jammu 37 and four in Ladakh.

Ladakh, in the reorganisation of the erstwhile state, was declared as a union territory without an assembly.

NCP minister seeks action against Twitter user

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Jitendra Awhad on Friday demanded strict action against a Twitter user, who allegedly wrote on the micro-blogging site that time has come to prepare "Baramati's Nathuram Godse for the 'Gandhi' of Baramati". The Twitter user, however, did not mention the name of any leader or political party in his purported comment. Baramati, a town in Pune district of the state, is the home turf of NCP patriarch Sharad Pawar. Godse was the one who had assassinated Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948.

Sisodia urges Shah to stop demolition drive in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah urging him to stop the "destruction" ensuing in the national capital due to the anti-encroachment drive by the BJP-ruled municipal bodies. In an online briefing, Sisodia slammed the "bulldozer politics" of the BJP and claimed that the civic bodies are planning to raze 63 lakh dwellings in the national capital.

"Of these, 60 lakh houses are in unauthorised colonies while the remaining three lakh are those where people have extended their balconies or covered them. We have learnt that notices have been sent to them," Sisodia said. "This will



lead to a huge destruction in the national capital. Almost 70 per cent of the population of Delhi will be rendered homeless," he added.

The Aam Aadmi Party will oppose the demolition drive and I have written to the Union home minister to seek his intervention in the matter, he said,

adding that they are even ready to go to jail.

"I have written to him (Shah) saying that this (demolition drive) should be stopped. If bulldozers are to be used, they should be used to demolish the houses of those BJP leaders and civic body representatives who took bribes to allow such structures to be constructed," he said. In the letter, Sisodia said there are 1,750 unauthorised colonies where nearly 50 lakh people live and 860 slum clusters which are home to around 10 lakh people.

"In Delhi, the BJP has a plan to run bulldozers on these colonies. Every day, some BJP leader reaches a colony with a bulldozer," Sisodia said in the letter written in Hindi. "Apart from this, three lakh people residing in unauthorised and

DDA colonies have been given notices for making alterations like extending their balcony or covering it. In reality, there is no house in Delhi where alterations have not been carried out," he added.

He further alleged that in the last 17 years, councillors, officials and mayors of the civic bodies took bribes to allow jhuggis and providing plots for unauthorised colonies.

Now when there is a threat to BJP's rule coming to an end in the municipal corporations, they are trying to ruin people's houses, he said. "I appeal to you (Shah) to tell BJP leaders to not indulge in dangerous politics in the name of bulldozers and to fix accountability of those who let these illegal constructions happen," Sisodia said.

Local body polls: K'taka govt likely to seek time from SC to fix reservation for OBCs

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Faced with the possibility of local body polls that were due, following the recent Supreme Court order, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday said the government is considering moving the apex court seeking time to fix reservation for other backward classes (OBCs) or for an opportunity to go by the reservation that existed until now.

The Chief Minister also expressed hope about getting time.

"On OBC reservation.....one case regarding BBMP (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike) is pending before the Supreme Court, secondly regarding Zilla and Taluk Panchayat polls too we have to request that we (govt) have to give OBC reservations legally and constitutionally," Bommai said.



Speaking to reporters here, he said the options before the government were to appeal for time or to request for an opportunity to go by old OBC reservation. "We are hopeful of getting time...We have to go for polls with OBC reservation, either to go by reservation that existed so far or give time for new reservation," he added.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) to issue a poll programme for local bodies within two weeks. The apex court said the ongoing activity of delimitation or formation of the ward cannot be a legitimate ground to be set forth by any authority to not discharge its Constitutional obligation in notifying the election programme at the opportune time and to ensure that the elected body is installed before the expiry of five-year term of the outgoing body. The bench said its order and directions are not limited to Madhya Pradesh but to all the states/ union territories and the respective election commission to abide by the same without fail, to uphold the constitutional mandate.

Miscreants pelt stones at boutique, open fire in Punjab

PNS ■ PUNJAB

Three unidentified youths allegedly pelted stones at a boutique and opened fire in the air at Mukerian main bazaar here, police said on Friday. Sajjan (18), a native of Pathankot but is currently residing in Mukerian, was seated outside his aunt's boutique on Thursday evening when the three youths arrived there and asked him for the address of another store, the police said. They left after Sajjan told him that he did not know the address they were looking for, but returned about 10 minutes later and launched the attack, according to the police complaint. Police said they recovered some empty bullet shells from the area. A case has been registered and further investigation is underway, they said.

Kashmir varsity prof, PC among 3 J-K govt employees sacked for terror links

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday sacked three government employees, including a professor and a policeman, for their alleged links with terror groups, officials said. The trio was terminated from services based on the recommendation of a designated committee constituted under Article 311 (2) (c) of the Constitution that allows dismissal from service without an inquiry in the interest of the State's security.

Those sacked are Altaf Hussain Pandit, chemistry professor at Kashmir University, Mohammed Maqbool Hajam, teacher in the school education department, and Ghulam Rasool, a constable with the Jammu and Kashmir Police.



Hussain Pandit is actively associated with the proscribed Jamaat-e-Islam (JeI). He had crossed over to Pakistan for terror training and remained an active terrorist of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front for three years before his arrest by the security forces, sometime in 1993. He continued to be an active cadre of JeI and worked as a terror

recruiter. Pandit was instrumental in organising stone pelting and violent protests over the killing of terrorists in 2011 and 2014, the officials said.

In 2015, Hussain Pandit became an executive member of the Kashmir University Teachers Association and used his position to propagate secessionism among students.

Nidhi Chibber appointed CBSE chairperson

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior bureaucrat Nidhi Chibber has been appointed as the chairperson of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) as part of a senior-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre on Friday. Chibber, a 1994 batch IAS officer of Chhattisgarh cadre, is currently Additional Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries. She has been appointed as chairperson of the CBSE in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary to the government of India, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said. Vivek Kumar Dewangan, a 1993 batch IAS officer of Manipur cadre, has been named Chairman and Managing Director, REC Ltd., Ministry of Power.

1995 CUSTODIAL DEATH CASE

Guj: 3 IAF personnel sentenced to life

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

A special CBI court here has convicted two retired and one serving Indian Air Force personnel in a 27-year-old custodial death case at Jamnagar Air Force Station in Gujarat and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

The court of CBI special judge N D Joshi on Thursday sentenced then Squadron Leader Anoop Sood and Sergeants Anil K N and Mahendra Singh Sherawat to life imprisonment, a release issued by the CBI stated on Friday.

Sood and Anil have already retired from service, while



Sherawat is still in service, it said. The trio were found guilty of killing Girja Rawat, who worked

as a cook at Air Force-I, Jamnagar. Of the seven accused in the case, three were convicted,

one died during the course of the trial, while three others were acquitted by the court, the cen-

tral agency said.

As per the case details, Rawat was a cook in the DSC Mess of Air Force-I, Jamnagar. On November 13, 1995, around 10 to 12 Air Force police officials, including Sood, conducted searches at his residence and forcibly took him with them, as they suspected him of stealing liquor from the Air Force canteen. It was alleged that the accused tortured Rawat to make him confess about the theft. In the evening, his wife visited the Guard Room and requested the officials to release her husband and was told that he would be released soon.

Jamia Millia extends deadline for UG, PG admissions to May 25

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) on Friday extended the last date of submission of online application forms for all graduate and postgraduate courses till May 25. Earlier, May 13 was the last date for submission of the admission forms. The deadline for registration has been extended for all JMI programmes such as post-graduate, undergraduate, postgraduate diploma, advanced diploma and diploma programmes, except for the PhD programme. The university said this was done as the last date for registration for the Common University Entrance



Test (CUET) has been extended to May 22. "In view of the extension in the last date of CUET Admission form, the Vice-Chancellor, JMI has very kindly approved the extension in the last date of filling of online application form for all Jamia pro-

grammes like PG/UG/PG Diploma/ Advanced Diploma/ Diploma programmes and Foreign Nationals/NRI wards except PhD programmes for the academic session 2022-2023 from 13.05.2022 to 25.05.2022," a notification issued by Jamia read.

An unforgiving May

Revised work hours protocol for extreme summers is needed

The effect of Cyclone Asani has waned. The moisture-laden easterly winds did lower temperatures for a couple of days in the north. The plains are back to witnessing a return of the debilitating heatwave. The weather office has issued a yellow alert that could soon be upgraded into an orange alert. Are any steps afoot to mitigate people's misery as the temperatures threaten to cross 46 degrees Celsius in Delhi and neighbouring states? A welcome step is shortening school hours, limiting students' outdoor activities, and relaxing the dress code norm. However, is there a need for primary schools to function? The heat threatens the adult population in no less measure. Sunstrokes are on the rise and dehydration is common. And yet there is no attempt to advance or shorten office hours. Private offices can easily shift to the WFH mode if advancing office hours is not possible. Online work in digitised government departments is recommended. The situation eminently suits half-day work timings. Routine activities in courts like date extensions, submission of documents, and bail arguments, especially related to petty crimes, can be online. However, what about the daily-wage labourers, agricultural labourers, and civic workers of the public works departments?



Millions spend their days under the unrelenting sun with barely any protection or nutritious supplements. The civic works have not been stopped or postponed anywhere. Big projects related to national highways, track-laying, and construction of bridges and buildings have no systems to allow for reduced working hours. In some states, the governments make arrangements for cool drinking water, buttermilk sachets, and medical camps. Most states have first-aid kits at the primary health centres in rural areas. But all these efforts miss the point. They essentially deal with basic resuscitation measures for labourers and workers suffering heat strokes. We are witnessing a definite, recurring pattern of extreme summer heat. The pattern is already an intrinsic part of summers, and climatologists fear things may become worse in the coming years. So, we should be talking about more than the basics. The focus should be on tweaking working hours without affecting productivity but sparing the workers from heat fatigue. Proposals for the work hours to begin earlier than usual or shift to the late afternoons and early evenings are worth examining. Implementing them is not easy without backup infrastructure, including the provision of power and, possibly, transport and arrangements of creches, temporarily in 'anganwadis', for the children of the labourers. By now, the National Disaster Management Authority could have met to discuss a summer public works protocol roping in organisations from the Centre, the States, and the non-governmental sector. The Authority's website does recognise the threat that extreme summers pose. The homepage lists the criteria offered by the weather office for heatwaves and spells out first-aid and stroke-prevention measures. It also acknowledges that India is also feeling the impact of heatwaves. But that is all.



People perform yoga during a yoga event ahead of International Day of Yoga at the banks of Lower Lake in Bhopal

Walk the talk

If Congress did not resolve the leadership issue then talks about revamp will have few takers

Both Opposition and the BJP camps will keenly watch the deliberations at the three-day Congress Chintan Shivir at Udaipur where the GOP will try to find ways to stem the rot within the party and settle the leadership issue. Ironically, the grand old party which wants to lead the nation has no permanent leader itself. The continuation of Sonia Gandhi as interim president is not only a perceptual disaster but it also reflects a complete lack of professionalism in the functioning of the party and its obsession not to allow anyone outside the Gandhi family to steer its course even when 10 Janpath has failed to perform, at least electorally. An army is as good as its general, the saying rings so true in the case of Congress. Sonia Gandhi rarely makes any public appearance, and Rahul Gandhi has yet to project himself as a leader who can keep the party together, mend fences with old guards, and sacrifice his foreign jaunts for the party's sake. Somehow a perception has gained ground over the years that Rahul Gandhi lacked the killer instinct to lead the party to electoral victories. It's one thing to address public rallies and hit out at the Modi Government, it's another to plan and plot strategies to fight electoral battles. Take the case of Punjab and Uttarakhand, where Congress virtually gave walkovers to the BJP in the assembly polls because of the failure of the leadership to resolve the infighting even at the peak of electioneering.

Sonia Gandhi's words in her inaugural address at the Chintan Shivir that "We need to change the way of our working", apply as much to the party workers as to the leadership. Similarly, when Sonia urged party leaders to keep the organization above personal ambitions, saying the party has given "us a lot and it's time to pay back," many would ask should not charity begin from home. For years the Congress leaders have been playing the same old tune. It's time they walk the talk themselves. Sonia Gandhi may have rightly said that the Shivir is an occasion to discuss the challenges before the party and bring organisational changes, but if Congress did not resolve the leadership issue and showed a readiness to empower leaders from outside the Gandhi family, too, then all the talks about organizational revamp will have few takers.



Hindus' incoherent angst about identity

If the Hindus had found a sufficiently eloquent manner of expressing their pain, the Muslims could then have taken the current changes in their stride

A few people know what Sir Arnold Toynbee told his Indian audience when he came to address them to commemorate Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Toynbee had come at Jawaharlal Nehru's special invitation in the early 1960s. Arnold Toynbee said: "In the course of the first Russian occupation of Warsaw, the Russians had built an Eastern Cathedral in the city that had been the capital of the once independent Roman Catholic country Poland. The Russians had done this to give the Poles a continuous ocular demonstration that the Russians were now the masters. After the re-establishment of Poland's independence in 1918, the Poles pulled this cathedral down. I do not blame the Polish Government for having pulled down the Russian church. The purpose for which the Russians had built it had been not religious but political, and the purpose had also been intentionally offensive."

In the Abrahamic religious tradition, a church or mosque is a prayer hall. It is not unusual for a parish in Europe to sell for money a church; say, for the reason it does not attract an adequate number of worshippers on Sundays. I was present in England when such a sale was made in Leicester and the sold-off place was brought down to be replaced with a temple. In West Asia, including Saudi Arabia, mosques are brought down to straighten or widen highways. By sharp contrast, in the Hindu belief, a temple is the residence of the divine. Therefore, it is very impious to meddle with its structure. Contrast a prayer hall with a residence of God, and one would know how deeply the Hindu sentiment has been hurt for centuries by the demolition of temples by Islamic invaders and conquerors from West and Central Asia; it is almost impossible for an Abrahamic person to imagine the extent of the psychological injury thus caused.

Quite to the contrary, when the communists came to power in Russia in 1917, they went about targeting all places of worship. This is no surprise; communism



nism is the fourth sibling in the Abrahamic family of religions and shares their intolerance towards any other belief system and like its siblings, has no hesitation in turning upon its fellow siblings as well.

However, it must be admitted that it is the Hindus who have largely been at fault in first allowing the emergence of a separate entity within the sovereign state of India after 1947, and thereafter, not putting forth their point of view eloquently and convincingly enough. In fact, over the centuries, they have not reacted sufficiently for the Muslims to know how badly they have hurt Hindu sentiments. In fact, more often than not, they have gathered around their destroyed edifices, wept and beaten their breasts. As a result, when the Babri structure at Ayodhya was brought down by Hindus, they had surprised the Muslims for the first time in centuries. Being the first such incident it could be taken as an exception that proves the rule. Now, with demands being raised for the restoration of Gyanvapi at Varanasi and the Idgah at Mathura, there is amazement, albeit privately, as to what has come over the Hindus.

Of equal consternation, if not greater, are the demands



CONTRAST A PRAYER HALL WITH A RESIDENCE OF GOD, ONE WOULD KNOW HOW DEEPLY THE HINDU SENTIMENT HAS BEEN HURT FOR CENTURIES BY THE DEMOLITION OF TEMPLES BY ISLAMIC INVADERS AND CONQUERORS FROM WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA

for changes in the names of the roads named after medieval Muslim conquerors. While there is much stomach-churning and hand-wringing, accompanied by a flurry of attempts to turn the narratives in favour of the "secular-liberal" lobby, hardly anyone has stopped to think, leave alone acknowledge that the injuries were first inflicted by Mahmud of Ghazni on the famous Somnath Temple and soon followed by his attack on the Keshav Dev Mandir at Mathura. Not long thereafter, were the unholy adventures by Mohammed Ghori when he converted three temples into one mosque at Ajmer and named it "Adhai Din Ka Jhopra"; the aggression was completed in 60 hours and hence the name. Barely a few years earlier, he had devastated Kannauj, then considered the capital of India. Qutbuddin Aibak's destruction of 27 Jain temples at Delhi's Mehrauli and converting them into a mosque called "Quwwat-ul-Islam" or the "might of Islam" was the next chapter of deliberate humiliation inflicted upon the Hindus.

I suppose the type of sentiments would differ from person to person. Even if we accept this contention, it was



PRAFULL GORADIA

all supposedly settled with the partition of the country on the midnight of August 14, 1947, when one-thirds of Hindu were given away to appease the progeny of those medieval conquerors, whose political representatives had declared in unambiguous terms that they could not co-exist with the Hindus. But such a settlement did not materialise and post-independent India allowed "a state within a state" to exist and flourish. When Vladimir Lenin conquered the Russian Empire for communism, most of the churches, synagogues and mosques were converted into municipal offices, departmental stores or places of any other civil purpose. In 1973, I happened to visit the sites of three such conversions. These changes were presumably accepted on the morrow of the Russian Revolution.

Be that as it may, it would have been much better if the Hindus had found a sufficiently eloquent manner of expressing their pain, the Muslims could then have taken the current changes in their stride.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JOURNALIST'S KILLING

Sir—The killing of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by the Israeli forces in a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank was tragic. Documenting life under occupation was her sole crime. It was what led to her targeted killing by the Israeli forces. The 51-year-old brave journalist did her job in a place where her life was susceptible to danger. But undeterred by the prospect of being killed, she discharged her duties. She was the epitome of a passionate and brave journalist. She sympathised with the Palestinian cause.

She reflected in her work the pain and suffering of the Palestinians living in occupied areas. She was affectionately called "a daughter of Palestine". She keenly observed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; she chose to be on the frontlines and at flashpoints to tell the story—the story of the stories of the Palestinians. Her face is familiar to all those who follow the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Her unique way of telling the story won her many admirers. Her voice conveyed the strength of her feeling when she reported the systematic and structural oppression and repression of the Palestinians on a daily basis by the right-wing Israeli regime. The Israeli military stifled her voice, but her martyrdom will inspire all those who cherish freedom and justice.

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

BACK-BREAKING INFLATION

Sir—The retail inflation shoots up to a 95-month high in April, paving the way for more policy rate hikes by the central bank. Inflation has remained above the central bank's upper tolerance limit for four consecutive months. The data released by the National Statistical Office showed the food inflation rate in April soared to 8.38 per cent as prices of edible oils and vegetables shot up by 17.3 per cent and 15.4 per cent, respectively.

Fuel inflation also breached the double-digit mark at 10.8 per cent in April due to rising retail prices of petrol, diesel, and cooking gas even as crude oil prices softened from March. The second round impact of higher energy prices has become

Historic verdict



The Supreme Court's verdict to stay all pending cases, appeals and proceedings with respect to the charges framed under Section 124A (Sedition law) was historic and courageous. In its first affidavit filed before the Supreme Court, the Central Government had vociferously defended the sedition law, and argued that the 1962 verdict of a constitution bench in Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case upholding its validity had withstood "the test of time" and needed no reconsider-

ation. However, the Government filed another affidavit, wherein it said, it had decided to re-examine and reconsider the sedition law, and urged the apex court to wait for the review by a "competent forum" and to "not invest time" on petitions filed by the Editors' Guild of India and others. The dramatic political volte-face reflected the discomfort of the ruling establishment in losing the sharp claws of the colonial law.

In the early 1960s, Kedar Nath Singh was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for his speech, "We believe in that revolution, which will come and in the flames of which the capitalists, zamindars and... will be reduced to ashes and on their ashes will be established a government of the poor and the downtrodden people of India." India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had wanted to "get rid of it (Section 124A)," and the latest Supreme Court verdict is a ray of hope.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

visible with transport and communication prices rising in double digits by 10.9 per cent. The services sector inflation rate rose to a 115-month high at 8.03 per cent as household goods and services (7.79 per cent) and personal care (8.62 per cent) inched up. With this there is very heavy burden on the common people who are struggling for survival and the country is heading for a disastrous situation.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

WIDENING NATO BLOC

Sir—Recently, in Russia's neighbouring country Finland, a referendum was held regarding joining the NATO. About 62 per cent of people had given their consent to join the NATO. However, it is noteworthy that just before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, most people in Finland wanted to remain neutral. However, seeing the condition of the people of Ukraine, they felt that joining the NATO bloc would secure their 13,000 kilometres border with Russia. Moreover, till 1917 Finland was a division

of Russia. Therefore, the vultures of Russia may also have an eye on them. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has said he expects the membership process for Sweden and Finland to be "quite quickly".

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

MARITAL RAPE A CRIME

Sir—It is gut-wrenching to read the split judgment on marital rape by the Delhi High Court where one judge said it is not a crime as the existing law. A husband has no right to force himself on his wife. A rape is a rape, there is no exception.

The act of rape itself destroys the institution of marriage. It was expected that both the justices should have declared marital rape as a crime. However, the only grace is that both the judges have allowed the parties to move the Supreme Court against their split verdict on marital rape.

Vishal Mayur | Tumkur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I am deeply saddened to know about the passing away of HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

Competition system in India is well behind big boxing countries and it needs to seize the momentum back.

High Performance Director — Santiago Nieva

Excited to bring 'Jungle Cry' to audiences and share with them the journey of these heroes.

Actor — Abhay Deol

I'm a player living with an injury. It's nothing new. It's something that is there, unfortunately.

Tennis star — Rafael Nadal

Many said you will get jobs if you learn Hindi. Is it so... Look here in Coimbatore, who is selling pani puri.

TN Higher Education Minister — K Ponnudiy





Exports up 30.7 pc to US\$ 40.19 bn in Apr; trade deficit widens

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports surged 30.7 per cent to USD 40.19 billion in April on account of healthy performance by sectors like petroleum products, electronic goods and chemicals, even as trade deficit widened to USD 20.11 billion during the month, the commerce ministry said on Friday.

Imports during the month under review grew by 30.97

per cent to USD 60.3 billion. The trade deficit in April 2021 was at USD 15.29 billion."After a record performance in the last financial year, the exports continued robust growth in April, 2022 with merchandise exports scaling a new high by crossing USD 40 billion," it said.

Petroleum and crude oil imports during the month rose by 87.54 per cent to USD 20.2 billion. Coal, Coke and Briquettes imports

jumped to USD 4.93 billion, as against USD 2 billion in April 2021.

Gold imports, however, dipped by about 72 per cent to USD 1.72 billion during the month under review, from USD 6.23 billion in April 2021.

Engineering goods exports increased by 15.38 per cent to USD 9.2 billion, while petroleum products exports soared 113.21 per cent to USD 7.73 billion.

Reliance top-ranked Indian firm on Forbes Global 2000 list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd climbed two spots to No. 53 on Forbes' latest Global 2000 list of public companies worldwide.

Forbes Global 2000 ranks the largest companies in the world using four metrics: sales, profits, assets and market value, Forbes said releasing the 2022 ranking of the world's top 2,000 companies.

Reliance is the top-ranked Indian firm on the list, followed by State Bank of India at No. 105, HDFC Bank at No. 153 and ICICI Bank at No. 204. Other top 10 Indian firms on the list include state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at 228 rank, Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd (HDFC) at No. 268, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) at No. 357, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) at No. 384, Tata Steel at No. 407 and Axis Bank at No. 431.

"Energy and banking sector corporations were among the highest-ranking Indian companies in Forbes' Global 2000 list of public companies this year," the publication said.

Oil-to-telecom-to-retail

conglomerate Reliance, which recorded sales of USD 104.6 billion between April 2021 and March 2022, became the first Indian company to generate over USD 100 billion in annual revenue.

"On the Global 2000, Reliance climbed two spots to No. 53 among all public companies worldwide and ranked first among Indian companies," it said. "Earlier this year, Forbes estimated Ambani's net worth to be USD 90.7 billion, landing him at No. 10 on this year's billionaires list." Mukesh's father Dhirubhai launched the business in the early 1960s, starting with import and export licences for nylon, rayon and polyester.

Today, the company's businesses include plastics and petrochemicals, mobile telecom services and retail.

With a market cap of USD 56.12 billion, SBI grabbed the No. 2 spot on the list of India's largest. "The bank, headquartered in Mumbai, has 24,000 branches and 62,617 ATMs across the country. Private sector banks ICICI and HDFC followed next on the Global 2000 list of Indian companies, highlighting the growth of the banking sector in India."

Ford shelves plans to manufacture EVs in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US auto major Ford has shelved plans to manufacture electric vehicles in India for exports despite getting approval from the government for production-linked incentives.

The company, which in September last year had announced that it would stop vehicle production at its two plants in the country as part of a restructuring exercise, said it is exploring other alternatives for its manufacturing facilities at Chennai and Sanand in Gujarat.

As part of the ongoing business restructuring in India, Ford has continued to explore possible alternatives for its manufacturing facilities. This included applying for the production-linked incentives scheme, which allowed us to explore utilising one of the plants as a potential EV manufacturing base, a Ford India spokesperson said.

"After careful review, we have decided to no longer pursue EV manufacturing for exports from any of the Indian plants. We remain grateful to the government for approving



our proposal under the Production-Linked Incentives and for being supportive while we continued our exploration," the spokesperson added.

Ford was among the 20 automotive firms, along with the likes of Tata Motors, Suzuki, Hyundai, Kia and Mahindra & Mahindra, that got approval for the Rs 25,938 crore Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the automobile industry in February this year.

On the future of the company's two plants, the spokesperson said, "Ford India's previously announced business restructuring continues as planned, including exploring other alternatives for our manufacturing facilities. We continue to work

closely with unions and other stakeholders to deliver an equitable and balanced plan to mitigate the impacts of restructuring."

The company has been reported to be in talks with homegrown auto major Tata Motors to sell its Sanand plant while it is scouting for buyers of the Chennai plant.

Last year, after nearly three decades of struggling to make a mark in India, Ford Motor Co decided to stop vehicle production at its two plants in the country and sell only imported vehicles going ahead as part of a restructuring exercise. The company, which invested about USD 2.5 billion at its Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Sanand (Gujarat) plants, has incurred losses of over USD 2 billion in India.

As per the plan, the vehicle assembly in Sanand plant was stopped by the fourth quarter of 2021 and, vehicle and engine manufacturing in Chennai will be stopped in the second quarter of 2022.

It will, however, continue to manufacture engines from its Sanand plant which will be exported to the company's global operations.

MONEY MATTERS

Brookfield-backed PIL, GAIL sign pact for hydrogen collaboration



hydrogen as a source of energy and thus build a partnership between the companies, official sources said. Pipeline Infrastructure Limited (PIL) is owned by India Infrastructure Trust, an infrastructure investment trust sponsored by Brookfield Asset Management, a global leader in alternative asset management and one of the largest investors in real assets. PIL owns and operates a 48-inch diameter, 1,480 km long Kakinada to Bharuch gas pipeline that connects major domestic supply hubs on the east to key demand centers in the west. It is a vital link in India's national gas grid. GAIL is India's largest gas transporting and marketing company. It owns about two-thirds of truck pipelines. Pipelines are a critical element in transporting hydrogen, a zero-carbon emitting energy source that has caught the fancy of the world. Several Indian firms including GAIL have announced plans to make hydrogen. Ayushji Agarwal, Assistant Vice President (Strategic Planning & New Initiatives), PIL and Ashu Singhal, Executive Director, GAIL signed the MoU in the presence of PIL CEO Akhil Mehrotra and GAIL Director (Business Development) M V Iyer.

Serum Institute, Symbiosis to set up research centre for vaccine development



The R&D (Research & Development) centre will lead the development of new vaccines, technologies, products and innovations in immunisation practices that provide equitable access to life-saving interventions, especially across Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). The entity will work towards improving health equity against future pandemics and infectious diseases. It will also ensure cross-programme coordination and collaboration, as the facility will be an ecosystem that would also have R&D centres for stem cells, nanotechnology, medical image analysis, applied artificial intelligence and waste resource management, among others. "The research centre will be instrumental in advancing indigenous capabilities for end-to-end development of any futuristic technology and projects in the field of vaccines and biologics in collaboration with global partners," Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla said in a statement.

ADB hints at providing US\$ 2.5 billion loan to cash-strapped Pakistan



and growing repayments and import financing requirements. The Ministry of Finance said on Thursday after a meeting between Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Aisha Ghous Pasha and Country Director of the ADB Yong Ye, The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Friday. "The ADB indicated the additional support of USD 2.5 billion for the next fiscal year, from which USD 1.5 billion to USD 2 billion can be available in the ongoing calendar year," according to the finance ministry. The finance ministry sources said the ADB indicated that it could provide USD 1.5 billion under the Counter-Cyclical Finance Facility and another roughly USD 400 million under the energy sector policy loans, the report said. However, it will be an uphill task to secure the USD 1.5 billion facility on priority due to the requirements and a slow-moving bureaucracy in the Ministry of Economic Affairs that has so far failed to even write a formal letter to the ADB for availing the loan, it said. The Economic Affairs Division (EAD) secretary has not been able to focus on the disbursements of foreign loans that are now falling behind the goals for the third and the fourth quarters, it said.

Emirates Air lost \$1 billion, but that's an 80% improvement

PNS ■ DUBAI

One of the world's biggest airlines and the Mideast's top carrier, Emirates Air, said Friday it lost USD 1.1 billion over the past fiscal year, but that figure still marks an 80% improvement from the year before. The airline said revenue was up 91%, reaching USD 16.1 billion. As Emirates Air claws it way out of the worst of the pandemic, its main hub of Dubai International Airport remains the busiest in international travel.

Emirates expects to climb out of the red and see profits this year as it plans to start paying back its shareholder, the Dubai government, some of the USD 4 billion it threw the airline to stay afloat amid COVID-19 lockdowns.

The carrier's success and financial health is seen as a bellwether of Dubai's own economy, which relies heavily



on tourism, foreign investments and real estate purchases by the world's elite.

The emirate, which is part of the United Arab Emirates, was quick to swing open its doors to foreign travelers with few requirements for entry after a brief, but extremely stringent lockdown period in 2020.

Chairman and chief executive of Emirates, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, said business recovery picked up pace in the second

half of the fiscal year, with demand for travel coming back. It's unclear how much of that was related to travel to visitors coming to Dubai to experience its six-month-long World Fair, or Expo, that ended in March.

The airline had posted a staggering USD 5.5 billion loss in the previous fiscal year — the first time the airline had not churned out a profit in more than three decades.

Swiggy to acquire Dineout

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On-demand convenience platform Swiggy on Friday said it has entered into a definitive agreement with Times Internet to acquire dining out and restaurant tech platform Dineout for an undisclosed sum.

Dineout, which serves diners across its network of 50,000 restaurants in 20 cities, will continue to operate as an independent app post the acquisition, Swiggy said in a statement. Founders of Dineout -- Ankit Mehrotra, Nikhil Bakshi, Sahil Jain and

Vivek Kapoor -- will join Swiggy once the acquisition is completed, it added.

"The acquisition will allow Swiggy to explore synergies and offer new experiences in a high-use category," Swiggy CEO Sriharsha Majety said.

Dineout co-founder & CEO Ankit Mehrotra said, "We strongly feel that with Swiggy's deep understanding of the ecosystem and our shared passion for a superior consumer and restaurant experience, our joint forces will help provide a holistic platform in this industry."



Elon Musk says Twitter deal 'temporarily on hold'

PNS ■ LONDON

Elon Musk said Friday that his planned \$44 billion purchase of Twitter is "temporarily on hold" pending details on spam and fake accounts on the social media platform. It's another twist after signs of internal turmoil amid the Tesla billionaire's planned buyout of the company, including that Twitter fired two of its top managers Thursday. It wasn't clear whether the fake account issue could scuttle the deal.

Iran arrests at least 22 persons protesting staple food price hikes

PNS ■ TEHRAN

Iranian authorities have arrested at least 22 demonstrators who had been protesting sudden price hikes of subsidised staple foods in two southern cities, state media reported early on Friday.

The arrests follow Iran's announcement this week that the cost of cooking oil, chicken, eggs and milk would rise by as much as 300 per cent as food prices surge across the Middle East due to global supply chain snarls and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

G7 unite against Russia; EU pledges funds to Ukraine

PNS ■ WEISSENHAUS

The European Union is giving Ukraine another 500 million euros (\$520 million) to buy heavy weapons to fend off the Russian invasion, the bloc's foreign affairs chief said Friday at a gathering in Germany of top diplomats from the Group of Seven wealthy nations.

Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign policy, said he was also hopeful of getting the bloc's member nations to agree to an oil embargo against Russia soon, despite misgivings from some countries.

"We will provide a new tranche of 500 more millions to support the military of Ukraine," Borrell told reporters ahead of the G-7 meeting in Weissenhaus, on



Germany's Baltic Sea coast. The funds would be allocated for the purchase of heavy weapons and take the EU's total financial support for Ukraine to 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion), he added.

Top diplomats from Germany, Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Japan and the United States also are attending the meeting. They plan to seek more ways to pile pres-

sure on Russia through economic sanctions, isolate Moscow internationally and to counter disinformation spread by Russia, Borrell said.

EU diplomats are scheduled to hold talks Monday on a possible embargo of Russian oil. Hungary has resisted the move because of its heavy dependence on Russian imports, but Borrell expressed optimism.

Agritech startup Fyllo raises US\$ 2 million

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agritech startup Fyllo on Friday said it has raised USD 2 million (over Rs 15 crore) in a funding round led by Triveni Trust, Ninjacart and existing investor IAN. New investors, including Venture Catalysts, StarAgri, Kia Ora Ventures, Singularity Ventures and Mastermind Capital, also took part in the round, the company said in a statement. The capital raised will be used for expansion to new markets and towards research and development to support more crops, it added. The startup has developed crop-specific models for irrigation, nutrients, diseases, pests and weather management for each physiological stage of crop and soil. Its

Internet of Things (IoT) enabled system measures precise requirements of plants on a real-time basis and provides timely advice to farmers. Fyllo co-founders Sudhanshu Rai and Sumit said farmers have seen the impact of technology, and the adaptability has increased. Having received the funding, the company is looking to invest in expanding the brand to new markets and more crops.

On its investment in Fyllo, Triveni Trust managing trustee M K Dhanuka said, "Fyllo's specific, precise and AI-driven advice to farmers helps them increase their crop productivity and lower input cost. 100 per cent customer retention reflects the farmer's confidence in Fyllo's offering."

More lives lost in road accidents than in war, says V K Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India loses more people in road accidents than in a war, Union Minister General (ret'd) V K Singh said on Friday.

Addressing an event organised by industry body ASSOCHAM, Singh said road safety is the most important issue which the government needs to tackle.

"More than 1.35 lakh people lose their lives due to road accidents every year...this number of people whom we lose every year (due to road accidents), is worse than fighting a war," the Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways said.

The minister lamented that unfortunately, road safety is considered something that



comes once a year.

"We have road safety week. We upgraded it to road safety month," he said, adding his view is that it should be a 365-day affair.

"It's not confined to one week, it is not confined to a

month because there is so much at stake," Singh emphasised.

According to recent government data, total 3,66,138 road accidents occurred in India during 2020, causing 1,31,714 deaths.

Escorts Q4 net drops 28 pc to Rs 190 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farm machinery and construction equipment major Escorts Ltd on Friday reported a 28.42 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 189.98 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2022, impacted by lower sales.

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 265.41 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal, Escorts said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated revenue from operations during the quarter under review stood at Rs 1,878.51 crore as against Rs 2,228.75 crore in the year-ago period.

For the quarter ended March 2022, tractor volumes were at 21,895 units, down 32.8 per cent as against 32,588 units in the year-ago period, the company said.

Construction equipment

sales in the fourth quarter were at 1,286 units, down 19.8 per cent from 1,604 units earlier.

For the fiscal ended March 31, 2022, Escorts said its consolidated net profit was at Rs 735.61 crore as compared to Rs 871.63 crore in the previous fiscal, down 15.6 per cent.

Revenue from operations for FY22 came in at Rs 7,238.43 crore as compared to Rs 7,014.42 crore in FY21.

Escorts Ltd Chairman and Managing Director Nikhil Nanda said the farm sector is seeing some positive tailwinds.

"With prediction of a normal monsoon and good news on crop prices and production, we hope this sector will continue to flourish," he said, adding the construction and railway sectors have also shown signs of improvement.

Fynd to hire over 1,200 engineers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

RIL-backed omnichannel platform Fynd on Friday said it plans to hire over 1,200 engineers this year and 30 per cent of them will be recruited from Ahmedabad. From Gujarat, the company will look for skilled developers from python, full stack, NodeJS, angular, java, and DevOps engineers across all levels, it said. "We aim to strengthen the company's existing engineering and product teams and welcome innovative minds to our growth-oriented team of over 640 members. The onboarding of extensive developers from Ahmedabad city shall further support our strenuous efforts of building and delivering next generation cutting edge tech products from scratch," Fynd Co-Founder Farooq Adam said.



Sunny Leone launches 'I Dream of Sunny' fanverse

Actress Sunny Leone has turned 41 on Friday and to treat herself and her fans she has joined hands with HeyHey, an online celeb-engagement platform, as a technology partner for her first-of-its-kind product combining NFTs, AI, fan verse, and more.

On her birthday, Sunny will launch the 'I Dream of Sunny' fan verse owned by Suncity media and Enterprises.

'I Dream of Sunny' is a never-seen-before product that combines NFTs, Artificial Intelligence (AI), fan verse, gaming, lucky draw, winning combination and other similar terms – all rolled into one and minted on the polygon network.

Talking about the new venture,

Sunny said, "I wanted to mark my birthday by launching something which is unique and something which hasn't been done before. I decided to enter the world of NFT through Utilities and gaming because I felt this would help me maintain my connection with my fans better while giving them a unique and fun game at the same time."

In order to be a part of this unique offering from the actress, it is important to purchase NFT cards first, made available on the 'I Dream of Sunny' website from May 13 onwards.

Buying these utility NFTs gives access to the actress' private discord server.

She added: "The concept of a fan verse appealed to me the most and that's how my team and I decided to

create this world where people could connect with me through the game. I am looking forward to my fans obtaining NFT cards and taking part in the weekly game that will be conducted on my private discord server. I will be announcing it on my Instagram handle and other platforms as well weekly to make sure we maximise our reach. I am looking forward to this exciting new world and like always, want this to be a success."

There are four different NFT card variants in the categories which are Silver, Gold, Platinum and Joker which assist in playing the game, and each card comes with bonus features, which will give access to Sunny directly.

They can be in the form of an interaction with Sunny on Zoom, on Instagram Lives, shout-outs from the actress, an opportunity to have coffee or even skydiving with her in Dubai.

Buying the NFT cards is the first step towards being eligible to indulge in the world of 'I Dream of Sunny' gamification.

Commenting on the partnership, Caleb Franklin — Founder & CEO — HeyHey Global, mentioned, "While the NFT industry is rapidly growing, it has also opened a gateway to fan verses and new forms of interactions between celebrities and their fans. Sunny's collaboration with HeyHey for the 'I Dream of Sunny' fan verse is a testament to how celebrities are seeking ways to empower their fan bases with personalised experiences via new-age tech like Web3."

Additionally, Sunny Leone and HeyHey! will leverage the deep expertise of Polygon Studios. The Polygon Studios team will support with a suite of services such as technical solutions, game distribution, asset expansion, industry resources, branding, web3 game design and other aspects to promote the development of Leone's fan verse

Anna Kendrick, Blake Lively to star in *A Simple Favor* sequel

Black comedy crime thriller film *A Simple Favor* is heading for a sequel as Anna Kendrick and Blake Lively are set to reprise their roles with Paul Feig returning to direct as well as produce with Laura Fischer, reports *Deadline*. Jessica Sharzer is writing the screenplay for the film which will be produced under the banner of Feigco Entertainment.

Sharzer will serve as the executive producer.

As per *Deadline*, the first film followed a single mother with a parenting vlog who befriends a secretive upper-class woman who has a child at the same elementary school. When Emily goes

missing, Stephanie takes it upon herself to investigate.

The film enjoyed both critical and commercial success as it minted more than \$97 million at the worldwide box office. Meredith Wieck and Scott O'Brien are overseeing the project for Lionsgate. Lively is set to make her feature directorial debut with *Seconds* for Searchlight, an adaptation of the graphic novel by Scott Pilgrim creator Bryan Lee O'Malley. Kendrick most recently starred in the Netflix drama *Stowaway* and also starred in the first season of HBO Max's *Love Life*. She can be seen next in *Alice, Darling*, which she also exec produced as well as *The Dating Game*.



what's brewing?

Kangana Ranaut: *Dhaakad* has longest fight sequence in Hindi cinema

Evoking the image of an Indian Black Widow, the fiery and enigmatic Agent Agni aka Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut is set to enthrall the audiences in her movie *Dhaakad*.

She recently visited the Capital along with co-actors Arjun Rampal, Divya Dutta, producer Deepak Mukut and director Razneesh Ghai. Kangana and the entire cast talked about their roles and the actress emphasised on the challenges in portraying her fierce and daring personality.

She spoke about how the movie will compete with Kartik Aaryan's *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* at the box office.

Speaking about her look and how she prepared for her role, Kangana shared: "I would like to thank our director for taking up this project and doing a movie with me while everyone suggested to him, 'how you can do your first movie with Kangana'. I tried to give my best."

She added while pointing towards the director: "He was most apprehensive about my weight gain due to *Thalaivii* and always asked me, 'You will lose this weight right? you will lose?; and I used to respond, 'Yes I will', she laughs and adds: "Even I used to think whether I will be able to be in shape again for this role after looking at his face."

Razneesh added what was on his mind when he took up this project and Agent Agni's character: "I wrote the stories for two other guys to portray physically strong woman characters and I wanted to physically push Kangana as she had done *Thalaivii* and so it was a gradual process to lose weight. I wanted to inspire children and today's generation with this movie."

Kangana shared: "I wanted to use fake guns for this movie as I got hurt while shooting for *Manikarnika* but my director was keen that I should use real weapons. As far as my training is concerned, since childhood I have been learning from my action master Surya Narayan



ji, from whom I am learning from the age of 16 or 17, but never got such a role except a few like *Krish* or *Manikarnika*. Moreover, for the movie, a crew came from Hollywood and also from Korea for the training. So, it's a team effort and no single person can be given the credit."

She claimed, "This movie has the longest fight sequence in Hindi cinema, approximately 14 minutes."

Continuing the conversation, Arjun who will be seen as Rudraveer, an international human and arms trafficker in the movie, throws light on his character.

He defined his personality as 'stylish, brutal, lean, evil—someone without feelings.' "I don't think anybody has presented me like this. I am returning to the big screen after a long hiatus, and I don't think I could have had a better opportunity and a better director to come onboard and do this wonderful film."

Divya briefed about playing a grey shaded character, Rohini in the movie: "*Dhaakad* is a really special movie for me. This is espe-

cially true because sometimes, one is able to receive a complete package. This is a totally different sort of role. It's a negative one. I got the opportunity to participate in numerous crazy mean streaks, which was really fun."

"There were some amazing scenes that I think I will remember for the rest of my life. It's something really beautiful. It's so nice to be cast against your type, and that was really wonderful. I am so glad I have the most fabulous co-stars with me. I think I will look back and have a broad smile," she added.

Talking about the competition between *Dhaakad* and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*, Kangana said: "We cannot always get a solo release. It isn't like that these films are releasing on 5000 or 7000 screens. They both can simultaneously come and do well at the same time."

On many Indian movies adapting from foreign films and *Dhaakad* having original content, Kangana said: "Definitely this is an original idea."

Arjun Rampal added: "I would like to add something.

Razneesh and I were talking recently. He received a call from the action directors. They said that the action scenes looked so amazing that they wanted to enter the movie for the action awards that are held in Hollywood."

The actress also shared her perspective about South films doing well and getting a good response from the audience in comparison to Bollywood films.

She said: "I have been the biggest cheerleader for South Indian films. If you see, I was the first one to start the topic of our regional cinema should do well. We all should do something by coming together to save our screens from Hollywood or international films, because the Italian, French and German and English film industries have single-handedly destroyed everyone. We must promote South, Malayalam, Kannada or Punjabi films. We should be scared of the American film industry."

On the question of women centric movies being made less in the industry, Kangana said: "We should look at a film just as a film. We shouldn't attach sexuality to it."

Divya also asserted: "I think we should cease demarcating women-centric and men-centric movies. Once this happens, normalcy will come by itself."

Arjun concluded: "We have come from an era when women had limited rights and there was no equality. Ever since I've arrived in the film industry, I've done at least one women-oriented movie per year. I think that this is because my support system is primarily comprised of women, which includes my mother, my sister, and now my daughters."

Directed by Razneesh Ghai, *Dhaakad* is presented by Soham Rockstar Entertainment Pvt Ltd in association with Kamal Mukut, Sohail Maklai Productions and Asylum Films. It features Kangana Ranaut as Agent Agni in the lead role with Arjun Rampal, Divya Dutta and Saswata Chatterjee in supporting roles.

FUN

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



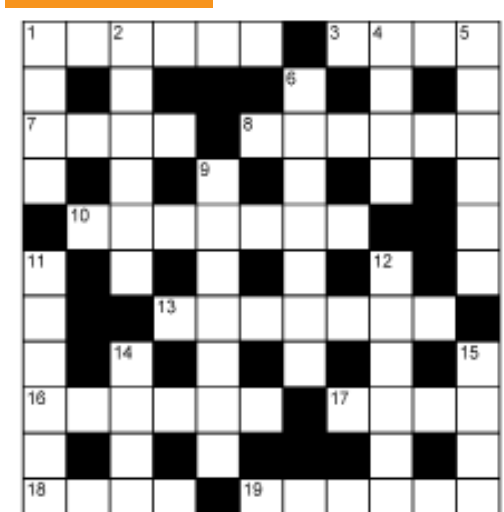
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 A sheep's coat
- 3 Halt
- 7 A tangle in your hair
- 8 Get
- 10 Sets fire to
- 13 Courage
- 16 Disappear
- 17 Thought
- 18 Lines
- 19 A bird that is raced for sport

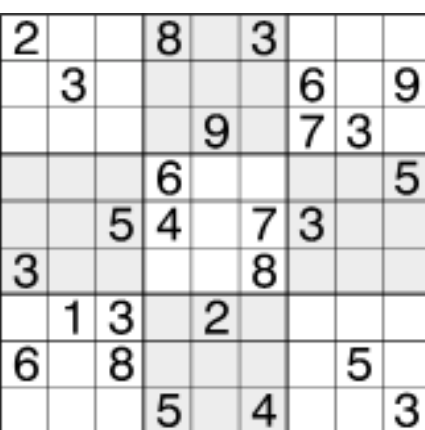
DOWN

- 1 Counterfeit
- 2 As much as is needed
- 4 Rip
- 5 Draw with this

- 6 Watch
- 9 Female tiger
- 11 Tremble with cold
- 12 A bed for a baby
- 14 Cold winter flakes
- 15 Sunrise



SUDOKU

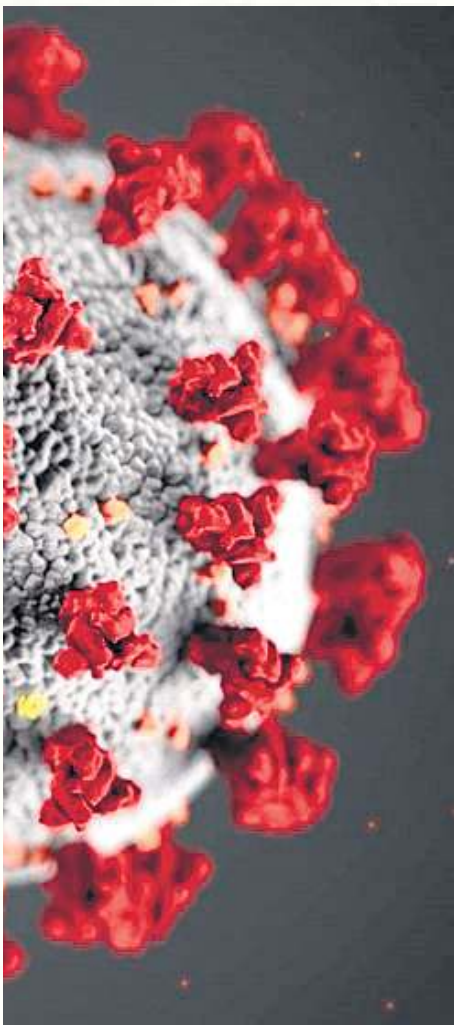


Yesterday's solution								
8	4	2	9	1	5	3	7	6
5	9	6	7	3	2	8	4	1
1	7	3	8	6	4	5	9	2
3	6	4	2	5	9	7	1	8
2	8	1	4	7	3	9	6	5
9	5	7	6	8	1	4	2	3
4	1	5	3	2	7	6	8	9
6	2	9	5	4	8	1	3	7
7	3	8	1	9	6	2	5	4

Rules

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

Attention! Beware of Omicron XE Variant symptoms in kids



Syndrome in children) and post-COVID induced diabetes. Other than that, it has been suggested that as with all coronavirus strains, it is best to follow COVID appropriate behaviour and safety mitigation steps like frequent handwashing, wearing masks, limited interactions in closed rooms and social distancing.”

Keeping all of this in mind, it is advised that parents vaccinate their children, consult your pediatrician, and stay calm.

This variant mainly has an effect on the upper respiratory tract and children tend to have higher upper respiratory tract infections as compared to adults making them more vulnerable. The first symptoms are a sore throat, then a dry cough and fever, perspiration, weakness—all the symptoms typical of acute upper respiratory diseases.

The Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus has been the object of immense speculation in global and domestic media. Presently, Omicron is the predominant strain in circulation. While the transmission rate of Omicron in comparison with other variants of concern is higher, available data suggests that disease caused by this strain is less severe than other COVID strains. Omicron has also been a cause of anxiety because of parents concern regarding their children. Seeing as those aged less than 12 years are still not eligible for vaccination, impact of Omicron on children is a point of concern.

In discussions with pediatricians who had the experi-

ence of treating children in the last wave and from data presently available, the infection in children mostly presented with fever, sore throat and rhinorrhoea. Little to no complications were observed. Also as compared to adults, the post COVID infection period was associated with less malaise.

Dr Abhilasha Kochhar, Sr. Microbiologist, Metropolis Healthcare Ltd, “It is recommended and encouraged to vaccinate children in eligible age group i.e., 12 years and above as on the day of vaccination (as per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare guidelines). This will help in reducing severity of disease and complications such as MIS-C (Multi System Inflammatory

Dr Supriya Awasthi, Professor, School of Allied Health Sciences, Noida International Institute of Medical Sciences, “Cold-like symptoms such as a runny nose, persistent sneezing, sore throat along with a headache and cough had become more common. In children, Omicron can lead to gastrointestinal illnesses with symptoms including high fever, diarrhoea, and vomiting, which may cause dehydration.

If you notice any of these symptoms, we recommend that you be tested immediately, so that you can begin the treatment process on time. Otherwise, it will be more difficult to avoid complications.”

Hyderabad, a special home away from home

TALIB ZAFFER

When Fowzia Afaq (now Dr Fowzia Afaq) from the valley of Kashmir came to Hyderabad in 2011, little did she know about what was there in the store for her.

In this edition of the Hyderabad, we bring to you the deeply intimate association of Dr Fowzia with the city. Right from how Hyderabad shaped her career to her wedding shopping, meeting the King Khan to meeting her husband for the first time, everything about her journey from a girl who came here to learn to a

woman who professes.

Association with Hyderabad:

My association with the place started way back in 2011, although there was a gap in between. I came here to do my masters. I wanted to do my masters in Urdu literature first, but I was from a mass media background so I studied the subject at Maulana Azad University. After that I had to go back home for a couple of years. But in 2015, I got my PhD admission back here. I completed my PhD by around 2019, went back home again, and now I teach here as an Assistant Professor. The association with the city has

helped me shape my career and life. I came here as a young girl and now I am here as a woman who is an assistant professor, that is a journey in itself.

Best memory in Hyderabad:

I have a lot of good memories here-going out with friends, roaming around the city, making documentary

cuisines. Everything about Hyderabad is so welcoming. It feels like a mix of many cultures that has space for everyone. And, especially coming from a Muslim family, the city in itself is very relatable.

On the other hand, for a Kashmiri girl who has grown up around Mountains and lakes the summers are very harsh here. Along with that, the traffic jams are the only things that I would want to change about the city.

Meeting my husband here:

I met my husband here for the first time at a University program. So, in a way, most of the good things in my life have actually happened here. After we got married because he was already working here, I decided to settle here too with him. I also love literature, especially Urdu literature. I have met a lot of people here who appreciated and enhanced my interest and craft in poetry. I even met my best teachers here, who guided and supported me all the way through, which honestly I might have never gotten in Kashmir.

Sense of security:

As a woman I feel Hyderabad is a very safe place compared to various parts of the country. You can go anywhere you want all alone without any sort of fear. There is a sense of inclusiveness here. Nobody treats you differently because of where you come from. I even did all my wedding shopping here. I even met my best friends Musheera, Afsana, Najma here. This city has given me a lot. It has become my second home and it will always have a special place in my Heart.

films, but if I had to choose one I would choose when I got the Gold medal for my masters in our convocation in 2016. That day they had invited ShahRukh Khan, the President of India and Sanjiv Saraf, the founder of Rekhta. Also, the day I got my PHD in 2019. These days will always be etched in memory because they changed my life.

Everything about Hyderabad is so welcoming:

I absolutely love this city; the people, the culture, and the



Budget-friendly ways to make your home look stylish



Home is the most prized possession in an individual's life. We generally view our house to be a warm resting place after a long hectic day. People tend to be always on board for making changes and redoing interiors to keep it updated while following the ongoing trends. We have that uncontrollable urge to make it complete with all things necessary so that nothing is missing from our own little paradise. Changing your interiors can generally take a toll considering the heavy cost that includes the price. Find below some perfect Budget-friendly ways to make your home look stylish as Priti Lohiya, MD, Priti International Ltd. lists them:

Incorporate multi-function furniture:

Multi-function furniture has become the new normal post-pandemic. These multi-utility furniture pieces do the trick and enhance your interiors while bearing minimal cost. Look out for a sofa-cum-bed which can

be used dually for the price of one. Similarly, coffee tables can act as a light refreshment table and work desks during office hours. These space-saving furniture items don't make a hole in your pockets.

Go for the minimalist decor trend:

Minimalistic interiors are the current ongoing trend in the home decor industry. Less is more is what is portrayed through this trend. Minimalistic approach tends to do justice to redoing your house by maximising spaces with minimum furniture. This is a quick method for invigorating the vibe of your space by revising the furnishings. Make the ideal use of the space while putting your furnishings. Make a format that will make your home look more open.

Add that much-needed lighting effect:

The lighting in the house can have a major

effect. Guarantee that there is a great deal of regular light coming in over the course of the day. To make it a comfortable climate in the evening, you should simply add lights, pixie lights, or candles. Follow this home stylistic layout thought for your room to add a heartfelt vibe.

Add colours:

You can change the appearance of the house by switching around your textures. Change your cushion covers, floor carpets and rugs, and draperies to give your space a new and fresh look. A definitive home-style thought for your living room is to layer various surfaces with different colors. This will add that little additional oomph to your family room.

Styling your home can be a daunting task. Make sure you enjoy this process and incorporate your vibe into your interiors. Little efforts can make a remarkable difference. Go ahead and use these tips for that perfect makeover of your house.



Donnarumma says PSG must choose him or Navas next season

AP ■ PARIS

Gianluigi Donnarumma has warned Paris Saint-Germain that they must choose between him and rival goalkeeper Keylor Navas next season.

Italian Donnarumma signed from AC Milan last summer to join veteran Navas, 35, who has been in the French capital since leaving Real Madrid in 2019.

Despite stressing his "very good relationship" with Navas, Donnarumma insisted it was out of the question to share the job next season.

"No, I think it will surely not happen like that, because I think the club will make choices," Donnarumma said.

"We're two good guys, we understand the situation, but it was hard, and for him too, but let's say that we managed it well."

Donnarumma said "yes of course" he wanted to stay next season with his contract running until 2026.

The 23-year-old lifted his first league title with PSG, while for Costa Rican Navas it was a second in France to join the La Liga trophy and three Champions League trophies he won in Spain.

"It's beautiful, it's my first league title, I'm very happy, and it's my first trophy with the Paris Saint-Germain shirt," said

Donnarumma.

"I'm very proud to belong to a great, very ambitious club, always aiming higher."

Donnarumma arrived in France after being named the best player in the European championships which Italy won.

"The debut was not easy, because it was my first outside Italy, in a new club, a new city (but) pressure, no," explained Donnarumma, who had spent six years in Milan.

"I feel a big family behind me, a big club, the welcome was great, and after it was easier for me."

Donnarumma said it hadn't been an "easy" season, giving it seven out of 10.

"I know I can do more," he said. "I haven't played so many matches, only half, that wasn't easy. In the conditions I experienced, I couldn't give the maximum, but I'm convinced that I can give a lot more to this team and this club."

In addition to PSG's Champions League exit to Real Madrid in the last 16, Donnarumma's Italy failed to qualify for a second straight World Cup.

"It was hard, very hard," he sighed.

"The following days were very difficult, but there is no going back. What we did at the Euro will remain in history, we have achieved something incredible."

It's Liverpool vs Chelsea in FA Cup final



AP ■ LONDON

Liverpool will bid to keep their quadruple chase alive in Saturday's FA Cup final against a Chelsea side hoping to welcome incoming owner Todd Boehly with victory at Wembley.

Jürgen Klopp's men have four matches left in their historic attempt to become the first English team to win all four major trophies in one season.

They beat Chelsea to lift the League Cup in February and have reached the finals of the FA Cup and Champions League, where they face Real Madrid on May 28.

No English club has come this close to such an incredible clean sweep, but Liverpool know their hopes of winning the Premier League are starting to fade.

Manchester City moved three points clear of the second-placed Reds

with a 5-1 win at Wolves on Wednesday and need four points from their last two games against West Ham and Aston Villa to retain the crown.

If a second English title in three seasons proves beyond Liverpool despite their blistering form in the second half of the season, then winning two more cup competitions would be a memorable consolation.

First up is a rematch with Chelsea, who fought gamely in an intense League Cup final in February before Liverpool prevailed 11-10 in the shootout that followed a 0-0 draw.

Liverpool and Chelsea are the first English teams to meet in both domestic finals in the same year since Arsenal and Sheffield Wednesday in 1993.

Klopp's side will hope they emulate Arsenal, who did the cup double against Wednesday that season.

But, in their 60th game this season,



Man City unveil Aguero statue

AP ■ MANCHESTER

One of the most famous moments in Premier League history has been immortalized outside the Etihad Stadium in Manchester.

To mark the 10-year anniversary of Sergio Aguero's title-clinching goal against Queens Park Rangers in 2012, Manchester City unveiled a statue of the Argentine striker celebrating his dramatic strike.

"Truthfully, it is a very beautiful thing for me, to see myself 10 years ago is very moving," Aguero said.

"In those 10 years, I was able to win a lot of trophies and was able to help the club become one of the most important in the world."

"I am very grateful to the club for making this statue in recognition of my football career in Manchester. It is something very special."

fatigue could be a threat to Liverpool's hopes of a first FA Cup triumph since 2006. In a bid to keep his stars fresh, Klopp made several changes in Tuesday's win at Villa, yet still lost Brazil midfielder Fabinho to an injury that rules him out of the final.

The history chasers will be back on league duty at Southampton on Tuesday and, aware of the strain on the squad, Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson called for one last push, starting at Wembley.

Villa seal permanent deal for Coutinho



AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Aston Villa completed the permanent signing of Barcelona playmaker Philippe Coutinho on Thursday in a deal the La Liga club said is worth 20 million euros.

The Brazilian has impressed since arriving at Villa on loan in January after struggling to make an impact at Barcelona.

Barca confirmed the transfer includes a 50 percent sell-on clause

if Coutinho leaves Villa.

The former Liverpool star, who has scored four times and contributed three assists for Villa, has agreed a contract that runs until 2026.

"This is a brilliant signing for Aston Villa," Villa boss Steven Gerrard told the club's website.

"Phil is a model professional and his impact on the group has been very clear since he joined in January."

Spurs win North London derby

AP ■ LONDON

Harry Kane scored twice as Tottenham beat 10-man Arsenal 3-0 on Thursday with a north London derby masterclass that kept alive their hopes of finishing in the Premier League's top four.

Antonio Conte's side would have been eliminated from the race to qualify for next season's Champions League if they had lost to their bitter rivals on Thursday.

But Kane tormented Arsenal once again as the Tottenham striker opened the scoring with a controversial penalty.

Crucially, Arsenal's Rob Holding was sent off for two bookings in seven minutes.

Kane netted again before the interval and Son Heung-min bagged Tottenham's third goal in the second half.

Instead of sealing a return to the Champions League for the first time since the 2016-17 season, fourth-placed Arsenal now face a nerve-jangling conclusion to the top-four battle.

Arsenal still hold a slender advantage, but the end of their four-match winning run leaves them just one point ahead of fifth-placed Tottenham, with both sides having two games left.



Conte said several weeks ago that it would be a "miracle" if Tottenham reached the Champions League given their lowly position when he replaced the sacked Nuno Espirito Santo in November.

But their victory in arguably the biggest north London derby since Arsenal won the league at White Hart Lane in 2004 ensured that miracle could still come true.

Conte believes finishing in the top four is "like winning

a title in another country, a big achievement" given the depth of talent and wealth at the top of the Premier League.

To decide who takes the lucrative prize, Tottenham host struggling Burnley on Sunday then travel to relegated Norwich, while Mikel Arteta's men visit Newcastle on Monday and entertain Everton.

Arteta's bewildered expression throughout Arsenal's capitulation suggested it is far from certain he will be able to

lift his players to finish the job.

Third-placed Chelsea, five points above Tottenham, will likely need a draw from their last two games to be sure of their top-four place given their vastly superior goal difference.

As well as the huge European stakes for both sides, Tottenham also felt lingering resentment about Arsenal's successful appeal to have this fixture postponed in January due to Covid and injury problems.

Benzema equals Raul's Real goal record

AP ■ MADRID

Karim Benzema continues to add his name to Real Madrid's record books, scoring his 323rd goal on Thursday to draw level with Raúl González as the club's second-highest scorer behind Cristiano Ronaldo.

Benzema netted in the first half of the team's 6-0 rout of last-place Levante in the Spanish league, with Madrid having secured the title a few rounds ago.

The result sealed Levante's relegation after five consecutive years in the first division.

Vinicius Junior, Benzema's trusted attacking partner all season, scored a hat trick for Madrid as it continues to prepare for the Champions League final against Liverpool in Paris on May 28, when it will try to win a record-extending 14th European title.

Benzema is now 128 goals shy of the 451 scored by Ronaldo, who played at the club until 2018.

Benzema's close-range header in the 19th minute off a cross by Vinicius gave the French striker his league-leading 27th goal, which is nine better than any other player in the competition this season. He has scored more than a third of Madrid's 77



league goals so far.

It was the 20th goal in the last 15 matches in all competitions for Benzema, who has been key in the team's run to the Champions League final, scoring decisive goals in every knockout round of the European tournament — including two hat tricks.

He could have added another goal on Thursday but unselfishly fed Vinicius the ball for the team's fifth after clearing the goalkeeper inside the area.

Vinicius had netted his first goal in the first half before closing the scoring in the final minutes for his maiden hat trick with Madrid. Ferland Mendy and Rodrygo scored their goals before halftime. Benzema was replaced in the 75th along with Luka Modric, who set up three of Madrid's goals.

Lewa turns down Bayern extension

MUNICH: Robert Lewandowski has opened the door to a high-profile transfer after telling Bayern Munich that he will not be extending his contract beyond June 2023 when it expires, German media reported on Friday.

The 33-year-old Poland international forward has scored 343 goals for Bayern

and twice picked up FIFA's Player of the Year Award since joining from Dortmund in 2014.

"Goal machine Robert Lewandowski will leave the club no later than the summer of 2023," claimed the daily *Sport Bild*.

"In recent weeks, FIFA's 2021 Player of the Year told

his bosses at Bayern that he would not extend his contract, which is still valid for one year."

The Sport1 site, citing its own sources, confirmed this information.

According to several reports, Lewandowski has recently been in contact with Barcelona. AP

Tsitsipas sees off Sinner to reach Rome semis

AP ■ ROME

Stefanos Tsitsipas reached the semi-finals of the Italian Open on Friday after beating local hero Jannick Sinner 7-6 (7/5) 6-2 in a match which was stopped for over 10 minutes at match point after a spectator fell ill.

World number five Tsitsipas has already won the Monte Carlo Masters this season and reached the last four in impressive style against Italian Sinner, who was in his first ever Rome quarter-final.

Next up Tsitsipas will face Alexander Zverev, who made the semis after comfortably seeing off Cristian Garin, the only unseeded player left in the tournament, 7-5, 6-2.

It will be the third time in the space of a month that the German will meet the Greek in the last four, with the pair sharing the honours from clashes in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

The Greek finally took the opening set after breaking Sinner to take

the tie-break to 6-5 and from their his opponent didn't recover.

The fervent atmosphere was finally dampened when Tsitsipas broke Sinner in game three and world number 13 Sinner had no reply, losing his serve again to love in game seven.

Sinner's fate seem sealed but at match point for Tsitsipas someone in the crowd appeared to collapse and play was stopped amid loud whistles directed at the umpire who wanted to continue.

What seemed like an age passed before the spectator was stretched out of centre court and Tsitsipas could finally serve his match point, and a simple passing shot from Sinner's miscalculated drop shot sent him through.

SABALENKA WINS

Tsitsipas will take number four spot in the world rankings on Monday after Rafael Nadal's shock third-round exit at the hands of Denis Shapovalov on Thursday night.



Shapovalov faces Casper Ruud knowing a win would give him a possible semi-final against Novak Djokovic, who is in action in the day's final match against Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Djokovic needs to beat Canada's Auger-Aliassime in order to maintain top spot in the world rankings, a position he has held for a record 369 weeks.

Aryna Sabalenka reached the women's semi-finals after beating Amanda Anisimova 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 and setting up a potential clash with world number one Iga Swiatek.

Third seed Sabalenka beat American Anisimova for the first time in five attempts and now awaits the result of Swiatek's last-eight match with Bianca Andreescu.

Anisimova had ended Sabalenka's Madrid title defence in the first round at the end of last month. Swiatek, the reigning champion in Rome, is on a run of 25 straight wins and gunning for a fifth tournament victory in a row.

Nadal knocked out by Shapovalov



AP ■ ROME

Rafael Nadal crashed out of the Italian Open in the third round on Thursday after falling to a shock 1-6, 7-5, 6-2 defeat at the hands of Denis Shapovalov.

Defeat in Rome for 'King of Clay' Nadal casts doubt over his prospects at the upcoming French Open, where he has been crowned champion 13 times but faces a threat from teenage phenomenon Carlos Alcaraz.

The 35-year-old had been out for six weeks with a rib injury before returning for last week's tournament in Madrid, and he began limping in the third set.

Nadal has won an all-time record 21 Grand Slam titles in a glittering two-decade career which may now finally be reaching its downturn.

World number 16 Shapovalov, who had pushed Nadal all the way when knocked out at this stage of the tournament last year, will now face Casper Ruud in the quarter-finals.

“I want to explore the city more,” says Pavitra Nayak

PNS | HYDERABAD

Nuvvu Nenu Prema, Star Maa's new project, which is the adaptation of a popular Star Plus daily soap *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?* is going live on the channel from May 16. This project will see yet another new face making her way in Telugu tinsel-town. Ahead of the launch, we caught up with the leading actress of the serial Pavithra B Naik. Pavithra is originally from Bengaluru, Karnataka and has worked in the Sandalwood entertainment industry. This is the first time that she is acting in Telugu and her experience, she says has been memorable. “This is the first time that I am doing a Telugu project. I knew the language a little bit but wasn't as fluent in it, so had to work on it,” said the actress. When we asked what made her choose this project to debut in Telugu industry, she credits her debut to her character in the serial, which is lively and bubbly. She feels her character is so relatable to everyone. “I really liked the character because this is the first time that I am doing such a character, so it was a chal-



allenge. I have done many characters in Kannada and there I have done more of soft characters and of girls

who are very less spoken and reserved, this is different so I like it,” said the youngster. Like any other new entrant, Pavithra is head over heels about this project and can't wait for the audience to watch her on their screens. “The preparation for this was very good, I was very happy when they approached me for this serial. This is a remake of the well-known Hindi serial *Iss Pyaar ko kya naam doon*. I was a fan of this serial beforehand. I used to follow it from day 1 till its last episode. Since I already knew about the character, I am very much related to the serial because I have a sister in real life and even the character has a sister. The character is similar to what I am in real life,” she added. Sharing about her association with the city of pearls, the actress said, “I have been here only a few times, on trips with my friends mostly. Now that I am here for work, I would love to explore the City. Even the cast and crew of Nuvvu Nenu Prema was very supportive, I was so happy when they offered me the role, and working with my co-star Swaminathan was great, he was also very cooperative.” The show will air every Monday to Saturday at 6.30 pm on Star Maa.

Films to watch this week on OTT

1. Bhala Thandanana



The film directed by Chaitanya Dantuluri of *Banam* fame featured Catherine Tresa as the female lead and Ramachandra Rau as the antagonist. According to the latest, the film's OTT premieres are confirmed. The film will be streamed on Disney+ Hotstar OTT from May 20.

2. RRR



RRR the S.S. Rajamouli-directed film that took the country

by storm with its box office receipts will now be released on OTT a few months after its worldwide theatrical release. Jr NTR and Ram Charan's epic *RRR* will be released on a popular OTT on May 20 ON Zee 5.

3. Morbius (Telugu dub)



The superhero film *Morbius* hit the Indian cinema theaters on April 1, 2022. Helmed by Daniel Espinosa, *Morbius* is based on a Marvel Comics character of the

same name which was written by Roy Thomas along with Gil Kane. The film is made under the big banners Columbia Pictures with the collaboration of Marvel Entertainment. The Telugu dubbed version of *Morbius* will release on the OTT platform BMS Stream on May 19.

4. Acharya

Chiranjeevi and Ram Charan-starrer *Acharya* to have global digital premiere on Prime Video on 20 May. The Telugu action drama also stars Kajal Aggarwal, Pooja Hegde, Sonu Sood and Jisshu Sengupta in pivotal roles.



Director Atlee appreciates the team of Don

The film 'Don,' which hit the screens on May 13, is directed by Siva Karthikeyan and has received positive reviews from all quarters. Leaving the illogical cinematic liberties apart, the film is said to contain equal amounts of comedy and emotion. Tamil director Atlee, who took to Twitter, congratulated the entire team as he wrote, “Don emotional family entertainer @Siva_Kartikeyan super performance da, lovely

film, thanks for giving an opportunity to debut director, mass da” Dir_Cibi director sir, so proud of you da,

great movie emotionally moved to keep rocking love you da. Congrats to the entire team”, Atlee added.

A video was also posted by the director of ‘Theri’, along with the above message, which was shot from the theatre during his watch.

‘Don’, starring Sivakarthikeyan, SJ Suryah, and Samuthirakani and directed by Cibi

Chakravarthi, is a fun entertainer with a message. While the ending is a little preachy, ‘Don’ manages to impress for the most part.

Siva Karthikeyan's next project will be with Telugu director Anudeep, who is best known for the superhit parody drama ‘Jathi Ratnalu.’ Rashmika Mandanna and Ritu

Varma will play the female lead in this bilingual Telugu-Tamil film.



It's official! Samuthirakani to direct Pawan Kalyan's upcoming multi-starrer

Samuthirakani, who plays one of the main characters in the recently released *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, has revealed details about his upcoming project.

Samuthirakani confirmed in a recent candid interview that he will soon direct Pawan Kalyan.

“Fans will receive good news soon. As I am myself a fan of Pawan Kalyan, I will direct Pawan Kalyan keeping a fan's point of view in consideration,” says

Samuthirakani. Pawan Kalyan will star in an intriguing remake of the Tamil film *Vinodhaya Sitham*, as previously reported. The Telugu remake will be directed by actor Samuthirakani, who also directed the Tamil version. In this much-anticipated remake, Pawan Kalyan and his nephew Sai Dharam Tej will star together.

Trivikram Srinivas is also expected to pen the screenplay. Featuring Samuthirakani,

Thambi Ramaiah, and Munishkanth in the lead roles, the original movie *Vinodhaya Sitham* was released last year. The story revolves around a tragic car accident, in which a self-centered and dominating man dies, and on his request, he is given an additional 90 days to live so that he can make things right.

The Telugu remake of *Vinodhaya Sitham* is expected to begin in July.

Sharma while Amcha's lines were penned by Amol Surve. Similarly, Banaras-based characters of Meenakumari and Sunaina's dialogues were written by Ranveer Pratap Singh while Darkie and Festish Girl's dialogues were penned by Jaya Mishra and Siddharth Kumar Tewary. The

cast includes Jaaved Jaferi, Shweta Tripathi Sharma, Sumedh Mudgalkar, Swastika Mukherjee, Plabita Borthakur, Walsucha D'Souza, Ritvik Sahore, Geetika Vidya Ohlyan, Jagjeet Sandhu, Rohit Chandel and child actor Aadyaa Sharma among others.



Important to strike a balance with social media exposure, says Siddharth

Actor Siddharth has been a part of numerous projects but has never essayed the role of a content moderator, which incidentally is his next performance in Disney+ Hotstars upcoming series — *Escapade Live*. Sharing details about his character in his OTT debut project, Siddharth spelt out his own views on social media as well.

“I play a content moderator in *Escapade Live*. It's a character that enables you to see the world of *Escapade* through him and his ambitions and motivations. As far as social media is concerned in today's world, it's important to strike a balance to its exposure. Excess of anything is bad. And in today's time, people need to have more real interactions as compared to virtual gratification. The internet is a make-believe place which mirrors your real life. An individual needs to be as careful as one can be.”

Escapade Live is a fictional story,

penned by Jaya Mishra and Siddharth Kumar Tewary, that could very well be true and real. The story features a bunch of content creators, on different paths but one goal, to produce viral content to emerge victorious in a life-changing competition announced by the hottest new app in the country called *Escapade Live*. Produced under Siddharth Kumar Tewary's One Life Studios, the nine-episode series emphasizes on the human tendency to be competitive and the drive to succeed. The series explores the lengths content creators and tech giants are willing to travel to achieve their aspirations.

Set across different cities of India, the series leveraged different dialogue writers for each city to add regional authenticity. Dance Rani story based in Jaisalmer saw her dialogues being penned by Vinod