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VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY, MAY 23, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



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TO DEBUT WITH
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IMRAN KHAN AGAIN PRAISES INDIA FOR REDUCING FUEL PRICES

Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan has once again praised India for reducing fuel prices with the help of "discounted oil" from Russia, saying this is what his government was working to achieve with the help of an "independent foreign policy." The Indian government on Saturday cut excise duty on petrol by a record Rs 8 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 6 per litre to give relief to consumers battered by high fuel prices that have also pushed inflation to a record high. It also decided to give Rs 200 per cylinder subsidy to Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries for 12 cylinders in a year.

WOMAN BOOKED FOR KILLING PUPPY AFTER THROWING IT FROM BUILDING

A woman was booked for allegedly killing a puppy by throwing it from the third floor of a residential building in Bhavnagar city in Gujarat, police said on Sunday. Asha Lumba threw a stray puppy from the third floor of the residential building on Saturday afternoon, and it was found dead in the parking lot of the complex, a Nilambaug police station official said. "An FIR was lodged against her under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and section 429 (mischief by killing or maiming cattle, etc.) of the Indian Penal Code on the complaint of a woman who runs an animal helpline," the official said.

10-YEAR-OLD SKATER GIRL FROM MUMBAI CLIMBS EVEREST BASE CAMP

In a rare accomplishment, 10-year-old skater Rhythm Mamania from Mumbai became one of the youngest Indian mountaineers to climb the Everest base camp, a trek which she completed in 11 days. Her parents - Harshal and Urmi - accompanied her during the trek earlier this month. "Rhythm, a Class 5 student from MET Rishikul Vidyalaya in suburban Bandra, reached the Everest base camp on May 6 at around 1 pm," her mother Urmi told PTI on Sunday. The base camp is situated at 5,364 metres and it took 11 days for her to complete the expedition, she said.

'THE SOUND OF MUSIC', 'HAIRSPRAY LIVE!' TO MAKE TV DEBUT IN INDIA

"The Sound of Music", "Hairspray Live!" and "Peter Pan Live!" are among the four globally award-winning musical stage productions to make their debut on Indian television, announced Zee Theatre, a platform that curates and produces plays. Tata Play Theatre, a TV channel, will host the screening of these musicals which will begin with "The Sound of Music Live!" on May 29 at 2pm and 8pm, followed by "Hairspray Live!" and "Peter Pan Live!" and "Billy Elliot: The Musical". "Indian audiences are no stranger to musicals. Our cinema and theatrical traditions thrive on musicality and dance. Musicals are also a huge part of Broadway and West End and we have curated some that will resonate the most with Indian audiences," said Shailja Kejriwal.

WEF SUMMIT - 2022

CM opens AP Pavilion, meets industry captains

PNS ■ DAVOS

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had a busy day at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2022 here on Sunday meeting dignitaries, Captains of industries besides inaugurating the AP Pavilion and showcasing the investment opportunities in the State.

The Chief Minister inaugurated the AP Pavilion which has the slogan 'People, Progress and Possibilities' which depicts the prowess of the State for the flow of investments and explains the various policies of the Government besides the geographic advantage with the long coastline among other thrust areas for business partnerships.

Initially the Chief Minister held discussions with Prof. Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of WEF on the potential areas including transforming governance, investing in future areas of education, healthcare, skilling, economic growth and recovery, infrastructure development, port-led industrialization, and how the WEF platform can be leveraged to meet environmental and social governance objectives of the State.

Prof. Schwab was impressed at the potential of Andhra Pradesh, consid-



ered as the Food Hub of India and has the largest rice belt. He emphasized the important role which could be played by the state in addressing the food shortages. Prof. Schwab, the German-born engineer, welcomed the advanced manufacturing partnership and extended the commitment of the WEF in meeting the objectives laid out in the agreement.

Later, the Chief Minister met Dr. Shyam Bishen, Head of Health and Healthcare, WEF and discussed collaborating with the Forum on healthcare,

biotechnology and innovation. He hailed the initiatives taken by Government of Andhra Pradesh in building resilient healthcare system through the YSR Village Health Clinics for every 2,000 population, Village / Ward Secretariats decentralized system, ensuring schemes and service benefits to all citizens, Universal Health Coverage - Dr YSR Aarogyasri - end-to-end cashless health care services, among others.

Jagan woos investors to turn State into a manufacturing hub

PNS ■ DAVOS

On the inaugural day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Summit 2022, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has stressed the need for modernisation of the manufacturing sector to make the State a manufacturing hub with a focus on green energy and advocated key infrastructure and port-led industrialisation

while there was an appreciation for the education and health policies being pursued by the government and the State was seen as a potential area for investments.

The Chief Minister held discussion with Pedro Gomez Head of Shaping the Future of Mobility and D Maya Ben Dror of Sustainable Automotive and Mobility, WEF.



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in conversation with World Economic Forum (WEF) Founder, Prof. Klaus Schwab, at Davos on Sunday.

Pawan hails cut in fuel prices by Centre, wants AP to follow suit

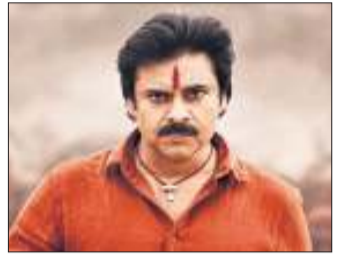
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief K Pawan Kalyan has asked the YSRCP-led Andhra Pradesh government to reduce the price of petrol and diesel on the lines of the Central government.

In a statement here on Sunday, he said that he feels the people who were hit hard by the rising prices may get some relief if the State government also reduces the prices of petrol and diesel.

"I wholeheartedly welcome the decision taken by the Central Government's top leadership to decrease the excise duty on petrol and diesel. As a result, it is commendable that the prices of petrol and diesel brought down to the tune of Rs 9.50 and Rs 7 per litre respectively," he said.

"I wish the Andhra Pradesh government too must follow the Central Government's way. The local taxes on the fuel prices are more in Andhra Pradesh than in other states. On one side, the people of Andhra Pradesh are facing difficulty travelling on the damaged roads and are hit hard with repairs to their vehicles on the other. The government is collecting Rs 600 crore from the people



in the name of cess on petrol and diesel sales every year. Even so, the situation of taking up road repairs is not seen anyway. At least, I request that the YSRCP government must consider the people's demand to reduce the local cess on petrol and diesel to give them relief," the Jana Sena chief said.

Pawan Kalyan said that the reason for the rise in essential commodities is increasing the fuel prices and added that he feels that with the decision of the BJP government, the lower-income groups and middle-class people may get relief as there is a possibility for a fall in the prices of essential commodities to some extent.

The reduction of Rs 200 on gas cylinders being given under the PM Ujjwala Yojana scheme would certainly help the poor people economically, Pawan Kalyan added.



Murder case registered against YSRCP MLC

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In an interesting turn to the controversial death of YSRCP MLC Anant Uday Bhaskar's former car driver Subramanyam, the post-mortem report has revealed that it is a case of murder. The police registered a murder case against the MLC Anant Uday Bhaskar and began a search for him. Sources said that the post-mortem report revealed that the deceased suffered multiple injuries which led to his death. SP Ravindranath Babu said that the case was being changed to a murder case and the accused MLC would be taken into custody.

Political slugfest on Jagan's London stopover continues

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Political slugfest continued on Sunday also over Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's overnight stay in London on Friday while on his way to Davos in Switzerland to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF). While YSRCP leaders strongly defended Jagan's London stopover citing air traffic regulations, TDP leaders continued their attack. They are not ready to buy the argument put forth by ruling party leaders.

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath on Saturday said that after leaving Gannavaram airport in Vijayawada, Jagan's flight landed in Istanbul, Turkey, for refuelling. There

was a delay due to heavy air traffic arriving in London. "In London also, there was heavy air traffic and as flights are not allowed to land in Zurich after 10 pm, the Chief Minister was forced to make a night halt in London. On Saturday morning, the Chief Minister was ready to leave London. But pilots need to complete their mandatory period of rest as per the DGCA rules," Buggan Rajendranath said.

However, TDP leaders termed the London halt as pre-planned and pre-fixed.

TDP spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhiram while slamming leader Buggana Raendranath said Jagan's flight had a stopover in Istanbul for refuelling for two hours. There was

no delay but the Ministers were saying the London trip became unavoidable because of the delay in refuelling, he said.

Pattabhi also said that Zurich airport's official website showed that over 20 flights landed at Zurich airport after 10 pm on the day of Jagan's tour.

He further said that Zurich airport website clearly showed that Jagan's flight would arrive from London. From this, it was clear Jagan's London visit was pre-planned and that totally wrong information was furnished to the CBI court, he added.

Housing minister Jogi Ramesh said that the TDP leaders were unable to digest the fact that the chief minister went to Davos to attract investments.



Indian, Bangla navies begin joint patrol

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The fourth edition of the Indian Navy-Bangladesh Navy Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) commenced in the Northern Bay of Bengal on Sunday. Indian Navy and Bangladesh Navy units will undertake joint patrolling along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) till Monday. The last IN-BN CORPAT was conducted in October 2020.

Two indigenously built Indian Navy

Ships - Kora, a guided-missile corvette and Sumedha, an offshore patrol vessel are participating in the exercise along with Bangladesh Navy Ships (BNS) BNS Ali Haider and BNS Abu Ubaidah. In addition, Maritime Patrol Aircraft of both navies would also be participating in the Coordinated Patrol.

The regular conduct of CORPATs has strengthened mutual understanding and enhanced interoperability between both the navies in countering transnational maritime threats at sea.

Chiranjeevi fans to support Jana Sena

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Actor Chiranjeevi's fans will do their part in taking Jana Sena Party (JSP) to the people and support party chief Pawan Kalyan, said Swami Naidu, president of the All-India Chiranjeevi Fan Club. Fans of Chiranjeevi, Pawan Kalyan and Ramcharan held a meeting in Vijayawada on Sunday, during which Swami Naidu said that their goal was to support Pawan Kalyan in the 2024 elections and make him the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

He said that after a few more meetings with the fans, an action plan would be prepared to ensure that Jana Sena came to power in the next elections. He made it clear that there was no difference between the fans and the leaders and they would go ahead following the party directives. He added that party alliances were not their concern. They would be dealt with by the party heads and party chief.

Swami Naidu said that there were many conspiracies against the Prajaraajyam Party in the past.

Central team inspects Polavaram works; reviews designs & funding

AP Irrigation Minister Ambati says decision on new diaphragm wall soon

PNS ■ ELURU

Water Resources Minister Ambati Rambabu has made it clear that after an in-depth study, the final decision will be taken on whether to repair the diaphragm wall or build a new one parallel to the damaged old diaphragm wall at the Polavaram project.

The officials of the Central government's Jal Shakti, led by Advisor Jal Shakti Veduru Sri Ram and Andhra Pradesh State Water Resources Minister Ambati Rambabu, inspected the Polavaram project construction works on Sunday.



TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	
Tithi: Ashtami	May 22 01:00 PM to May 23 11:34 AM
Navami:	May 23 11:34 AM to May 24 10:45 AM
Nakshatram:	
Shatabhisha:	May 22 10:47 PM to May 23 10:22 PM
Purva Bhadrapada:	May 23 10:22 PM to May 24 10:33 PM
Rahukalam:	7:22 AM to 8:59 AM
Yamagandam:	10:36 AM to 12:12 PM
Varjyam:	04:49 AM to 06:26 AM
Gulika:	1:49 PM to 3:26 PM
Amritakalam:	03:17 PM to 04:52 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:47 AM to 12:38 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 55%
Sunrise: 5:40 AM
Sunset: 6:35 PM
Updated: MAY 22, 2022 5:00 PM

Biodiversity parks @ Rs 2 cr each to come up across AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Biodiversity Board (APSBB) has approved the action plan for the development of Biodiversity Parks (BD parks) and Museums in all the undivided 13 districts in the State. The land is being identified in Kakinada, Kadapa, Tirupati, Nellore, Visakhapatnam, Amaravati, and Kurnool with an investment of Rs 1.5 crore to Rs 2 crore to establish each of these biodiversity parks.

Apart from biodiversity parks, digital biodiversity museums will be established in seven major cities of Andhra Pradesh simultaneously for the first time in the country. APSBB Chairman BMK Reddy said that as per the provision of Bio-Diversity (BD) Act, 2002 and orders issued by the National Green Tribunal, the



APSBB has prepared the People's Biodiversity Registers (e-PBRs) in electronic format by engaging reputed agencies/organisations and multi-disciplinary teams in all districts during the year 2021-2022 which is a first in the country.

Also as per the provision of BD Act, 2002 and orders issued by the NGT, the APSBB constituted the Biodiversity Management

Committees at all local bodies numbering 4,157 in the State, i.e., District level - 13 BMCs with ZP Chairperson and CEO as Chairman and Secretary of BMCs; Mandal level - 661 BMCs with MPP and MPDO as Chairman and Secretary; Grama Panchayat level - 13,363 BMCs with Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretary and Municipal and Municipal Corporation level - 120

BMCs with Chairman, Mayor and Commissioners as Chairman and Secretary.

The task is completed with the co-operation of Panchayati Raj and Rural Administrative and Municipal Administration Departments during the year 2020-21 in a record time, he added.

In order to strengthen the BMCs, a programme with 15 points is initiated in all local bodies of the state released an amount of Rs 9,55,19,500 for 10,013 GP level BMCs in all 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh for implementation besides the Intensive Core Activities Action Plan (ICAAP) programme initiated in selected 78 manuals covering all districts of Andhra Pradesh for operationalization of BMCs and for conservation of Biodiversity in the State.

Kapunadu Maha Sabha in Vijayawada on May 29

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kapunadu national president Galla Subramaniam and Kapunadu women's wing national president Goli Kiranmayi have said that they are conducting a Maha Sabha at MBVK Science Centre to unite Kapu, Balija and Kurmi Kshatriya on May 29 at Vijayawada.

Addressing a press meet here on Sunday, the leaders said that Kapu, Balija and Kshatriyas constitute 25 percent of the county's population. They said that ministers from various

states, about 600 delegates from 21 states including Nepal, MPs and MLAs from different parts of the country will attend the Maha Sabha.

The duo explained that in the meeting key decisions and new strategies will be discussed to take over power in the State in the future Assembly elections and to fight for the reservations of the Kapu community.

They said that Kapu, Balija, and Kshatriyas, who play a vital role in the political and social systems of the county, will devise strategies to assume power in AP in future elections.

Students need to have positive attitude towards learning

College students' learning engagement has become a key issue in universities and colleges. Due to technological revolution, internet plays a pivotal role in the learning process today and has tremendous impact also on teaching. Colleges provide an environment that enables students to gain academic knowledge, while focusing on their emotional, social, physical, mental and moral development. Students' attitude is considered as a vital part of learning. A person's attitude comprises their beliefs, emotions and behaviors towards an object, person, thing or an event. Hence, positive attitude is imperative for students towards classroom learning so that they can benefit from the academic activities. Right attitudes can help students stay motivated and work hard. Their attitude in the classroom can augment individual productivity as well as their fellow students' outcomes.

Attitude plays a key role in learning

Attitude is a tendency which is attributed to individuals' behaviour and creates ideas, feelings in an orderly manner about a psychological object. Attitude can change a person's life; especially students. A positive attitude is instrumental in academic and professional success. When someone has a positive attitude, they often display confidence, optimism, happiness, reliability, and flexibility.

A student's attitudes on learning decide his/her ability and eagerness to learn. If negative attitudes are not changed, a student may not continue his/her education beyond what is necessary for his/her future. "A negative attitude tarnishes ambition and makes students bequeathed to hope on future career".

It's the opposite of having a positive mindset. Many times students face adverse circumstances that make them adopt a negative attitude towards college life. Constantly feeling negative can affect students' mental

A student's attitudes on learning decide his/her ability and eagerness to learn. If negative attitudes are not changed, a student may not continue his/her education beyond what is necessary for his/her future. "A negative attitude tarnishes ambition and makes students bequeathed to hope on future career".

and physical well-being. **Positive environment vital for learning**

A positive attitude is a powerful tool that fosters enthusiasm, promotes self-esteem, and creates a cohesive learning environment. Attitude refers to the predisposition to categorise objects and events, to react to them with assessment consistency. Attitude consists of one's information, reverence, emotions, incitement, and self-esteem designing an individual's outlook on a certain discipline. The use of innovative technologies in educational practices to enhance academic learning in higher educational institutions has become a matter of persistent

concern. Positive attitudes serve a better comprehension of the nature of learning, and it also makes the students more open to learning, increases their expectations from learning process, and reduces their anxiety levels. A positive environment? Can do wonders such as eliminating negative thinking and encouraging healthy thoughts when students tackle new learning challenges and opportunities. A student's attitude is their tendency to respond in a certain way towards home tasks, classroom engagement, on time submission of assignments, project works etc. Colleges need to maintain and develop students' positive disposi-



SRINIVAS VISSAPRAGADA

tion to learning. Education is considered to be a powerful method which aids to change the behaviour of the students based on their needs and expectation of society. Studies have affirmed that learner's attitudes towards college are a determinant factor that predicts their academic achievement. "A positive attitude creates salubrious climate while a negative attitude turns out to be enervating." Naturally, the student's response can be a gamut of positive to negative or good to

bad. A student with a right attitude is likely to perform better and exhibits positive spirit in terms of complying with day-to-day tasks which are given by the teachers. A positive attitude lets students relax, remember, focus and absorb information as they learn. Therefore, students' attitudes towards learning and their classroom engagement play important roles on the success of educational programs. Negative attitude leads to despondency and enervates learning zeal.

Wipe off negative attitude towards learning

There is a paradigm shift in students' learning in twenty-first century: from teacher-centered to student-centered. "A negative attitude will also hold a student back from his or her true potential and behaves condescendingly". A positive attitude among students infuses incredible power of fortitude that gives positive outcomes. Improving students' attitudes toward learning is a major curricular goal for many colleges. The major-

ity of students' learning time is spent in colleges and hence the academic climate of the college is given paramount importance for creation of effective learning environment. If a student feels alienated and disengaged from the learning contexts in the college, his or her potential to master fundamental skills and concepts and effective learning skills is likely to be reduced. Motivation and engagement can be regarded as the driving forces of learning. They can also affect students' quality of life during their campus stay and can influence whether they will successfully pursue further educational or job market opportunities.

Be agile in the classroom

Learners should not be passive in the classroom while teachers share their knowledge. The onus is on students to briskly participate in teaching and learning process. Of late, there is a paradigm shift in teaching and learning process. Hence, colleges are fully equipped with comput-

er labs and modern classrooms to facilitate student-centered learning to enhance learning experiences. A student-centered environment should be created to enable students actively participate in variety of academic activities. Students should be made aware that academic pursuit is not just for passing exams; but to know how to utilize the knowledge gained to better human life. Attitudes involve a complex set of our feelings, beliefs and tendencies towards particular actions. It is a learned behaviour and is highly susceptible to change. Behavioural theories say that attitudes toward learning play a significant role, especially at the college level. Once a positive mind-set is developed, it will lead the learners to embrace change and eventually leads to career success.

(The author is a lecturer, Department of Commerce, P.B. Siddhartha College of Arts and Science, Vijayawada)

Monday Mirchi

Center, state not interested; Prakash eyeing IBM

Some of the officials who are posted out of the state and sent on deputation to the Centre may be not very comfortable. Yet, they may still be in the reckoning in the private sector because of the perceived broad experience they may have gained during their long administrative career. The empanelment of Praveen Prakash -- who had been shifted to Delhi under a cloud -- as joint secretary has not yet cleared. A little bird told us that Praveen is done and dusted with bureaucracy now. He is now trying to get into a big multinational company. Possibly the post could be IBM company's India head. Praveen, despite having been noticeably close to AP Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, had to go reportedly because he had, out of over-enthusiasm attracted criticism from some quarters. Thereafter he was circling in Vijayawada as if he was homesick, while trying to get back to his home turf. Nothing seems to have worked in Andhra. Now IBM India is eyeing him as its future head for Indian operations and for that also the Government of India and Andhra Pradesh governments have to give their approval.

Selection for election goes awry

For the record, everyone prefers smooth and fair elections. However, for the person overseeing elections in present-day cut-throat politics, it may be akin to wearing a crown of thorns. Mukesh Kumar Meena, has just taken charge as the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh; yet, he is extremely unhappy. A little birdie told us that he has shared with his friends and well-wishers his agony at not being consulted before his name was sent in the list to the Election Commission. Initially, the names of M M Nayak, Ananth Ram and Jai Lakshmi were identified for the post of CEO, as mentioned in these columns. Surprisingly, the name of Nayak was replaced with that of Meena for reasons best known to the powers that be. For starters, Meena, a 1998 batch IAS officer, had a long stint as Secretary to the Governor of AP and recently moved to the Commercial Taxes Department as its Secretary. Even before cooling his heels, he is again shifted to CEO post.

CP's son ready for another match

Chama Milind (27) was bought by the Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL auction for Rs 25 lakh, while his base price was Rs 20 lakh. Unfortunately, he could not play even one match in this IPL season. For the unversed, Milind is son of Hyderabad Commissioner of Police C V Anand. Milind is, however, readying for another 'match', marking a new phase in his life. A little bird told us that CP is all set to become a father-in-law with his son tying the knot in a fortnight. CP has been trying to keep up with professional and personal work, while keep-

ing his son's morale up. As Milind pads up for a different innings, the son-dad duo are sending a message in the right spirit and moving on.

Govt driving ABV to court again!

Senior IPS officer AB Venkateswar Rao's tumultuous administrative journey is turning out to be episodic, like some of the daily Telugu serials. Based on the judgement of the Supreme Court the Andhra Pradesh state government led by the Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has withdrawn the suspension orders of AB Venkateswar Rao. But the state government did not give any posting to him. There are speculations that the state government is planning to arrest the IPS officer AB Venkateswar Rao in another case. The Chief Secretary did not give appointment to AB Venkateswar Rao to meet him. After withdrawing the suspension orders the state government asked AB Venkateswar Rao to report to the General Administration Department (GAD) for further posting. The close associates of AB Venkateswar Rao are telling that he has to go to Court again for his posting. The state government officials feel if AB Venkateswar Rao goes to court for everything the court may be angry at him. The state government wants this only. In administration matters the Courts cannot be involved, officials said. The court may direct the state government to give posting to some officer and cannot put a deadline and cannot tell to give so and so post to him; it is purely an administrative issue.

Will ABV throw his hat in the race for next DGP?

The hot discussion now going around in the power corridors in Andhra Pradesh is: if the senior IPS officer AB Venkateswar Rao, who waged a relentless legal war against the government over his suspension and at last got himself reinstated into service, threw his hat in the race for state DGP. Now, that its quite some time that the current DGP K V Rajendranath Reddy was given FAC after his predecessor Gautam Sawang was moved out and the government has to sooner or later have to send probable names to the UPSC which will in turn send a panel with three names and the state government can pick one name. The UPSC will, as far as practicable, choose people within the zone of consideration who have got a clear two years of service and must give due weightage to merit and seniority. ABV has two years' service left. Though his suspension may come as a hindrance, it would be interesting to see if the government also sends his name in the list to the Centre. If the government does not consider ABV's name, there are animated discussions going on if he will again approach appropriate forums like CAT defending his candidature. Now that he has waged a legal war against the government, ABV appears to have gained legal acumen out of this experience, a senior IPS officer quipped.

—Yours truly



'Biodiversity crucial to survival of mankind'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

N Prateep Kumar, PCCF and HoFF, AP, has said conservation of biodiversity around us is very important for the survival of mankind. On the occasion of International Day for Biological Diversity-2022, he unveiled a special poster regarding biological diversity at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam. He said that everyone had a responsibility to conserve biodiversity while protecting the small creatures and animals around us. "We are conserving tigers in

Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve. The impact of the extinction of any creature in an ecosystem would be huge and sometimes even some areas could disappear from the map. Biodiversity exists in such a way that each organism is dependent on the other," he said.

Prateep Kumar inaugurated the newly-constructed Reptile House, herbivore quarantine facility, curator's new chamber and meeting hall. He further said that IGZP was continuously developing with the setting up of necessary facilities and

required enclosures.

Prateep Kumar congratulated Curator Dr Nandani Salaria for her efforts towards bringing CER/CSR funds to the zoo for its development and thanked the IOCL for taking up the initiative. He also congratulated the zoo on its collaboration with Parco Natura Viva, Italy. P Ram Mohan Rao, CCE, Visakhapatnam, Anant Shankar, DFO, Visakhapatnam, Uma Maheshwari, Assistant Curator, IGZP, forest section officers and the zoo education team were present at the event.

CM opens AP Pavilion, meets...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also identified the Forum as a platform to explore fruitful partnerships to scale-up the state-wide health initiatives and also explore setting up of the multi-specialty hospitals across the districts. During the meeting with Hans-Paul Burkner, Chairman of BCG, they discussed the opportunities emerging in India and specifically, Andhra Pradesh with the global diversification of supply-chains and emphasized the importance of ensuring seamless facilitation of investments.

He regarded availability of land and transparent labour contracts as of utmost importance to global investors, in addition to accessibility to connectivity and infrastructure. The Chief Minister has empha-

Jagan woos investments...

Continued from Page 1

They briefed on Shaping the Future of Mobility and "Moving India" initiative of which AP was the first state selected. The Chief Minister discussed the evolution of green mobility and challenges associated with battery disposal to ensure the transition to green modernization mobility is net zero. He discussed ideas where Renewable Energy sources could be integrated with Electric Mobility charging infrastructure and also to generate Green Hydrogen to make the transition greener and enable sustainable manufacturing. Further, the WEF and Govt of AP have exchanged the Platform Partnership on "Shaping the Future of Advanced Manufacturing and Value Chains", through which the state of AP will be integrated with the Global Network of Advanced Manufacturing Hubs (AMHUBS).

Andhra Pradesh is the ideal destination acting as the gateway to the east. Mr. Burkner also regarded the investments and initiatives being

Central team inspects Polavaram works, reviews designs & funding

Continued from Page 1

Water Resources Minister Ambati Rambabu, Chief Secretary of the department Shashi Bhushan Kumar, ENC C Narayana Reddy and others discussed with the Central team the next step to be taken on the construction of the damaged diaphragm wall. They reviewed project designs, funding required to complete construction, Spillway, Spill Channel, and Spillway Guide Bund works. Polavaram Project Authority- CEO J Chandrasekhar Iyer, PPA members MK Srinivas, M Gopalakrishna, and DP Bhargava were present at the meeting.

Later talking to the media, Water Resources Minister Ambati Rambabu said that the construction of the diaphragm wall without undertaking the construction of the cofferdam was a historic mistake made by the previous Chandrababu Naidu government.

The Minister said that the diaphragm wall was damaged due to heavy floods. This took place because of the construction of the diaphragm wall

before the construction of the Copper Dam was completed, he informed.

The Central Water Commission, Polavaram Project Authority, Central and State water resources experts, and Central team members are conducting a scientific study to determine the extent of damage to the diaphragm wall, he said, stating that this is the first time in the world that such a problem has arisen for irrigation projects.

The inept handling of the situation by the previous TDP government was the reason for the present situation, he alleged. He said it was initially estimated that the diaphragm wall would have been damaged by 1.7 km due to heavy flooding due to the inefficient and ill-considered decision taken by the previous TDP government to construct the diaphragm wall without constructing the Cofferdam.

The experts said that after an in-depth study, the final decision would be taken on whether to repair the diaphragm wall or build a new one parallel to the damaged old diaphragm wall.

FM rebuts Oppn flak on excise duty cuts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday rebutted the Opposition's criticism of excise duty cut impacting share of states in central taxes, saying the Rs 8 a litre cut in petrol and Rs 6 reduction in diesel have been done in road and infrastructure cess levied on the two fuels, collection on which was never shared with states.

First, former union finance minister P Chidambaram and then other Opposition leaders stated that the reduction in excise duty announced on Saturday evening would reduce the share of states in central taxes.

Chidambaram on Sunday retracted his statement saying the cut in the levies accrues to the central government alone.

Taking to Twitter, Sitharaman said she is sharing some useful facts on levies on petrol and diesel for the benefit of all. "Basic Excise Duty (BED), Special Additional Excise duty (SAED), Road & Infrastructure Cess (RIC) and Agriculture & Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC) together constitute Excise Duty on petrol and diesel. Basic ED is sharable with states. SAED, RIC & AIDC are non-sharable," she said.

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

Murder case registered against YSRCP MLC

Continued from Page 1

The last rites of the deceased Subramanyam were held at his native village Gollalamadida on Sunday. The body was taken to the village after the postmortem and the family members held last rites for him. Amid a tense situation and after a series of negotiations the family members consented to conduct a postmortem on the body of Subramanyam

and it was conducted on the night of Saturday.

TDP chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu consoled Aparna, the wife of Subramanyam over phone on Sunday. Naidu announced Rs 5 lakh compensation to the bereaved family on behalf of the TDP.

A large number of leaders including CPI state executive committee member Madhu, CPM leader Subba Rao, and

KVPS leaders paid homage to Subramanyam. The leaders demanded the arrest of the accused MLC Ananta Uday Bhaskar. The leaders alleged that the accused MLC Uday Bhaskar is a benami to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy which is why the police did not arrest him when he was moving before their eyes.

He assured her to stand by the family and to extend all the needed help. He told her that since the agitation organised by TDP and Dalit organisations, the police registered Subramanyam's death as a murder case. Minister for Social Welfare Merugu Nagarjuna welcomes the government decision to register a murder case against MLC Subramanyam. He said that all are equal before the law.

Chiranjeevi fans to support...

Continued from Page 1

He pointed out that now, false propaganda was spread against the Jana Sena Party and personal criticism was being made against Pawan Kalyan. Swami Naidu appealed to the fans and activists to work with determination to ensure that Pawan Kalyan became the CM. Mega star fans would bring everyone together

to support JSP.

He further said that Nagababu would soon be meeting the fans exclusively. Special meetings would be organised as per the directions of Nadendra Manohar and Nagababu in the days to come. He made it clear that the mega fans were getting ready to strengthen the party at the field-level and all the fans were ready to support the Jana Sena Party.

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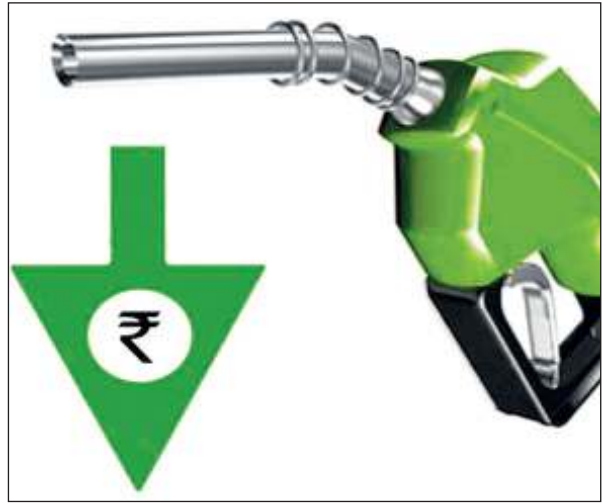
Fuel price cut deals a big blow to petro dealers in AP

C PRADEEP KUMAR
VIJAYAWADA

The surprise move of the Union government to reduce the fuel prices has brought cheer among the people using two-wheelers, four-wheelers and heavy vehicles. However, it has caught the petroleum dealers unawares, dealing a big blow to them.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the slashing of fuel prices and domestic LPG across the country on Saturday and on the very next day the petrol and diesel prices came down to Rs 111.37 and Rs 99.15 respectively in Vijayawada.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has unveiled a slew of measures to rein in inflation on Saturday evening, including duty cuts on petroleum products, a Rs 200 subsidy on LPG cylinders for the poor and a rejig of import duties on plastic and steel products. A reduction in central excise duty per litre of petrol by Rs 8 and Rs 6 for each litre of diesel, will translate into retail prices on these fuels dropping by Rs 9.5 per litre and Rs 7 per litre.



AP State Lorry Owners' Association general secretary YV Eswar Rao said that there is a slight relief to the transport sector after the price cut. He said that the price should be further reduced for the sector to withstand as they were in a huge crisis ever since the Covid pandemic struck the country. He said that in the adjacent states like Telangana, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the fuel

price is still cheaper compared to Andhra Pradesh. The State government should reduce taxes on fuel and ensure that the price is on par with adjacent states so that the government would gain in the form of taxes on the volume of fuel sales, he added.

Raavi Gopala Krishna, president of AP Federation of Petroleum Traders, said that slashing the petrol and diesel

price is a good sign but for the petroleum traders and dealers across the State it is a big blow as they had lost about Rs 100 crore. He said that each dealer in the State had incurred a loss of about Rs 2 lakh to Rs 15 lakh after the announcement. He said that during the weekends every trader or dealer will have stock for at least three days and the announcement of slashing fuel came as a shock to them as they had huge stocks that should be sold for a lesser price. He said the petroleum dealers across the country had lost Rs 2,000 crore after the announcement. He further said that reducing fuel is a good sign as many sectors depend on it, mainly transport, farming and other sectors.

S Vikram, a marketing executive, said that it is a big relief to him as he has to fill petrol in his bike daily. However, the petrol allowance remains the same without any change. For the past few months, there was an additional burden due to the continuous increase of fuel price with the cut in petrol price by about Rs 10 per litre. It is a great relief to him, he added.

TDP chief wants YSRCP MLC arrested

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday expressed surprise over the police not arresting the main accused YSRCP MLC Ananta Babu in the alleged killing of his car driver Subrahmanyam.



Naidu said the police were not arresting YCP MLC even though he was publicly moving around in Kakinada. The prime accused was openly attending marriages and functions in front of the eyes of everybody. It was because of these wrongful actions that suspicions grew over the police probe.

A statement here said that the TDP chief spoke to victim Subrahmanyam's wife Aparna on phone and consoled her. He expressed anguish over the suffering that came to Aparna who was pregnant. He asserted that the TDP would continue its fight till justice was done to the victim's family members.

Aparna told Naidu that the police had given up their adamant stand and registered

the murder case only due to the agitation of the TDP and the Dalit organisations. She reiterated that Ananta Babu was responsible for the murder of her husband. She thanked the TDP chief for his party's support at a critical moment.

Aparna also told Naidu that the Government made all efforts to silence her with inducements. They tried a lot to dilute the case. She said justice would be done to her only if a CBI probe was ordered into the murder of her husband. She said even now she had many doubts over the investigation by the AP police.

Govt shielding Ananta Babu in driver's death case: TDP

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP politburo member Varla Ramaiah on Sunday suspected a preplanned conspiracy to protect YSRCP Kakinada MLC Ananta Babu who was the main accused in the alleged murder of his car driver Veedhi Subrahmanyam.

Ramaiah strongly objected to the SI concerned registering an FIR of 'unnatural death' under section 174 while Subrahmanyam's family members insisted he was murdered.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader asked why the Kakinada police did not question the gunman and family members of MLC Ananta Udaya Bhasker popularly known as Ananta Babu. Was the postmortem properly video-graphed?

Ramaiah said that the post-mortem should have been conducted in the presence of

revenue officials and under the supervision of expert doctors. The police were making huge blunders and mistakes in this case right from the beginning.

The investigating officials seemed to have worked as per the orders of Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy but not as per the laws of the land.

The TDP leader demanded action against the DSP who slapped TDP Dalit fact finding committee member M.S. Raju at the Kakinada GGH.

The YCP MLC had a very bad track record. There were reports that the slain Subrahmanyam knew details of the shady activities of Ananta Babu.

Ramaiah said that the Sawang mark anti-people policing seemed to be still going on in the State. The present DGP should take corrective steps in order to restore the trust of people in the police force.

'Salagrama Haram' donated to TTD temple in Odisha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the second day of ongoing religious activities at Sri Venkateswara temple in Bhubaneswar, a series of agamic rituals took place on Sunday. During the day Kankana Dhanan, 'Nava Kalasa Sthanapanam' and 'Panchagavya Adhivasam' were performed. As part of it, the idol of Venkateswara Swamy was rendered a holy bath with aromatic ingredients from nine vessels.

Later in the evening, 'Kalasa Sthanapanam', 'Agni Pratistha' and 'Ukta Homam' will be

observed by the archakas under the supervision of Agama Advisor Dr Vedantam Vishnu Bhattacharyulu.

Deputy EO Gunabhushan Reddy, All Projects Programme Officer Vijayasardhi, AEO Dorasami Naik, Superintendent Sri Mallikarjuna and others were present.

On the occasion, Majeti Munaiah, former General Manager, Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation, Bhubaneswar along with his spouse Venkata Padma has donated a Salagrama Haram to

the deity on the auspicious occasion.

According to the donor, the sacred jewel weighed around 2.28 kilos and was wrapped in around 670 grams of silver. All the 54 'Saligramas' (holy stones believed to be a non-anthropomorphic representation of Lord Vishnu) are the original and precious ones that were brought from banks of Kali Gandaki river at Mukthinath in Nepal which are considered to be most auspicious.

Local Advisory Committee Chief Dushmant Kumar, TTD officials were also present.



Ex-MLA of K'taka donates lorry to TTD

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Former MLA from Mulabagal of Karnataka, G Manjunath, along with 12 other vegetable donors, handed over Rs 30 lakh worth of lorry to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) here on Sunday.

A TTD release here on Sunday said that after performing puja to the new carrier in front of Srivari temple, Manjunath handed over the keys to TTD Executive Officer AV Dharma Reddy. The vehicle is specially designed to carry vegetables donated to TTD Annaprasadam.

Deputy Executive officer of Annaprasadam and Donor Cell of TTD Ms Padmavathi and others were also present.

Lokesh for slash in State taxes on fuel prices

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Sunday urged Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to reduce State-level taxes on petrol and diesel so as to provide relief to the AP people.

Lokesh said that the Centre and over 23 States in the country decreased their respective taxes in order to reduce the burden on the people. But, the AP Government was not taking any steps toward providing relief to its people.

Nara Lokesh wrote an open letter to the Chief Minister, saying that the highest VAT tax of 31 percent on petrol in the



country was being collected in Andhra Pradesh. In addition to this, Rs. 4 per litre was being collected towards additional VAT and another Re 1 towards road cess.

Lokesh said the AP people were being openly looted with the country's highest petrol and diesel rates being collected in AP under the YCP rule. While all other States were trying to provide relief to their people, the Jagan Reddy regime was causing continuous price rise with total disregard for the people's problems.

The TDP MLC pointed out that the Centre had reduced excise duty by Rs. 8 on petrol and Rs. 6 on diesel. As a result, the respective rates came down by Rs. 9.50 per litre petrol and Rs. 7 per litre diesel. The Kerala government announced a reduction of State taxes to the tune of Rs 2.41 on petrol and

Rs. 1.36 on diesel. Rajasthan reduced Rs. 2.48 on petrol and Rs. 1.16 on diesel.

Lokesh said that the Central government had also suggested to the States to reduce their taxes ahead of Deepavali festival. But the AP Government was not reducing one single paisa tax. On the other hand, it was wasting hundreds of crores of public funds on publicity for the Chief Minister.

Nara Lokesh demanded that the AP Government reduce the additional VAT and road cess on fuel in the State. Because of the prevailing highest prices, the AP vehicles were getting tankfuls of petrol and diesel in other States bordering AP.



10 red sanders logs seized, 4 smugglers held at Papanasanam

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The police seized 10 red sanders logs and arrested four red sanders smugglers at Papanasanam here.

Police said here on Sunday on the directions of Taskforce SP Meda Sundar Rao and under the supervision of DSP Muralidhar, a police team led by RI Suresh Kumar Reddy

conducted combing at Papanasanam to Annadamula Konda area.

The police team spotted red sander wood cutters carrying red sander logs. After noticing the police, the woodcutters fled the scene. The police arrested K Nadipayyan, Chandra Kumar Kuppuswamy, Kashi and Yelumalai Govindan and seized 10 red sander logs.



Children take part in nature camp on river bank

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of their Sunday fixture, the Amaravati Walkers and Runners Association (AWARA) organized a 3K run for children on the banks of River Krishna. As the peak summer embroils the earth, even before dawn break, scores of children on summer vacation turned up with their parents.

The 3K run was aimed to build a child's stamina and steadfastness. Environmentalist and AWARA founder Prof Ajay Katragadda made sure that the run was flagged off by a humble local farmer, Veera Reddy.

Interspersed with songs and interaction with nature, the participants were encouraged to speak of their true selves and their inner nature. Adobe manager based in Bengaluru,



Nagi Reddy, made an passionate speech about his aspirations to become a life coach, while recounting his upward struggle from IIM-

Kolkata and thereafter, a journey beyond his dreams.

SDRF trainer Appala Swamy narrated his struggles through utter

penury to become a police officer through sheer hard work and focus. He recounted the experience of saving scores of people from drowning, a skill that he honed from the intensive training he obtained at AWARA Swim & Rescue Academy based on the river.

Prof Ajay summed it all up as 'success happens best when your inner nature is in tune with nature'. Several VTPS engineers and other professionals along with their families took part in the programme with their children aged five to 20 years.

They spoke from their hearts, how they were inspired by a decade-long AWARA environmental crusade.

To pre-enroll on this regular Sunday fixture on the river, one could WhatsApp 9494126812.

1.9L hectares in Krishna to come under Kharif cropping

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An action plan has been prepared by the Krishna district agriculture department officials for the cultivation of crops in around 1.90 lakh hectares during the Kharif season. The irrigation department has already announced the release of water to the Krishna delta from June 10.

On the other hand, the farmers are preparing for the agriculture season as monsoon rains are predicted in June and the Irrigation depart-

ment has announced the release of water for the Krishna delta on June 10.

Joint director of agriculture S Manohar Rao has said the normal crop area for the Kharif season is 1.90 lakh hectares. He said paddy is the main crop with an estimated crop area of 1.75 lakh hectares. The other crops in the district are sugar cane 5,000 hectares, black gram 2,000 hectares, and turmeric 1500 hectares. Besides some other crops like green gram, chili and other crops are there in the district. But, the cultivated area is nominal.

District agriculture department is gearing up to supply seeds and fertilizers through the Rytu Bharosa Kendrams in the district. On the other hand, early cultivation of crops is safe for the farmers. From October to December, the Coastal districts get cyclones and heavy rains. If the farmers cultivate the crop early from June to September, they can harvest the crop early and there will be no loss to the farmers.

Due to heavy rains last year, the irrigation water is available in Nagarjuna Sagar and

Pulichintala reservoirs. Initially, the irrigation water will be released from the Pulichintala reservoir. Moreover, Water can be obtained from the Pattiseema lift irrigation scheme also. Most of the cultivated lands and horticulture crops are in the Krishna district. Last year, the estimated crop area in the erstwhile district was 3.34 lakh hectares. Paddy was cultivated in over 2.50 lakh hectares. This year paddy cultivated area decreased to 1.75 lakh hectares in Krishna district.



Vja students excel in CAT 21

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Students of Vijayawada excelled in CAT 21 and secured admissions in top institutions across India. P Karthik Sourie and S Geetanjali, students of Time Vijayawada centre, obtained 99.83 percentile and 98.19 percentile in CAT 21 and have secured admission in IIM Ahmedabad.

Speaking to the media persons, the centre director PV Narasimha said that 13 others students had secured admissions in IIM Kolkata, Indore, Kozhikode, Lucknow, Shillong, Visakhapatnam, Trichy, Ranchi and Udayapur.

He said that the centre had been imparting coaching on students gearing up for competitive exams such as CAT, GRE, Bank exams, CLAT and IPM for the last 23 years.

He said that effective teaching methods, mock CATs and practical training, group discussion and personal interviews had been helpful in preparing to crack the tests with confidence. Narasimha and his team of faculty members congratulated the students who secured admissions in top class B-Schools.

'Don't compromise on quality in developmental works'

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Mayor Kavati Shiva Manohar Naidu directed the engineers and officials concerned to ensure that quality is maintained while carrying out various development works in the city.

The Mayor, along with MLA Maddali Giridhar, laid the foundation for the construction of the main road, drains, culvert and central divider at Rama Nama Kshetram here Sunday. Speaking on the occasion he said that no development had been carried out to the main road near Rama Nama Kshetram for the last several years. Since the traffic has gone up extensively, the movements of people, as well as vehicular traffic, are being hampered.

The Mayor said that the construction of roads, drains, culverts and central dividers



was taken up at a cost of Rs 1.20 crore. He said that this road is the main road connecting divisions 18,19,20,21 and 22 and most of the traffic would be controlled after constructing the road.

He said that the engineering authorities were directed to supervise during the develop-

were directed to take steps to ensure that the works were carried out within the stipulated time.

Speaking on the occasion, Guntur West constituency legislator Maddali Giridhar said that the tender process had also been completed to carry out development works in various divisions in Guntur city. Ramanama Kshetra main road is a very important road and the construction of central divider, culverts, road, and drains on this road would benefit the people in the 5 divisions. He said the road works should be expedited and engineering officials should directly monitor the works from time to time.

Corporators Nimmala Venkata Ramana, Dhupati Vamshibabu, Marri Anjali, Satyanarayana, and DE Venkata Ramana were among those who were present.

'Ramayana Chitramalika' exhibition a huge draw

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The exhibition of 'Ramayana Chitramalika' containing 108 fabric paintings showcasing various important events of the great epic the Ramayana, set up in the clubhouse at Jewel Meadows area here has attracted a large number of lovers.

Popular spiritual orator Chaganti Koteswara Rao inaugurated the two-day exhibition. Speaking on the occasion he lauded promoting spiritualism, culture, and tradition of the country and the Hindu dharma.

He also blessed septuagenarian Rajeswari (70) the artist for her talent and her husband MVK Raju for giving due encouragement.

He said the painting depicting Seethamma Thalli crossing the line 'Lakshmana Rekha' drawn by Lakshmana ignoring the warning for giving alms to Demon Ravana was the main event. It teaches everyone a lesson about do's and don'ts and one should not cross the limits in daily life either in the dharma or the law of the land for their own safety or else land into trouble.

Rajeswari said that as an ardent devotee of Lord Sri Rama she had ventured to paint using colour fabrics covering all the seven Kandas of Ramayana in 108 pieces which she commenced on 28 January 2021 and completed on 28 January 2022 toiling for an year.



Alcoholics make merry as beer-laden lorry overturns

ONGOLE: At a time when the cost of a bottle of beer has gone up, the accident involving a beer-laden lorry has come as a boon to beer lovers. Hundreds of alcoholics took away beer bottles from the overturned lorry. A lorry

was transporting beer bottles from Srikkulam to Madanapalle in Chittoor district. The beer-laden lorry overturned Moolaguntapadu village in Singarayakonda mandal. As the news spread like wildfire, a large

number of alcoholics thronged the place and took away beer bottles from the ill-fated lorry. By the time the police reached the place, all the beer bottles in the ill-fated lorry had been taken away by the people.

Two killed in road accident

PNS ■ KADAPA

Two teenagers were killed when their bikes collided at Guttupalli village in Sambepalli mandal in Annamayya district.

Police said that the deceased Somasekhar (18) and Jyothi Naidu (19) were going to their native village after participating in Anjaneya Swamy thirunallu at Guttupalli.

Both died instantaneously. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the government general hospital for postmortem.

TDP protests murder of MLC's ex-driver

PNS ■ ELURU

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activists organised a torch rally in protest against the murder of V Subramandam who was the former driver of ruling party MLC Anant Uday Bhaskar.

The TDP activists held a torch rally near BR Ambedkar statue here on Sunday. They raised slogans demanding the arrest of MLC for killing his ex-driver. They demanded to register a case making the MLC as accused number one.

The TDP leaders also demanded the suspension of the MLC Anant Uday Bhaskar from the Legislative Council. They alleged that the atroc-



ities and attacks had gone up during the YSR regime. SC cell and TDP state secre-

taries Dasari Anjaneyulu, Jala Balaji, Pedda Venkata Ramana, Lankapalli Manikyala Rao, M

Venkanna, Chowtapalli Srinu and other leaders participated in the programme.



Telangana CM KCR presenting a cheque to the kin of a Punjab farmer in the presence of Delhi CM Kejriwal on Sunday

Ryots can change regimes: KCR

- BJP trying to brand as traitors those who question the BJP and the Centre
○ Farmers' movement should be nationwide to achieve goal

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has suggested that farmers are powerful enough to change regimes. While reaching out to farmers in Punjab and Haryana on Sunday, KCR said that they could change government if they wanted and should keep fighting till they get a constitutional guarantee for remunerative prices of their crops.

The Telangana Chief Minister paid tributes to farmers who died during the course of the agitation against the Centre's now-repealed farm

laws and said he bowed to their grit and determination.

KCR stated that the Union government did not like state governments and Chief Ministers speaking about farmers and their welfare. Should they speak about farmers or their welfare, the Centre would mount pressure on those governments. KCR said that Punjab farmers knew how the Central government had made allegations during farmers' movements. He said the Centre described farmers as Khalistanis and traitors. The BJP was branding those who questioned the BJP and the Central government as traitors.

KCR's Bharat Yatra yielding results

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The significant moves made by AAP supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, after his meeting with Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, boost KCR's efforts to assemble anti-BJP forces.

KCR's national mission is gaining traction, going by the change in stances of Arvind Kejriwal and AICC leader Rahul Gandhi towards. Arvind Kejriwal has changed his stance

towards KCR and Rahul Gandhi has changed his stand towards regional parties.

AAP is also one of the strong opponents of BJP. Last time when KCR went to Delhi to meet various political leaders to discuss the formation of federal front, AAP strongly criticised KCR. AAP MLA and Telangana incharge Somnath Bharti said "KCR is known as 'Chota Modi' in Telangana". He also said that the AAP would not join the front proposed by the Telangana CM. Arvind Kejriwal was stated to be away

when KCR camped in Delhi. Now surprisingly Arvind Kejriwal met KCR on Saturday and invited him for lunch.

This significant development has taken place reportedly due to political strategist Prashant Kishor's involvement. Prashant Kishor has good relations with both KCR and Kejriwal.

Prashant Kishor has become a bitter enemy of BJP. KCR has taken a firm decision to defeat the BJP in the forthcoming General Election. He is also trying to bring all regional political parties onto

one platform. As a part of this, KCR has taken 10-day national tour to meet leaders of various political parties. Kejriwal is also bitter enemy of BJP and he also wants the defeat of BJP. The same target may help KCR and Kejriwal join forces.

In another significant move, Rahul Gandhi has clarified that his party respected regional parties and added that his party would coordinate with regional parties to launch a nationwide movement against the ruling BJP.

Who caused price rise?

KTR lashes out at the central govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration and IT Minister KT Rama Rao on Sunday lashed out at the central government for making much out of the recent price cut on petrol and diesel.

KTR on Sunday tweeted: "There was a shopkeeper next to my school who used to hike

the prices by 300% during peak season and then just to hoodwink people, slash it by 30% and his cronies would start hailing it as a bumper offer and thank him. Sounds familiar? Who increased the prices in the first place?"

Adding to that, KTR later tweeted comparing the crude oil prices in May 2014 and May 2022.

Krishna district Rugby teams selected

Inter-district tournament at Kurnool from May 28 - 30

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Rugby Association (KDRA) has selected senior and junior rugby teams to participate in inter-district senior and junior rugby championship to be held at the Adarsh School in Kurnool district from May 28 to 30. The selection trials were conducted at the Mallikharjuna High School at Gannavaram near Vijayawada on Sunday.

As many as 120 rugby players attended the selection trials and exhibited their talent. Later, the district selection committee picked those who showed good talented players

and selected them for the district team. The selections were conducted under the supervision of Krishna district Rugby coach K Ganesh.

Rugby Men's team: L Muralidhar, D Sai Dhanush, K Rahul (Vikas Polytechnic College, Nunna), J Vijay Bhasakr Reddy, G Prem Kumar, R Sairam, P Sajar, V David, B Lokesh Teja (MSR high school), P Anil Kumar, P Ganesh, T Shashank Women's Team: P Shi Harhs, M Pavani Kumari, KVD Malleswari (MSR high school), SK Afreeen, B Indra Lakshmi, M Ratna Priya), Uma Maheswari, S Sarvagna and G Mounika.

Junior Boys' Team: S Mahesh, D Yaswanth, N Hema Sai Krishna (SRR), U Venkata Ramana (Vikas, Nunna), B Ganesh (Chaitanya College), P George, P Manikantha (Gudlavalleru), G Shiva Ganesh (ZPHS, Peda Avutapalli), M Lakshmana Swamy (Sangamudi), MV Balaji (STVR), G Adhi Seshu (Sarada college) and K Hemanth Kumar. Junior Girls' Team: B Sameera, P Alekhya, P Sindhu Priya (Srinivas, Vuyyuru), B Swathi, B Harithitha, L Shrivani B Udaya Lakshmi (AG and SG, Vuyyuru), D Srilekha and K Srivalli.



Krishna district Rugby men and women players with association representatives and physical education teachers at Gannavaram near Vijayawada on Sunday.



Krishna district junior boys and girls team players with association representatives and physical education teachers at Gannavaram near Vijayawada on Sunday.

7-yr-old boy allegedly killed by step mother

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 7-year-old boy was allegedly killed by his step mother and the incident took place under Kachiguda Police Station limits in the city. The woman tried to cover it up by saying that the child fell unconscious while playing and might have died due to exhaustion.

The victim Ujwal (7) lived along with his father N Bhaskar and step mother Saritha, at their house in Golnaka in Kachiguda. Bhaskar has three children including Ujwal through his first wife who passed away in the year 2017.

TDP spreading lies out of jealousy, says Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh has said that the Opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is burning with heartburn and hence its leaders are making baseless allegations against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Addressing the media at the YSRCP Central Office in Tadepalli on Sunday, he wondered why could not the CM go to the WEF meeting with his spouse and made it clear that the present tour of Jagan Mohan Reddy is intended only to woo investments to the State.

Jogi Ramesh said the people of the State, who are putting up with the false propaganda unleashed by TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu, are wondering whether he was the chief minister who had ruled the State for 14 long years. Naidu's trusted lieutenants Yanamala Ramakrishnuudu and Pattibhiram were speaking lies as they like over CM's visit to Davos to take part in WEF 2022 event.

Alleging that Chandrababu Naidu is the care-off address to black money, the minister



reign of sins.

Stating that the CM had signed six agreements in Davos, Jogi Ramesh said Jagan Mohan Reddy was trying to ensure that the State grows industrially and is working hard for the interests of the state.

Refuting allegations of TDP leaders on CM Jagan Davos tour, minister Ramesh said that Chandrababu Naidu was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Yanamala Ramakrishna is suffering from bloating and other TDP leaders from irritable bowel syndrome hence they are leveling baseless allegations CM Jagan. He cautioned that people will hit TDP with a powerful weapon called Vote again in the coming elections for their conspiracies.

Minister Ramesh said that CM Jagan will not tolerate any illegalities and said that the police registered a case against YSRCP MLC Anantha Udaya Bhaskar on the allegations of his involvement in the ex-car driver's suspicious death. He added that if criminal charges are proved against our MLC then he will be arrested without any hesitation.

MLA Vamsi inspects road and drainage works

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan inspected the road and drainage works at Marlapalem hamlet of Gannavaram village, near Vijayawada, on Sunday. He interacted with road and drainage contractor and asked him to complete the works within a stipulated period.

Vamsi Mohan, along with ZPTC member A Elizabeth Rani, Gannavaram MPP Anagani Ravi, and Panchayat Raj department officials, inspected the works. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the contractor should maintain quality until the completion of the works. Later, he interacted with workers and local people and enquired about the work.

Vamsi further said that the State government had been giving top priority to development and welfare. Under the able leadership of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the State is marching ahead, he said.

Roads, drainage, drinking water and amenities are being provided in rural habitats, he added.



INDIA CORNER

Centre bats for sharing research infrastructure, incentivising funding

Researchers from smaller cities will soon be able to access expensive research infrastructure at state-funded institutions as the Centre has released guidelines for sharing such scientific equipment at a small cost. While researchers from mofussil towns will get access to cutting-edge equipment, the Scientific Research Infrastructure Sharing Maintenance and Networks (SRIMAN) guidelines also seek to incentivise the institutions by offering them for the extent of participation in the initiative, which may have a bearing on the funds they receive in the future. Releasing the guidelines recently, Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh noted that 90 per cent of the high-end research equipment is imported and not shared among the research community. The objective of the SRIMAN initiative is to "make publicly-funded scientific research infrastructure available as valuable public resource by providing better access and sharing for extensive and optimal use of the community".



Murugan bats for India's tech prowess at Cannes

India has the biggest talent pool in the audio-visual sector, including artificial intelligence and virtual reality, Union Minister L. Murugan said on Sunday and urged global filmmakers to explore the country's lucrative movie market. Speaking at the Cannes Next, a business event on the sidelines of the Cannes Film Festival in France, Murugan pitched India as a great land of story-tellers with the biggest pool of technical and software talent, which play a crucial role in movie making. "Audio-visual is the area where technology marries art, he said, expressing happiness that five Indian start-ups were pitching their expertise in dubbing, automated solutions for lip-synchronisation and gaming at the event. Prithvi Jain, the co-founder and CEO of VerboLabs, a sub-titling service in major languages of the world, made a pitch before entertainment industry representatives at the Cannes Next.



UP: 300 turtles released into Chambal on eve of World Turtle Day

Nearly 300 endangered turtles were released into the Chambal river here on the eve of World Turtle Day, officials said on Sunday. During the event, about 300 hatchlings of red-crowned roofed turtle (Batagur Kachuga) and three-striped roofed turtle (Batagur dhongoka) were released into the river on Sunday, they said. The programme was organized jointly by the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), an international turtle conservation organization, and leading apparel company Turtle Limited. A memorandum of understanding (MoA) was also signed between the two parties on this occasion. According to the MoA, Turtle Ltd will support TSA India's turtle conservation projects under its corporate social responsibility. Dr Saurabh Dewan, Development Researcher at TSA, said, TSA India programme is managed by Indian conservation biologists, scientists and researchers.



29 children in MP, 14 in Rajasthan per day went missing in 2021: NGO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
On an average, 29 children in Madhya Pradesh and 14 in Rajasthan went missing every day in 2021, according to a new report of child rights NGO CRY, which revealed that there was a significant increase in the number of missing children cases in four major states of north India. Also, five children went missing per day in Delhi in 2021 in eight police districts, according to the Status Report on Missing Children report of Child Rights and You (CRY), which also said on an average, eight children -- six girls and two boys -- went missing per day from 58 districts of Uttar Pradesh. The report revealed that the number of missing girls in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan was reported five times higher than that of boys in 2021. While



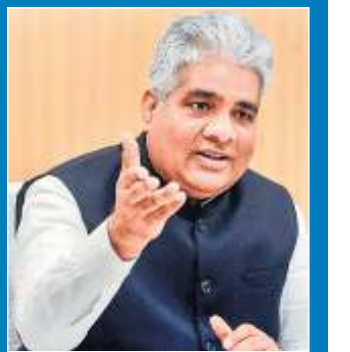
8,751 cases of missing children were registered in Madhya Pradesh and 3,179 in Rajasthan (National Crime Records Bureau, 2020), the figures increased to 10,648 in Madhya Pradesh and 5,354 in Rajasthan in 2021, as revealed by the state governments in response to RTI applications filed by the CRY's partner organisations. The data received from Madhya Pradesh shows that the number of missing girls over a period of 11 months is about five times higher than that of the boys. The data collected through RTI applications shows that the top five districts in terms of number of missing children are Indore, Bhopal, Dhar, Jabalpur

and Rewa. "On an average, 29 children, including 24 girls and five boys, went missing per day from Madhya Pradesh," the report said. A total of 2,998 children -- 835 boys and 2,163 girls -- were reported missing in Uttar Pradesh in 2021 (data of 58 of the 75 districts). About 88.9 per cent of the children reported missing in the state belonged to the age group of 12-18 years. The data shows that the top five districts in Uttar Pradesh in terms of number of missing children are Lucknow, Moradabad, Kanpur Nagar, Meerut and Maharajganj. The report said five children went missing per day in Delhi in 2021 in the districts for which data was available and a total of 1,641 children were reported missing in eight districts of the national capital in 2021. About 85 per cent of the children reported missing in Delhi were aged 12-18 years. According to the records made available, the number of missing children in 2021 is the highest for North East district and the lowest for South East district. The maximum number of children in the 12-18 age group went missing from North East district. The data for West, North West and South districts was not provided. In Rajasthan, a total of 5,354 children -- 4,468 girls and 886 boys -- went missing. "On an average, 14 children, including 12 girls and two boys, went missing each day in Rajasthan," it said. The data indicated an increase of around 26 per cent in the number of cases of missing children in Madhya Pradesh and a 41-per cent rise in Rajasthan as compared to 2020.

Need to bring global warming under control stressed

PNS ■ CHENNAI
Union Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday said biodiversity offers goods and services that provide a natural habitat and are essential for a well-functioning global economy. Approximately 40 per cent of the world's economy is based on biological products and any effort at conserving biodiversity would be able to succeed only by tackling the challenges that arise due to global warming, the Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change said at an event here. "Global warming has to be urgently brought under control," he said, after inaugurating an exhibition on the occasion of International Day for Biological Diversity. He noted that the country was on track to achieve its biodiversity targets at the national level and was also contributing significantly towards achieving the goals at the global level. India has established a unique three-tier model of biodiversity resource governance at national, state and local body levels ensuring the entire country gets the representation in the governance system, he said. The minister added that the convergence of people, culture and rich tradition of Tamil Nadu has preserved its unique biodiversity in the region. Yadav said the National

"Global warming has to be urgently brought under control," he said, after inaugurating an exhibition on the occasion of International Day for Biological Diversity.



Biodiversity Authority and Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board were working with the Irula Snake Catchers Industrial Cooperative Society to provide access to snake venom to iSERA Biological Private Ltd which has signed an "Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)" agreement. As per the tie-up, five per cent of the total purchase price of snake venom on an annual basis would be deposited into the account of the cooperative society for the benefit of the community, he said. Such partnerships are needed to strengthen and incentivise conservation, he added. Later, the Union Minister took part in the foundation stone ceremony for construction of an Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI) Hospital in neighbouring Sriperumbudur district which is aimed at serving residents of nearby localities. The hospital would be built at an outlay of Rs 155 crore and would have a host of facilities including general medicine, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, emergency, critical care among others. Yadav said the Central government has rolled out several welfare schemes aimed at benefitting the people, including the supply of e-Shram cards to 75 lakh workers employed in the unorganised sectors in the last eight months in Tamil Nadu. Nearly 13.24 crore labourers along with their families were receiving the medicinal benefits under the ESI scheme, he said. In Tamil Nadu, the ESI scheme was meeting the needs of 38.26 lakh insured persons and about 1.48 crore beneficiaries, he said. The minister said out of the total 38 districts in Tamil Nadu, the ESI scheme was fully implemented in 20 districts and partially in 16 districts.

UP: SP to protest against govt on price rise, law & order

PNS ■ LUCKNOW
The first session of the 18th Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh is set to begin on a stormy note with the Samajwadi Party - the main opposition party -- aiming to corner the BJP-led state government on the issue of price rise and law and order. "The current BJP-led government in the state is responsible for the price rise of various commodities ranging from fuel to vegetables, fruits and edible oil. The law and order situation in the state has worsened. The health sector is in a very bad shape, and patients' attendants are being beaten up in hospitals in Kanpur, Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA from Sishamau Assembly constituency in Kanpur told PTI. The situation is very grim. We will raise all these issues in the assembly, and will seek an answer from the government, he said. He said that the BJP-led government has "miserably failed" on all fronts.



SII seeks nod for trial of Covovax as booster dose

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Serum Institute of India (SII) has sought permission from the country's drug regulator to conduct Phase-3 trial to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of its COVID-19 vaccine Covovax as a booster dose in children aged two to 18 years, official sources said on Sunday. The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) had granted permission in March for conducting Phase-3 clinical trial of Covovax as a booster dose in adults. In an application, SII Director for Government and Regulatory Affairs Prakash Kumar Singh has sought permission to conduct the Phase-3, observer-blinded, randomised, controlled study in children aged two to 18 years in India who have already received primary vaccination against COVID-19 with Covovax at



least six months ago. The study will evaluate the immunogenicity and safety of the vaccine as a booster dose in comparison with the placebo. Singh is learnt to have stated that it has become evident that the protection offered against COVID-19 wanes after a two-dose schedule of vaccines and that more than 100 countries have started administering booster doses. A total of 408 eligible children of two to 18 years of age who have completed the primary two-dose schedule of Covovax at least six months ago will be enrolled in the study. The Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech has recently sought permission from India's drug regulator to conduct Phase-2/3 study of its Covid vaccine Covaxin as a booster dose among those aged two to 18 years.

Man kills wife with axe in Rajasthan village

PNS ■ JAIPUR
A 27-year-old man allegedly killed his wife with an axe in a domestic dispute in a village in Sikar district, police said Sunday. The incident happened on Saturday in Meena Wali village under Reengus Police Station, they said. Dharmendra Meena allegedly killed his wife Pooja, 23, and then attempted suicide by jumping into a water tank but was saved by the villagers, they said. The accused was arrested and a case was registered against him, head constable Ram Swaroop said. He said the woman's body was handed over to the relatives after the post mortem.



Stop befooling people, roll back excise duty on fuel to UPA level: Cong on price cut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Congress on Saturday accused Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman of "befooling" people after she announced an excise duty cut on petrol and diesel and said people needed relief instead of "jugglery of figures". Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the government had increased the excise duty on petrol by Rs 10 in 60 days and is now "duping" people by reducing it by Rs 9.50. The opposition party demanded that the finance minister show courage and roll back excise on petrol and diesel to the level it was under the UPA in May 2014. "Dear FM ... in 60 days, you increased the price of petrol by Rs 10/litre and now reduced it by Rs 9.50/litre. ... U increased the price of Diesel by Rs



10/litre and now reduced it by Rs 7/litre. Stop befooling people! "Nation doesn't need jugglery of figures to dupe the people, Nation doesn't need Jumlas, Nation needs rollback of excise on petrol and diesel to May 2014 levels of Rs 9.48/litre on petrol and Rs 3.56/litre on diesel. Stop deceiving, Show the courage to give relief," Surjewala said in a series of tweets. The Congress leader said in

May 2014, excise duty on petrol was Rs 9.48/litre. "It is still Rs 19.90 versus Rs 9.48 during the Congress," he said. On excise duty on diesel, he said, "It is still Rs 15.80 versus Rs 3.56 during Congress." Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said the true cut will be if the Centre decreases the cess it levies on petrol and diesel that is not shared with the states. He said the FM's exhortation to states to reduce taxes is meaningless. "When she cuts Central Excise by one rupee, 41 paise of that rupee belongs to the states. It means that Centre has cut 59 paise and the states have cut 41 paise. So, dont point fingers," the former finance minister said. "Raise Rs 10 per litre in 2 months and cut Rs 9.50 per litre on petrol and Rs 7 per litre on diesel. This is equal to rob Peter more & pay Peter less!" Chidambaram tweeted. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot claimed the Centre had to reduce the excise duty under the pressure of the Congress party's public awareness campaign decided in the recently held Chintan Shivir. He demanded that the central government should lower the petrol and diesel prices to the level during the UPA rule if the government wants to give relief to people in the true sense. Due to the continuous protests by the Congress against inflation across the country and the pressure of public awareness campaign against the inflation decided in Namsankalp Shivir, Udaipur, the central government today had to decide to reduce the excise duty on petrol and diesel, Gehlot tweeted.

Taxpayers can now claim refund of IGST

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Taxpayers who have paid GST on 'Ocean Freight' on imported goods will be entitled to claim refunds, following the Supreme Court verdict, provided they have not claimed input tax credit, experts said. Giving its ruling in the Mohit Minerals case, the Supreme Court held that since the Indian importer is liable to pay IGST on the 'composite supply', comprising of supply of goods and supply of services of transportation, insurance, etc in a CIF (Cost Insurance Freight) contract, a separate levy on the Indian importer for the supply of services by the shipping line would be in violation of ... the CGST Act. In this particular



case, the company had challenged the validity of the CBIC notification regarding levy of Integrated GST on ocean freight in the Gujarat High Court. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Gujarat High Court which had favoured the company. Tax Connect Advisory Services Partner Vivek Jalan said this is a big relief for importers and

GST taxpayers. "Infact those taxpayers who had already paid the GST may also seek a refund of the same now". Naresh Sheth, Partner, N A Shah Associates said, "Such levy, in substance, was a tax on transactions between two foreign parties taking place outside India which apparently is beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the Indian Government." Jalan further said generally, the value of imported goods is CIF and includes the Cost, Insurance and Freight components. Hence Customs Duty and GST is charged on such value. "However, CBIC also sought to levy GST @5 per cent on the value of Imported goods considering 10 per cent of the value of imported goods as deemed ocean freight," Jalan added. AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said the Supreme Court has upheld the Gujarat High Court judgement categorizing the levy of IGST on ocean freight services as unconstitutional. This is a dual levy of IGST as the same has already suffered tax as part of the value of goods. Moreover, these services are received by the foreign exporter, thus the Indian importer shall not be held liable to pay GST on the same, he said. "Through this, a window of opportunity has been opened for the importers who have already paid the tax to demand refund from the exchequer," Mohan added.

Centre forms 3-member panel to investigate Ramban tunnel collapse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Centre has constituted a committee of 3 independent experts to investigate the reasons for recent collapse of a part of under-construction tunnel in Ramban in Jammu-Srinagar highway and suggest remedial measures. State-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has already initiated process to handle such emergency situation and also taking all possible measures to avoid such incidents in future, an official statement said on Sunday. "A committee of 3 independent eminent experts has been constituted by the central government which has already moved



to the site to investigate the reasons for slide/collapse and remedial measures thereof... Further action will be taken based on report of committee," it said. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) office order, Professor JT Sahu of IIT Delhi will be the chairman of the committee, and it will submit the report to the ministry within 10 days.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Quick march

The Army is mulling recruitment of jawans on a four-year 'Tour of Duty'

The Indian armed forces may no longer recruit jawans permanently. A short-term 'Tour of Duty' (ToD) scheme is on the anvil. Recruits will be trained for six months and take up soldiering for three and a half years. They get discharged at the end of the four-year term with a decent severance package and a degree or a certificate attesting to their ToD status. The Government feels this is the best way to tackle shortages and infuse the services with fresh blood at short intervals. The short tenure saves the Government expenses on pension and medical benefits — one of the largest cost components. Some of the ToD retirees could later be selected for a longer or a permanent position. The scheme will thus save money and wipe out personnel shortages. The armed forces are short of personnel at present because recruitment rallies were not held in the last two pandemic years. On average, 50,000-60,000 soldiers retire every year. With recruitment suspended, the shortfall stands at over one lakh soldiers. The existing process will take around one and a half years to select and train recruits. By that time, the shortfall will pinch the services much more. The ToD scheme, if implemented right away, cannot solve the problem overnight. If the selection process — the same as the current one — takes six months and the training another six months, the new soldiers will be ready in a year. Thereafter, the process will become seamless.

It remains to be seen how the youth react to the ToD programme. On the face of it, they have no reason not to take up the attractive challenge. It targets those who are at least matriculates and gives them a chance to join the services and retire after just four years, still in their mid-20s, and armed with decent savings and a work certificate to boot. The opportunity saves them from hunger pangs, makes them employed and, in the end, leaves them qualified for better jobs. Importantly, it will keep them off the streets where circumstances force many of them to get into questionable activities. Some immediate thoughts come to mind about the unique scheme. What happens if forces need to be rushed to the borders or when hostilities break out? Can a ToD jawan with six-month training handle a situation at the front line? It is said a soldier needs up to three years to be fully ready for combat and acquire skills related to combat support and combat service support. By the time the recruits become combat-ready, it will be time for them to retire. Will all ToD recruits be trained as combat personnel only? Or are there avenues to promote other careers within the military? For ToD recruits, most of whom may not return for a permanent role in the services, the four-year tenure can then mean an opportunity to acquire vocational skills that can lead them to jobs as discharged soldiers.

PICTALK



Fans with smoke flares during a soccer match between Liverpool and Wolverhampton, in Liverpool

A futile effort?

The Congress Chintan Shivir failed to throw up anything concrete to help it regain lost footing

The latest Congress jamboree at Udaipur, aka Chintan Shivir, is over. It was supposed to be an exercise by the 'grand old party' to soul search, find faults within and tread on the path to revival. If one goes by the reaction of party men and media persons at the Shivir, it was just another meeting without any effort to usher in radical changes that could revive the party. The Chintan Shivir, which was called 'Nav Sankalp Chintan Shivir', failed to achieve anything meaningful. The main agenda, however, was to absolve the party's high command of all the electoral debacles in the recent past. A camp like this should have been an interactive exercise that could obliterate the line between the leaders and workers. But



Rahul Gandhi seemed aloof and reluctant to connect with his party workers. The Congress seems to have made peace with its existing situation and *status quoist* mindset. There were no sessions dedicated to introspecting and rectifying the problems alienating the party from people. Despite the BJP handing it issues on a platter, it has been unable to cash in on these. Hardly any Congress leader on the ground connects with people or takes up their issues.

One of the decisions taken at the Shivir is to take up Bharat Jodo Yatra, starting October 2. It would be a 3,500-km rally to create awareness about the BJP's game plan among people. How far it would serve the purpose we don't know yet, but it's indeed a good strategy. Advani's Rath Yatra and Chandrashekar's yatra did make a difference. The Congress could also think of galvanising State and district units to create awareness among people and stop polarisation. Congress president Sonia Gandhi was right in her speech about polarisation and the ruling party's strategy to deflect attention from real issues. But the moot question remains what the Congress is doing to call the bluff. The BJP sets the agenda and blames Congress for the problem; yet it is unable to effectively retort to it. Of course, the Congress' revival strengthens Indian democracy as only a national party can effectively play the role of meaningful Opposition. Regional satraps are regional in their scope and approach. For a vibrant democracy, a strong Congress in and out of Parliament is the only guarantee against the BJP's bulldozer.

The current mess in Lankan politics



PRAFULL GORADIA

The installation of a new, and experienced, Government in the island nation is a harbinger of good change, and India must lend a helping hand

Now that a responsible and experienced replacement for the unpopular and forcibly ousted Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has been appointed, it is time for Sri Lanka to decide how it wants to recoup the current economic depression. On the television, Ranil Wickremesinghe, the new Prime Minister, has stated that he has a revival plan. He has some credibility because of his track record, as well as his having served as the PM five times. What role India wishes to play is for South Block to decide; I personally do feel that India should try and play a significant role in Sri Lanka, especially because of its geopolitical situation. Both New Delhi and Colombo are aware that India has a 7,500-km coastline in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, Sri Lanka is strategically at the southern end of the Indian *praayadweep* (peninsula).

Coming to the current situation in our southern island neighbour, there is an unalienable law and order scenario with Sri Lanka's citizens in open conflict with security forces. I have visited Sri Lanka four times in my lifetime and am somewhat familiar with the political and ethnic issues there, but I must admit that the torching of recently deposed PM Mahinda Rajapaksa's ancestral home in Hambantota by a mob has come as a bit of a shock as people there are generally an amiable and easygoing lot. However, keeping cordiality is difficult when one has to wage a daily struggle merely to survive; in Sri Lanka's case, the country has been suffering prolonged power cuts (up to eight hours a day in several parts of the country, according to several reports), lack of food and inflated cost of all essential items.

Most international agencies have severely downgraded the country's sovereign ratings and its foreign exchange has fallen, too. Sri Lanka, even in happier times, lived mainly on tea, rubber, coconut and tourism as the main revenue earners. Moreover, the ruling Rajapaksa dynasty's profligate ways and allegations of corruption against



the family have only served to light a torch to an already explosive situation. The discovery of a fleet of some of the world's most expensive automobiles, including Ferraris and Lamborghinis, hasn't exactly been a positive advertisement for responsible behaviour, let alone good governance.

If one talks to a Sinhala scholar or journalist, he may well begin by blaming the cost of Lanka's civil war with its Tamils. He would not admit that the Tamils have been in eastern Sri Lanka since the beginning of civilisation. I first visited the country in 1964, and could soon thereafter sense that the Sinhala jealousy towards the Tamils was noticeably intense. For example, my father-in-law predicted that the next chief executive of the British Ceylon Corporation (like the British Indian Corporation at Kanpur) would be Pereira and not Swamidasan, who was more competent. The former was a Sinhala. The latter subsequently migrated to Australia. This was less than even the tip of the iceberg.

The other bias that the majority Sinhals have harboured has been towards

Hindus. Indians, therefore, would be well advised to generally field a north Indian and certainly avoid a Tamil or even a Malayali when it comes to official dealings with Lanka. Some thinking Sinhals apprehend that it is not ruled out that, sooner or later, Tamil Nadu could pressure New Delhi to act against Sinhala interests.

The dark clouds hovering over Sri Lanka were visible as early as 2020 when the global pandemic struck. International rating agencies like Standard & Poor's and later Moody's downgraded Sri Lanka's long-term sovereign credit ratings. These global agencies had raised the issue of the Sri Lankan Government's fiscal health and its ability to service the debt it had incurred from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Ukraine war has worsened things for the Emerald Isle.

The crisis there needs urgent succour and India must decide how far it wants to go in order to help. For the record, the new Prime Minister has already voiced his Government's priority of furthering relations with India. Secondly, Colombo must per-

sue its creditors to wait patiently, so that what India sends would be of help to Lanka's future rather than applying balm to its past. India could then offer that proportion of Sri Lanka's future needs which the island country can earn and utilise to pay back. We have mentioned the mutual stake in the Indian Ocean. Both countries must protect each other's interest in this vast pond. This ought to include a Sri Lanka administration being more sympathetic to the people of Jaffna. Any Indian loan(s) should ideally be for use to procure all or any goods/items from India. We are capable of supplying anything from butter to guns.

The Sinhals are a frank, friendly and pleasure-loving people and not very money-minded. As was revealed by a scholar in Kolkata, while Karl Marx had said that "religion is the opium of the masses", a loan is the opium of the classes. It is in this innocent spirit that the Sri Lankas have borrowed money. Any new lender should be conscious of this.

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



THE TORCHING OF RECENTLY DEPOSED PRIME MINISTER MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA'S ANCESTRAL HOME IN HAMBANTOTA BY A MOB HAS COME AS A BIT OF A SHOCK AS PEOPLE THERE ARE GENERALLY AN AMIABLE AND EASYGOING LOT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SSC SCAM EMBARRASSES TMC

Sir — The SSC (School Service Commission) scam in Bengal has raised questions about the State Government's credibility. It has exposed the deep-rooted corruption and nepotism under the Ministers who were allegedly involved in Group C teacher recruitment racket. The CBI investigation ordered by the Calcutta High Court against former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee and other ministers over graft charges will damage the TMC's reputation beyond repair. It's a shame that 221 candidates, who never took the SSC exam, are now working at different Government-aided schools. They are playing with the future of students after ruining the chances of deserving candidates.

The Calcutta High Court has set a good precedent by ordering Education Minister Parsh Adhikary's daughter to discontinue her job and return the salary earned. Similar action awaits those who got jobs after greasing the palms of corrupt officials and Ministers. The scam, which has cropped up recently, will further delay the SSC exam announced by the Government. The CBI investigation is likely to open a can of worms as Partha Chatterjee is just the tip of an iceberg. After the Sharada chit fund scam, the TMC Government are now trapped in alleged irregularities in teachers' recruitment.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

GOOD RULING BY MATHURA COURT

Sir — While allowing a petition for the removal of the Shahi Idgah mosque, a Mathura court has observed that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, was not applicable in the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah case as the compromise decree dividing the disputed land was signed in 1968, long before the law was enacted. The Act will not be applicable in this case by virtue of Section 4(3)(b) of the 1991 Act, which states that the bar under Section 4 will not apply to any suit, appeal or other proceeding, with respect

The SC as people's voice



The Supreme Court has taken a wise decision to unearth the truth in respect of the Gyanvapi case. The case has been transferred to the district judge in Varanasi from the civil judge (senior division). The rationale behind this transfer is that a senior and experienced judicial officer has to hear the case in view of the complexities and sensitivity involved. Without coming in the way of Muslims for their ablution before *namaz*, the apex court has ordered for the protection of

Shivling despite argument from the Muslim side that it is only a fountain, not a Lingam. It is necessary to protect it until it is decided whether it is a Shivling or a fountain.

The Supreme Court has said it wants the truth to come out. People are entitled to know the truth as people's voice. The court has made it clear that "the ascertainment of the religious character of a place as a processual instrument may not fall foul of Section 3 or 4 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991". The suit's maintainability is not being decided here since the Muslim panel wants the commissioner's appointment to be held void *ab initio*. If Muslims can't argue that there exists no Hindu temple or deity in the mosque's vicinity, they would do well to facilitate the petitioners in their worship.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

to any matter referred to in sub-section (2) to finally decide, settle or dispose of by a court, tribunal or other authority before the commencement of this Act.

The judgment proves that our judicial system is on the right path. Unnecessarily defaming the judicial system, people don't understand the position judges and lawyers often find themselves in. India is a deeply religious country, where even a small line can cause a riot; it's our duty to maintain the dignity of the judges of our country who are trying to bring about peace. Now there is no need for God's incarnation; his devotees are ready to fight for His rights.

Vinay Verma | Ujjain

TENSION IN THE US-UK TIES?

Sir — Whoever has deeply studied the political relationship between the US and the UK, will find that Britain is actually not only a reliable partner of the US, but it is almost a part of the US though not located in America. From British PM Margaret Thatcher to John Major, Tony Blair to Gordon Brown to David Cameron, they

all used to almost obey the White House diktats. In the US, Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan, and George Bush to Donald Trump used to make foreign policy decisions while London used to bow its head and just say "Yes Sir".

I have never seen any tension between these countries. But on Thursday, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued a warning to London, which surprised me. The US has explicitly stated that the unilateral UK legislation affecting the Northern Ireland Protocol could jeopardise British prospects for a free trade agreement with the US. The Northern Ireland Protocol was the result of negotiations with the European Union on how to maintain a frictionless border between Ireland and the post-Brexit EU customs borders. But America, forgetting the past, has issued a strict warning to Britain. Hope the Londoners will come on the back foot.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshepur

SOUND BITE

Every regional language in the country is worth worshipping.

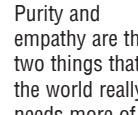


Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



Such actions (J&K, Article 370) make it difficult for us to hold a dialogue with India.

Pak Foreign Minister — Bilawal Bhutto Zardari



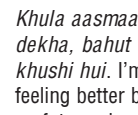
Purity and empathy are the two things that the world really needs more of.

Actor — Rajkumar Rao



I was disappointed that I haven't done much for my team. That's what bothers me, not the stats.

Indian cricketer — Virat Kohli



Khula aasmaan dekha, bahut khushi hui. I'm feeling better but no future plans yet.

Media baron — Indrani Mukerjea

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN THE CAUSES OF RUPEE HITTING ALL-TIME LOW

Policy intervention could reverse the trend



RAVI KUMAR GUPTA



SARTHAK KANSAL

The rupee has shown a lot of irregularities since January, 2022. The Rupee stood 73.77 against the Dollar on 12th January, 2022 and since then it is in downward trend. On 16th May, 2022, the Indian rupee fell to an all-time low of 77.81 against the previous low of 76.98 against the USD.

The increase in the rate hike by the Fed earlier this week by 50 bps has created a huge demand for USD in local markets. Foreign investors are pulling their money out of the Indian stock market owing to greater demand for USD. The outflow of foreign investors has pulled 1.5 lakh crores so far from the Indian stock market. This has caused a huge gap to be filled by domestic investors. About one-fifth of India's total imports are accounted by crude oil. Because of the Russia-Ukraine war, crude oil prices have skyrocketed. The cost per barrel has broken all records after the 2008 recession and came to a high of \$123.70 in the year 2022. This has caused the strengthening of the USD and caused a major concern in the current account deficit of India.

It is expected to hit a 10 year high of 3.3% of GDP this year, causing the rupee to fall even more. While China and Japan are unable to adjust their monetary policy according to the US federal rate hike, it has drastically affected the value of their currencies along with major Asian currencies.



Performing poorly, the rupee was bound to be affected. The lockdown in China has made it difficult to deal with a lot of companies, which has caused the yuan to depreciate further, affecting sentiments of emerging market currencies. Economists believe the dollar is strengthening not only as a result of aggressive Fed policy, but also as a result of weak rising sentiment. There is a greater risk in the market because of the Russia-Ukraine war and a tighter lockdown in China. Therefore, the significance of safe currency in a changing world increases. Food inflation, which accounts for almost half of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), has been increasing in multilevel due to the global rise in the price of vegetables and cooking oil. A global supply shortage has caused the inflation level to reach an all-time high. Wholesale price index of India also jumped to an all-time high of 15.1% in April 2022 compared to the previous 14.6% in March 2022. All these factors are putting pressure on emerging markets like India causing them to depreciate against the USD.

To ensure the safety of the rupee, the Reserve Bank of India has started selling large chunks of foreign reserves. The \$642.5 billion foreign Reserve has fallen to \$597.7 billion because of selling. There is a continuous fall in weekly foreign Reserve. The Reserve Bank of India also increased the repo rate by 40 basis points, changing from 4% to 4.40% and CRR increased by 50 basis points (4.5%) to tackle inflation among the falling rupees. Few economists believe that the rupee will continue to lose as there is a significant difference in long-term inflation between India and the USA. On the other hand, some economists contend that value of the rupee will rise again through intervention of tools of monetary policy.

(Gupta is Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Management Science and Kansal is in Computer Science Junior Year, Madan Mohan Malaviya University of Technology, Gorakhpur, India. The views expressed are personal.)

Bihar and industry: Will the twain meet?



DHANANJAY KUMAR

The perception that Bihar is off limits for industry is passe now, according to the Minister for Industry in the State, Shahnawaz Hussain

The list of participants at the Bihar Investors Meet in Delhi on May 12 made a very impressive reading indeed- Adani, ITC, HUL, Coca Cola, Amazon, Flipkart, Samsung, Amul, Britannia Industries, Usha Martin, Honda, L&T, Arvind Mills, TATA Bluescope, Shree Cement, Ambuja Cement, to name a few. Presence of M A Yusuf Ali, Chairman, LuLu group International from Dubai, was the icing on the cake. ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri and many other notable industry biggies embellished the occasion.

The man of the moment, Bihar Minister for Industry Shahnawaz Hussain, said things which even diehard Biharis will find tough to stomach. He went on to declare that Bihar is now the most favoured investment destination in the country. The perception that Bihar is off limits for industry is passe now, the minister asserted claiming that the perception particularly changed quickly after he took up the reins.

Those who used to say that when it comes to industry Bihar was not even worth a needle must be rubbing their eyes in disbelief after watching the milestone that the Investors Meet turned out to be, he said. "I am going to take the road shows to Mumbai, Surat and other cities of the country including Patna, and even to Dubai. The grand success of Investors Meet is symptomatic of the fact that the perception has unmistakably changed and Industrialization of the state is a fait accompli, the beginning of which is marked by establishment of first ever ethanol plant and Pepsi's bottling plant."

Mega Food Park, Mega Textile Park, Mega Leather Park, IT Park, Ethanol Plants and youth from all over India seeking jobs in Bihar et al-- the promises that Hussain portrayed seemed so unreal. But you cannot fault Mr Hussain for dreaming. No one did. Despite not believing what he dreamt, people had glowing words for his efforts and his chasing of gold at the end of the rainbow. It is said if you can dream it, you can do it - in the light of this saying all wished him all the best.

As for political stability, a sine qua non for industry, the minister said that there are no ifs and buts about the continuation of Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar till 2025. Like an oracle he gushed - "Listen to my prediction, the day is bound to come when youth from other states will come to Bihar for jobs".

Though showering profuse praise on Shahnawaz Hussain for showing the nerve and determination to embark on the perilous path, Doubting Thomases as ever are dubbing it as nothing but "jumlas." His claim of change in perception about Bihar among investors had few takers in the media and he had to evade questions regarding it. The fact is there has been non-existent growth in industry in Bihar in the last 30 years, export being less than 1 percent.

Not to talk of others, even Neeraj Kumar, State President, Commerce Cell of



AN ETHANOL PLANT HAS BEEN A DREAM OF MODI AND BIHAR EMERGED AS THE FIRST STATE TO TAKE IT UP. TEXTILE AND LEATHER POLICIES ARE IN THE OFFING AND ONCE THEY ARE IN PLACE, INVESTMENT PROPOSALS WILL POUR IN. FOOD PARK, MEGA TEXTILE PARK, LOGISTIC PARK, LEATHER PARKS ARE IN THE PIPELINE

(The writer is a journalist who has served for long in Bihar. The views expressed are personal.)



Bihar BJP and MD, Asian Pharmaceutical Ltd, refused to buy Hussain's optimism. Talking to this writer, Kumar said that in a state where a single road takes at least 10 years to be built, industrialization is at best a leap of faith.

Acquisition of land fragmented into small holdings will be the greatest hurdle. Illustrious peasant leaders of yore Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Sir Ganesh Dutta had tried to consolidate the land but their efforts were frustrated by the erstwhile govt which fragmented big chunks of land into small acreages and distributed among people on caste lines.

Today, thousands of farmers will have to be aggregated for land for single industry. The question of law and order is forever an intimidating one.

But Hussain found a cheer leader in Ajay Kumar, a renowned Urologist in Patna and former president of Indian Medical Association (IMA). He said Hussain is sincere in his intent and has raised hopes of industries dawning on Bihar. He advised Hussain to put his energy in roping in Bihar owned pharmaceutical honchos and bring them home for investing in the state. If only Bihari pharmaceutical honchos producing medicines outside come to state to manufacture, the state would turn into a pharma hub in no time. Over 120 Bihari pharma leaders, many of them majors, manufac-

ture medicines outside Bihar. The irony is that Biharis are the biggest consumer of medicines but strangely enough not a single pharma company representative made it to the Investors Meet. Hussain made a fervent appeal to them in their absence to come home to invest.

Unwittingly echoing Chief minister Nitish Kumar, Shahnawaz himself dubbed industrialization of the state as impossible when he said that his party always assigns him impossible tasks and he was never found wanting. Nitish Kumar not long ago said without pretence that Bihar being landlocked is unfit for industrialization.

Hussain said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has mandated him to pull out all stops to bring industries to Bihar and he has his full blessings. The ethanol plant has been a dream of Modi and Bihar emerged as the first state to take it up. Textile and leather policies are in the offing and once they are in place, investment proposals will pour in. Food Park, Mega Textile Park, Logistic Park, leather parks are in the pipeline.

MOUs are flaunted in any Investors' meet but they were conspicuous by their absence. Hussain rationalised it by saying that the meet was organised just to fathom the interests of industrialist. The interest they evinced was palpable. Hussain's goodwill in the media

was equally palpable which spared him many blushes. The rough edges around gaps in Investors Meet were safely put on the back burner. Questions around CM Nitish Kumar could have queered the pitch. The absence of Nitish Kumar itself was tricky issue.

However, Hussain must be given credit for creating buzz around an issue which has always been a no go in Bihar. Making a spectacle of over 170 companies out of which 30 were majors in different domains is not a mean achievement. It certainly speaks a volume about Hussain's capability to create event and must have raised his stock among BJP leaders. But he should also hedge his bets as such shows might have triggered his detractors in the party into action. To his credit, the prohibition question did not rear its head.

Giving it a reel touch, Hussain said the era of Prakash Jha's famous Gangajal had unarguably been replaced by that of Good Newz, a recent hit film about treatment of infertility through assisted birthing technology IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) meaning out of womb. The resemblance is spot on as the Investors Meet to turn the industrially sterile Bihar into a manufacturing hub was also held in Delhi, i.e., outside Bihar. The venue itself was pregnant with meaning.

POINT COUNTER POINT

THE BJP WILL TALK ABOUT THE CONGRESS, ITS WORKERS AND LEADERS, BUT NOT ABOUT REGIONAL PARTIES BECAUSE ... THEY CANNOT DEFEAT THE BJP.

—CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



IN MY VIEW, THE 'CHINTAN SHIVIR' FAILED TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING MEANINGFUL OTHER THAN PROLONGING THE STATUS QUO.

—ELECTION STRATEGIST PRASHANT KISHOR

The religious economy: \$40 billion and growing

Indians undertake more pilgrimages than business trips and spend more on pilgrimage than travel for education purposes

The temple economy is as large as the Indian budget and is sustaining the country. Its contours across religious denominations - Hindu, Muslim and Christians - are much wider than expected. It is changing the society and its financial parameters.

The NSSO survey estimates that temple economy is worth Rs 3.02 lakh crore or about \$40 billion and 2.32 percent of GDP. In reality it may be larger. It includes everything from flowers, oil, lamps, perfumes, bangles, sindur, images and puja dresses. It is driven by the vast majority of informal unprotected labour.

The 2022-23 Central government revenue is Rs 19,34,706 crore and mere six temples collected Rs 24000 crore in cash alone. There are 5 lakh temples,



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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

7 lakh mosques and 35,000 churches in this country. Top officials as devotees give a kick.

Donations for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya collected in 2021 is Rs 5450 crore, almost equal to Rs 5000-crore defence budget. It surpassed the collection in the first phase.

Others are Tirumala Tirupati, Rs 3023 crore; Vaishno Devi, Rs 2000 crore, Ambaji, Rs 4134 crore (Rs 5163 crore in 2019-20), Dwarkadhish, Rs 1172 crore, Somnath, Rs 1205 crore, Golden Temple, Rs 690 crore. Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura, Banke Bihar Mandir in Vrindavan, Padmanabha mandir, Siddhivinayak mandir and Kashi Vishvanath mandir have similar large earnings. Gold donations at different temples vary from 130 kg at Tirupati



to 380 kg at Shirdi.

The Pew Global Attitude survey shows that more than 25 percent of Indians reported having become more religious over the past four-five years. Between 2007 and 2015, the share of respondents in India who perceived religion to be very important increased by 11 percent to 80 percent now.

Ram Mandir movement and the court verdict has been a game changer. It has poured in

huge funding into a region that was one of the most backward. It boosted funding for mosques and Islamic shrines too. During pandemic the silent real estate boom took place in Ayodhya, Varanasi, Vindhyachal, Mirzapur and Mathura. Land prices soared in the most backward places. The premium on land is unprecedented.

Whether religious activities can sustain such places would be interesting to observe. The enthusiasm is high but would it surpass the next industrial revival?

The domestic religious tourism is surpassing the number of foreign visitors. Over 100 crore domestic visits to new destinations suggest there is churning beyond Delhi-Agra-Jaipur golden triangle. The NSSO figures suggest

that 55 percent of Hindus undertake religious pilgrimages patronizing mid and small sized hotels. Expenses on religious travel are Rs 2,717 per day/person, expenses on social travel, Rs 1,068 per day/person, expenditure on educational travel, Rs 2,286 per day/person. That comes to expenditure on religious travel of Rs 1316 crore per day and an annual expenditure on religious travel of Rs 4.74 lakh crore

This NSSO data says that Indians do more pilgrimage than business trips and spend more on pilgrimage than traveling for education purposes.

The government has chalked out religious circuit tourism. The Ramayana circuit is over the life philosophy of Lord Ram. Along with this, the Char Dham road project has

also been prepared. The government has also strengthened the Buddha circuit.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi relaunched Varanasi corridor, Kedardham and Badridham. The government is renovating about 50 thousand temples in Jammu and Kashmir. No other prime minister made the visit to religious shrines an event.

The dargahs of Chisti, Aulia, Charar-e-Sharif, Jama masjid of Bhopal, Delhi and other shrines have large income in cash and kinds. Similarly various churches also have decent incomes. The movement for Ram temple in Ayodhya stated to have increased the incomes for most Hindu and Muslim shrines. The earnings of the Hindu temples are known to some extent but whether it is the

Ajmer dargah or other Muslim shrines they are shy of telling the approximate figures.

The holy fund is changing the politics, hospital administration and even university portals and more. Dishing out degrees is not difficult and that becomes a money spinner.

During demonetization, some heads of mutts were in the news for their wide connections and effective delivery. Their services were not limited to India. They could deliver new currency notes with ease even in dollars to Dubai, Canada, England or other destinations at premium price. The Hawala linkages help.

They are good at balance sheet manipulations. Even scrapped notes were exchanged with élan. Yes, these are done to adjust the murky money.

PNB earns over Rs 645 crore through ATM transaction charges in FY22

Public sector lender Punjab National Bank has said it earned over Rs 645 crore by levying ATM transaction charges on customers during the financial year 2021-22. Revenue earned by PNB from ATM transaction charges stood at Rs 645.67 crore in financial year 2021-22, the bank said in response to an application seeking information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Besides, the country's second largest lender collected Rs 239.09 crore in the form of penalty imposed on customers who failed to maintain minimum balance or quarterly/monthly average balance in their bank accounts, according to the bank's response to Madhya Pradesh-based RTI applicant Chandrashekhara Gaur. In 2020-21, the bank had earned Rs 170 crore by levying charges on customers for not maintaining minimum balance in their accounts. This amount was collected from 8,518,953 accounts during FY22. To a query on the number of zero balance accounts with the bank, PNB (Punjab National Bank) said there were a total of 67,637,918 such accounts as of March 31, 2022.



Salil Parekh reappointed as CEO, MD of Infosys for 5 years

The board of IT services major Infosys has approved the reappointment of Salil Parekh as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of the company for five more years, till March 31, 2027, according to a regulatory filing. This is based on the recommendations of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) and subject to the approval of shareholders. "...Board of Directors, in their meeting held on May 21, 2022, based on the recommendations of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) have approved ...Reappointment of Salil Parekh as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of the company from July 1, 2022 to March 31, 2027, subject to the approval of shareholders," the BSE filing said. Parekh, has been the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Infosys since January 2018.



Spinning mills to stop production, cotton procurement: SISPA

To tide over the crisis of rising cotton prices, small spinning mills on Saturday decided to stop production operations till the situation turns conducive for them and also to stop procurement of cotton. The decision in this regard was taken at an emergency meeting of members of South India Spinners Association (SISPA) to discuss the present crisis and took a unanimous decision, its president J Selvan said here. Spinning mills are facing an unprecedented hike in cotton prices in the last five months in India as January saw cotton price per candy (356 kg) at around Rs 75,000 that has today gone up to Rs 1.15 lakh, which is an increase of 53 per cent, he pointed out. At the same time, the yarn price in January was Rs 328 per kg and today (May 21) it is Rs 399 per kg, Selvan noted. Based on the current yarn prices, mills are incurring a loss of Rs 50 to Rs 60 per kg, he said and attributed the main reason for the sudden rise in rates to low cotton production this year.



Markets may face volatility amid derivatives expiry

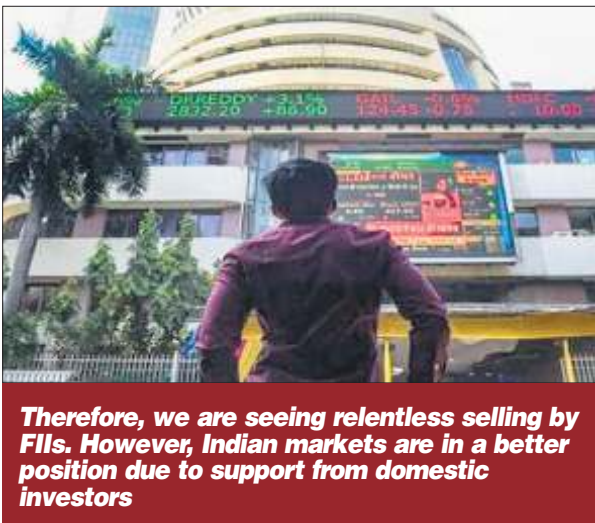
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global factors and trading activity of foreign institutional investors are expected to guide domestic market sentiments this week, while equity benchmarks may face volatility amid monthly derivatives expiry, analysts said.

Indian markets have been witnessing volatile trades for the past several trading sessions. However, the Nifty managed to break its five-week losing streak and ended with a decent weekly gain of 3 per cent, said Santosh Meena, head of research, Swastika Investment Ltd.

Inflation and slowdown in the global economy means stagflation is a key concern for the global equity markets, "therefore, we are seeing relentless selling by FIIs (Foreign Institutional Investors). However, Indian markets are in a better position due to support from domestic investors," he added.

"The market may remain volatile this week due to May



Therefore, we are seeing relentless selling by FIIs. However, Indian markets are in a better position due to support from domestic investors

month expiry. On the global front, minutes of the FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting will be released on 25th May, which will be an important trigger, while movement of the dollar index and commodity prices will be other important factors," Meena

said. Yeshu Shah, head of equity research, Samco Securities, said, "The volatility observed last week is expected to continue considering major economic data releases, the current earnings season and the monthly expiry. The FOMC minutes, US GDP growth rate forecasts and

initial jobless claims will all influence global market sentiment."

Last week, the Sensex climbed 1,532.77 points or 2.90 per cent, while the Nifty jumped 484 points or 3.06 per cent.

"Overall we expect this volatility to continue this week as well with several macro headwinds like high inflation and aggressive interest rate hike. Also heavy FII selling continued, which added to the overall pressure in the market," said Siddhartha Khemka, head -- retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

From the earnings front, SAIL, Zomato, Adani Ports, Deepak Fertilizers, InterGlobe Aviation, Hindalco, NMDC, GAIL and Godrej Industries would announce their quarterly numbers this week.

Ajit Mishra, VP - research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "Going ahead, global cues, the last leg of earnings and updates on the Russia-Ukraine war will be on the radar."

Greenko to supply green power to 3 states

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Greenko Group will supply green power to ArcelorMittal, Ayana Renewable Power and three states from its 5,230 MW renewable energy plant being set up here, a top company official said.

The plant which is being set up at a cost of USD 3 billion is the world's largest renewable energy storage project. Global steel giant ArcelorMittal has made an investment of around USD 600 million for 1,000 MW capacity of the project.

Out of 5,230 MW, 3,000 MW is solar, 550 MW wind and 1,680 MW is pump storage capacity. The daily storage capacity of the project will be 10,800 MW.

"Renewable energy will be supplied to ArcelorMittal, Ayana (Renewable Power) and discoms in Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Bihar," the company's Joint Managing Director Mahesh Kolli told PTI.

'Excise duty cut to help reduce logistics cost; promote exports'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Excise duty cut on petrol and diesel and rationalisation of customs duties on goods such as raw material for plastic and steel will help reduce logistics cost, promote competitiveness of manufacturing and exports of value-added goods, exporters said on Sunday.

The government on Saturday announced reduction in excise duty on petrol by a record Rs 8 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 6 per litre. It also cut import duty on raw material of steel and plastic and increased export duty on iron ore and steel intermediates.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said these measures will bring down the domestic prices of key inputs thereby softening inflation.

"This will also add to the competitiveness of the manufacturing and export sector and will further push value-added exports from the country. These proactive measures will also ease the logistics



pressure and bring down the freight bill of the country as in some cases the same raw material was being exported from the country and subsequently being imported by the downstream users," he said.

Sharing similar views, leading Mumbai-based exporter and Chairman of Technocraft Industries, Sharad Kumar Saraf said reduction in excise duty on petrol and diesel will reduce logistics costs and will support exports particularly of commodities which are freight sensitive.

"Export duty on iron ore and

semi finished steel products like HR coils and bars already has a desired effect. Steel prices have started softening and this will have a significant positive impact on our engineering exports. The government must be complimented for such actions," Saraf said.

Ludhiana-based Hand Tools Association President S C Ralhan too said the iron and steel industry should pass on the benefits to the engineering sector, particularly the MSME units, which are reeling under the impact of high iron and steel prices.

Prestige Group to pump Rs 7,500 cr in Mumbai

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bengaluru-based Prestige Group, which is entering the financial capital, has drawn plans of investing at least Rs 7,500 crore over the next four-five years to get a foothold in the foremost realty markets in the country, a top official has said.

The listed company, which has a presence in the southern market and has delivered over 250 projects, will develop both residential and commercial projects in the financial capital, its managing director Irfan Razack told PTI.

He said the group envisages developing at least 16 million square feet of space in six projects spread across the city and will be conservative in its approach in the market, which has seen quite a few developers facing troubles.

"We want to be a responsible developer who delivers whatever we have signed up for. We are not in any hurry and will be conservative," he said, detailing the projects.

MFs collect Rs 1.08L cr via 176 NFOs in FY22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Riding on intense retail investors' interest and a sharp rally in equity markets, asset management companies (AMCs) launched 176 new fund offerings (NFOs) in 2021-22, garnering a whopping Rs 1.08 lakh crore.

With liquidity tightening, interest rates on the rise, stock market consolidation in progress, return to work from office, there could be subdued interest in NFOs going forward. While fixed maturity plans (FMPs) category could see considerable launches, the same cannot be expected from other categories, Gopal Kavalireddi, Head of Research at Fyers, said.

Also, almost all AMCs have launched new schemes across most categories, thereby fillings the earlier existing product gaps that was created post-recategorization, he said.



Export duty hike on steel items to hit projects under PLI scheme: ISA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Imposition of export duties on steel products will send a negative signal to investors and adversely impact capacity expansion projects under PLI scheme, steel industry players said after the government removed customs duties on raw materials and hiked export taxes to check local prices.

The government on Saturday waived customs duty on the import of some raw materials, including coking coal and ferronickel, used by the steel industry, a move which will lower the cost for the domestic industry and reduce the prices.

Also, to increase domestic availability, the duty on exports of iron ore was hiked up to 50 per cent, and a few steel intermediaries to 15 per cent, according to a notification.

In a statement, the steel-makers' body, the Indian Steel Association (ISA), said the industry welcomes the removal of import duty on coking coal and few other input raw materials for the industry.

"However, imposition of export duty on steel will only send a negative signal to investors in the steel sector and will adversely impact the sector's capacity utilisation. India has been increasing its engineering and steel exports over the last two years and has the potential to become part of a larger global supply chain.

"India may lose the export opportunities now and this decision may also impact the overall economic activity in the country," the association said. Also, the imposition of export duty will help other countries to increase their share in the global market, which India will vacate. Rebuilding the lost ground may take a very long time, as the supply chain will be disrupted, while India's credibility as a reliable exporter will take a hit, the ISA noted.

The body further said, "Steel industry in India has made the largest investment commitments ranging from 36 per cent to 40 per cent of total investments committed by the entire manufacturing sector.

Excise Cut: Industry, traders urge states to follow suit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Inc, traders and exporters have welcomed the Centre's move to slash excise duty on auto fuels and urged states to follow suit to provide more relief to consumers. They said the price cut would lower inflation on account of lower cost of transportation.

CIIL welcomes the government's move to cut excise duty on fuel, which will help bring down inflation levels. The government's swift action shows its intent to bring down the burden on the common man, in addition to bringing down input cost for many sectors."

Cooling items in hot demand; refrigerator, AC sales jump: Croma

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the unrelenting heat wave sweeps across major parts of the country, demand for cooling products such as refrigerators, air conditioners, coolers and fans has shot up and sales have more than doubled this summer season, according to a report by Tata group consumer electronics goods retailer Croma.

As per Croma's 'Unboxed Summer 2022' report, sales of refrigerators have shot up more than 100 per cent over 2021, while those of air conditioners (ACs) jumped by three times.

"For the more value conscious, room cooler sales have



witnessed a 2.5 times jump in demand with the highest sales this summer coming from Pune," it said, adding that fan sales have doubled in 2022 over 2021, with 1 out of 5 consumers coming from Bangalore.

When it comes to the size of ACs, cities like Mumbai, Thane,

Pune and Kolkata saw the maximum off-take of 1 ton ACs, while cities in the north and central India with mostly high rise buildings witnessed more interest in 1.5-ton ACs due to larger average home sizes and accounted for 60 per cent of all ACs sold, it added. In terms of

energy efficiency products, the Croma study found that the highest proportion of 5-star ACs were sold in Hyderabad, Delhi-NCR, Bangalore, while in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Surat, Chennai, Vadodra, Indore over 50 per cent buyers bought 3-star ACs.

Interestingly, 50 per cent of portable ACs were purchased in just four cities Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune, it added.

On the other hand, consumers in Delhi-NCR seem to be getting ready for winters with 62 per cent of Hot and Cold ACs sold during summers in the region, the survey found.

LML Electric to invest Rs 350 cr in product expansion, new plant

PNS ■ MUMBAI

LML Electric, which has announced its plans to roll out three products next year in its second coming, is looking to invest Rs 350-crore in the business, including in setting up a new manufacturing plant, a top company executive has said.

The Kanpur-based Lohia Motors Ltd (LML) earlier used to make the iconic Vespa Scooter in collaboration with Italy's Piaggio and C Spa.

The company in September last year announced its plans to re-enter the market with electric vehicles. In April this year, it said the company is looking to unveil three EV products a



hyperbike, an e-bike and an electric scooter by September and their subsequent launch between February and August next year.

We are looking at our first investment of Rs 350 crore. This investment is planned for product expansion, setting up a new manufacturing facility and collaborations, among

others, LML Chief Executive Officer Yogesh Bhatia told PTI.

He said that the company has received many investment proposals from some big investors but it will take a call only after unveiling its products in September this year.

Emphasising that LML Electric has so far been funded through the parent company SG Corporate Mobility, Bhatia said that the management has discussed the proposals but sought time from the prospective investors as we want them to first evaluate all aspects of our products once they are unveiled in September.

Davos turns into festival for WEF meet; locals look for economic boost

PNS ■ DAVOS

Nearly 5,000 Swiss military personnel have joined local police to secure this small Swiss town for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum after a pandemic-induced two-year hiatus, but residents and businessmen are not complaining as they are eagerly awaiting the much-awaited revenue windfall brought in by thousands of participants and their delegations.

The rare springtime WEF Annual Meeting -- which has been otherwise taking place for 50 years in January, when this highest town of Europe is covered



in snow -- however, is different in many other senses, be it a sunny weather, absence of snow boots and heavy jackets

and also the missing Russian parties. To be precise, the traditional Russia House has given way to "Russia Warcrimes

House", as no Russian leaders or citizens have been invited this time due to the war in Ukraine.

However, across the road at a close distance, a huge Ukraine House has been set up and a number of Ukrainian leaders including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be addressing this high-profile congregation of the rich and powerful from across the world. The traditional India Lounge remains at its usual place, while there are also separate pavilions set up by Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu governments, in addition to several pavilions by top Indian com-

panies such as HCL and Wipro.

According to local estimates, the summit brings in about USD 60 million of windfall revenue to this small town, which otherwise mainly depends on ski tourism. The Swiss government has deployed its armed forces, which will remain in place till May 30.

"The federal parliament has set an upper limit of 5,000 army members for the WEF deployment of the army in the assistance service, which lasts from May 20 to 30 this year, due to the postponement of the annual meeting," the Swiss government said.



Sun Pharma recalls over 10,000 bottles of generic anti-depression drug in US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Sun Pharma is recalling around 10,500 bottles of a generic drug meant for the treatment of major depressive disorders in the US market following a customer complaint.

According to the latest enforcement report of the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), the US arm of the domestic pharmaceutical major is recalling 10,548 bottles of bupropion hydrochloride extended-release tablets in the American market.

The drug is used to treat depression and prevent Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). It is also used to help people stop smoking.

As per the USFDA, the company is recalling the affected lot due to "presence of foreign substance: Customer complaint for the presence of dark, gritty substance found within the bottle, which was determined to be activated carbon from the desiccant

canister inside the bottle".

The drugmaker is recalling the product in 150 and 200 mg strengths, it added. The company is recalling 9,804 bottles of 150 mg strength and 744 bottles of 200 mg strength, the US health regulator stated.

The affected lot of the medication was manufactured by the drug maker in its Halol (Gujarat) based manufacturing plant. In the US, the medication was distributed by New Jersey-based Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Inc.

The company initiated the Class III nationwide (US) voluntary recall on April 29 this year.

As per USFDA, a Class III recall is initiated in a "situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product is not likely to cause adverse health consequences." Earlier this month, Sun Pharma had said that the USFDA issued a 'Form 483' with ten observations after inspecting its Halol plant in Gujarat.



Actor Ayushmann Khurrana says rather than having a common language, hearts need to be one in a country like India where diversity is the biggest strength. Khurrana, who promoted his upcoming film *Anek* at Miraj Cinema here on Friday, weighed in on the language row and said all languages in the country deserved to be treated with respect. Those who haven't spoken Hindi from childhood, if they are expected to

it was unfair, the National Award winner said. "We should give importance to each and every language in the country. Those who cannot speak Hindi should not be treated in a certain way. It really doesn't matter if there is a common language or not. Only the hearts need to be one," Khurrana told reporters when he was asked to address the controversy over the demand that

"There are so many languages, religions, and every 10 km, there's a change in dialect. Our diversity is our biggest strength as the uniqueness of the nation. We should give importance to each and every language in the country," he added. On Friday, during his virtual address to BJP office-bearers, PM Narendra Modi said the party considers all Indian languages worthy of reverence. "I want to mention this

guage. We have to constantly alert the people of the country about this," the prime minister added. India doesn't have a national language, and Hindi and English are the two official languages of the country.

In his answer to another question, Khurrana said sports and cinema are two 'great binders and levellers' where language, religion or caste don't matter.

Set against the geopolitical backdrop of Northeast India, *Anek* follows a journey of an undercover cop named Joshua, played by Khurrana, who wants nothing more than peace for the nation. The movie, which explores discrimination against the people from Northeast India, reunites the actor with his *Article 15* director Anubhav Sinha.

"It's a very special film to me because it is an important film in today's scenario. It has been made with a lot of heart by Anubhav Sinha. It's not just an action film, it's a political film. The film talks about uniting the country, about language. Many other issues have been touched upon in this film," Khurrana added.

Also starring Andrea Kevichusa, Manoj Pahwa, Kumud Mishra, and J D Chakravarthy, *Anek* is slated to be theatrically released on May 27.

Doesn't matter if there is a common language or not: Ayushmann Khurrana

especially because attempts have been made in the recent past to create new controversies on the basis of lan-

speaking or learn the language all of a sudden, Hindi should be the national language.

especially because attempts have been made in the recent past to create new controversies on the basis of lan-



Jacqueline steps in to help Bollywood photog in distress

Apart from acting in movies, Jacqueline Fernandez is also known to help out people in need.

Last year, she had also launched her foundation 'You Only Live Once' or YOLO to spread kindness through various mediums. Recently, Jacqueline stepped in to help Bollywood photographer Manoj Mehara who was in dire need for funds for his brother's medical treatment.

When he reached out to Jacqueline for help, the actress, along with her Foundation, came to his aid.

Expressing his gratitude Manoj took to his Instagram and shared, "@jacquelinef143 aur @j.yolofoundation ka dil se shukriya. Aapne mere bhai ke ilaaj ke liye madad kar mere liye kaafi bada kaam kiya hai aur main apki iss help ke liye apko kitna bhi thank you bolu kam hai. Maine ek din apko meri takleef aur pareshaani batayi aur aapne bina waqt gayave turant hi apne foundation ke dwara meri aur mere bhai ki help ki. Mere bhai aur meri family ke taraf apko dher saara respect, pyaar aur THANK YOU. You are a per-

son with a golden heart."

Jacqueline has recently clocked one year of YOLO Foundation, had tied up with an NGO called the Roti Bank, to provide one lakh meals that month for the needy. YOLO had also partnered with the Feline Foundation, an initiative to help stray animals, distributed masks, sanitizers, and raincoats to front-line workers; the Mumbai and Pune Police Force, who continued to work relentlessly amid the pandemic. The acts of spreading kindness continued when Jacqueline along with the foundation partnered with Beachplease for the beach clean-up drive. During Diwali they connected with Mann NGO for the Diwali artifacts purchasing and joined the kids there in making those products.

Diwali celebrations took place with the Kinnar community as well. For Christmas, they spread joy by celebrating the festival with the children from Udayan Shalini Mumbai (NGO) and Oscar Foundation and also recently hosted a movie screening for the underprivileged children.

Krishna Shanti Production announces its first film, *Ishq Pashmina*

Krishna Shanti Production is proud to announce its first film, *Ishq Pashmina*, starring the heart-throb young influencer and actor Bhavin Bhanushali and the fresh new talent actress Malti Chahar, sister of Cricketer Deepak Chahar. Malti Chahar will be making her leading Bollywood debut with *Ishq Pashmina*.

Bhavin Bhanushali is known for his roles in movies and TV shows like *De De Pyaar De*, and has also sung songs and

featured in music videos as well.

In the words of actor Bhavin Bhanushali, "The character in *Ishq Pashmina* was one of the main deciding factors of my involvement. It was a challenging role and I'm happy that I took it. I loved working with Malti, my co-star, a very sweet individual. Zarina ma'am did not make us feel that we are working with such a senior artist. Arvind who is also debuting as a director like me and Malti

gave his all in making this film. The music in the film is top-notch and I have been in love with all the songs. It is going to be a really beautiful musical journey as well. I wish that the audience will love it just as much."

Ishq Pashmina will depict a soulful, poetic, and unusual love story.

Actress Malti Chahar shares, "I'm so beyond happy to be a part of *Ishq Pashmina*. My character in this film is very unique and I hope the

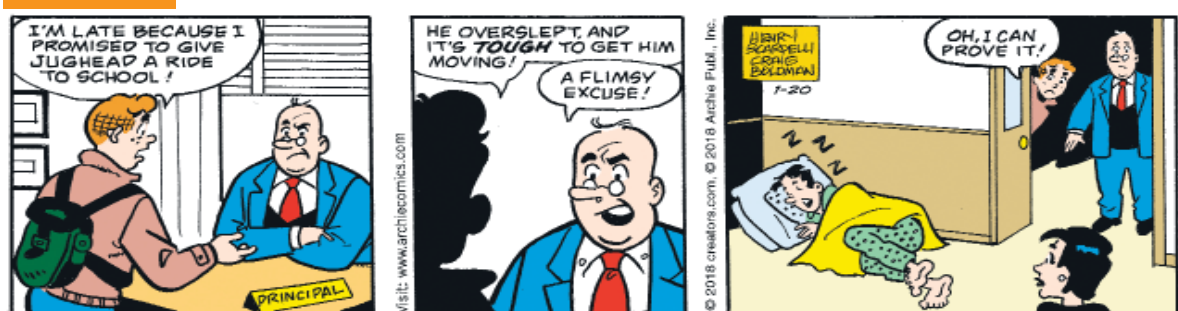
audience shower the film with nothing but love."

In the words of the debutant Director Arvind Pandey, "I'm very thankful for the producers Surya Mishra and Shalu Mishra for giving me the creative liberty to make this work of art happen. It was very gratifying to work under the guidance of the producers. As it is our debut movie, we gave our all to it and I believe this gives a very good perspective to the film. eeplay of this film, it is very close to my heart."



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Expecting a baby
- Scraps of material
- Weigh yourself with these
- Frequently
- A row of metal rings fastened together
- Jumble together (3,2)
- Sneak
- Baby's toy
- A stinging insect
- A newspaper employee
- Use your eyes
- Rub wood smooth with this
- An imaginary line around the middle of the Earth
- Precise
- Jump
- A chopping tool

DOWN

- Actor or singer
- An octagon's number of sides
- As well
- Instructor



Be it Deepika Padukone's debut as a jury member, or Rajasthani singer Mame Khan creating history by becoming the first folk artist to open the red carpet for India, this year remains very special for us as India was chosen as the country of honour at the Cannes Film Festival. We catch up with some of the celebrities from India walking the ramp at Cannes to know the inside talk.



Urvashi Rautela

If we go back in time, the original aspect of the event was emphasised how each country would select a film to be proposed for the competition. France did not want to create further tensions and decided to invite all filmmaking nations. Now let's talk about a debut, so who is it? Our very own dazzling Urvashi Rautela debuted on the red carpet this year, and we couldn't take our eyes off of her. She mentioned to us on a quick byte, "I am tremendously delighted to be making my debut and to be accepted to one of the world's most prestigious film festivals to launch my multilingual film titled *The Legend*. To me, and in terms of global influence, it is without a doubt the most important film festival. India is also declared the official 'Country of Honour' for the first time in history, at a time when India is celebrating its 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. My Cannes agenda is to open doors to the world that otherwise might not have been available. Gone are the days where it's completely normal to speak only one language — a multilingual film like this is the future for us."

Cannes 2k22:



Mansi Bagla

It was Jean Zay, Minister for Education and Fine Arts, who had the desire to implement a cultural event in France to rival the International Venice Film Festival. There we saw the birth of the International Film Festival in Cannes. Awaiting to know who else is walking the red carpet? Well, the vivacious Mansi Bagla, fronting the production house Mini Films, has been officially invited to be at the Cannes Film Festival. She has been invited to the prestigious film festival to talk about her upcoming slate of films. She had recently announced her collaboration with globally renowned author Ruskin Bond, which has attracted attention and interest from all over the globe. We called her up too. She said, "I'll be there to talk about my upcoming film projects and represent Indian cinema on the global stage." I have always had a creative calling, and as a producer, my aim is to create and support content that is not just relevant but also good business at the box office. I feel honored to be a part of the festival that celebrates global cinema and all that it stands for. My work requires a lot of hard work, patience, and resilience because I work with people and talents. Creativity needs space and understanding, and I have dedicated my time to reach where I am today."

SHIKHA DUGGAL

WHO STOLE THE SPOTLIGHT?

You'll be surprised to know that Cannes was once a fishing village. Yes, you read this right. Today, it's nothing more than a glamorous paradise every actor would love to go to. This very popular Cannes Film Festival began in 1946 and the list of who has walked down the red carpet is endless. The majority of netizens are waiting for the reveal of who is invited and who is wearing what. This year was one of the proudest moments for the country as our very own top-ranking actress, Deepika Padukone, created history by becoming a jury member representing India.

In fact, Rajasthani singer Mame Khan made history by becoming the first folk artist to open the red carpet for India at the Cannes Film Festival. All of this seems so overwhelming. While there have been many artists who have had the opportunity to represent our country on international platforms, Raveena Mehta confirmed that she will be walking the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival 2022. Yet again, representing our country and the music fraternity in the most coveted couture brand is Dimple Amrin for the fourth time in a row.

We couldn't stop ourselves and just rang her up. She said, "Fashion and art go hand in hand, which makes them one of the most integral forms of self-expression. In my opinion, the Cannes Film Festival is a very important global festival, wherein celebrities and artists from around the world can showcase their initiatives, interests, and fashion. Due to the scale of this event and the number of eyes on it from around the world, a festival is definitely a place where you can make an impact on many. I am very excited to be wearing Dimple Amrin couture at this year's festival. The piece is a work of art. I can't say too much but think of crystals, shimmer, and edge. Talking about the films that I am looking forward to is *Top Gun: Maverick* and *Elvis* and my upcoming performance at the Hermitage Hotel in Monaco at the very awaited

Tiffany's fashion show?"

France's transition from the 4th Republic to the 5th was not easy, and it nearly brought down the young Cannes Film Festival. At the start of the 5th Republic, André Malraux became the International Film Festival's organiser. He gave a new dimension to the competition and let the younger generations express themselves. Malraux's selections were not always uncontroversial, but he imposed a film that led to one of the biggest French scandals of the decade, Jacques Rivette's *The Nun*. Nevertheless, it's still the biggest event in the world today.

The festival's reputation has enabled it to become a forum for many demands from filmmakers.

In the 80s, foreign films that were forbidden from being exported were shown in the competition. Diplomatic barriers were shaken, but the festival was committed to defending the filmmakers' freedom of expression! And fashion, of course, took the frontal part as well. "Being authentic when it comes to expressing

At the dawn of the 21st century, cinema broke loose and began to evolve through perpetual change. The promotion was the keyword, as the people in charge have started! Now let us see how the youth icon Niharika rocked and rolled on the red carpet. News is she won the youth icon—entertainer of the year at world influencers and bloggers at Cannes 2022 award.

To know the excitement, we spoke to her too exclusively. "As far as I have seen, when there's cinema, there's always the glitz and the glamor! We have all seen it evolve over the years and now at a global platform where people from different nationalities and cultures are presenting their talents; fashion is also an integral part of it. Representing your country and traditions and taking it to a global platform creates a deep impact in itself. I looked like a princess in a stunning navy blue beaded gown. My gown was by Geisha Designs, and it was styled by the incredible Anisha Jain. I had a great time at Cannes because the feeling of wearing that outfit, walking down the red carpet, and receiving the award was surreal. Who wouldn't be overjoyed if they won an award and got to represent their country on an international platform? This feeling is surreal and wonderful beyond description. I consider myself fortunate because I have found an audience who loves and supports me in unexpected ways. This is a personal triumph for me that I will cherish for the rest of my life! My entire life has been filled with excitement since I have come to India. I have worked with a number of celebrities. I was the only creator who collaborated with Yash and Mahesh Babu on their internet debut."

themselves, like keeping it tasteful, would be my way to go if I was styling an actor for Cannes!" said Vanessa Friedman, fashion director and chief fashion critic for the *New York Times*, adding, "For me, the most effective red carpet looks are not just aesthetically successful, elegant, beautiful, flattering, but reflect a moment of social or cultural change. It's the combination of style and substance that makes them memorable. Plus, donning a sari to the world's most glamorous film festival is sure a statement to make! Representing the country on one of the biggest red carpets, wearing the traditional costume is the way to win the hearts of both the Indian and international audiences at the same time. There isn't a place where the traditional Indian attire of the sari hasn't mesmerised people, and the Cannes Film Festival is no exception."

The famous twenty-four steps decorated with the red carpet area on the outside of a building whose often-contested architecture has, over the years, welcomed tens of thousands of festival-goers, hundreds of screenings, and the ongoing popularity of the film market. With the rise of social media in the past few years, there is a new breed of celebrity that is making waves at the festival. They are the internet influencers who are no less than stars on the red carpet.

Among them is Masoom Minawala, who has been a pioneer in India as a fashion and lifestyle influencer. In an exclusive conversation with us, she said, "Fashion, just like films or any other expressive art, is a means to communicate an artistic stance. Considering the fact that the Cannes film festival is a forum where the cinematography excellence of the films meets the brilliance of fashion, it's an aesthetical hub for curating ripples of change and impact. My association with Cannes has always been very special — my aim has been to represent my

country in whatever capacity possible. It's so great to see that over the years, the Indian film industry has grown so much that it's being celebrated as the country of honour at *Marche du Film*."

She further added, "I still remember the first time I walked the red carpet for Cannes. It was like a dream that I had never dared to dream. That being said, it was magnificent and overwhelming in equal parts. I saw two months' worth of hard work fly by in less than 200 seconds. Now that I have attended the event for the third time in a row, I am more comfortable and aware of the entire process, and this time I managed to fly down with my team to assist me in the process. My aim this year has been very clear; it is to step out of my comfort zone and experiment with my personal style as much as possible. Honestly, I am somebody who absolutely loves experimenting with the parameters of my personal style, and Anaita has got a timeless charm to her stylist wand. So, the ensemble that we have put together by Yusef Akbar and Swarovski is a concoction of both of our high spirits. The most exciting moment for me at this point in time is to sit with my entire team and watch the two months' worth of efforts come to life, to gauge the impact, and take a couple of days to celebrate the professional milestones."

Few of us will ever know what it feels like to represent a country on a global scale and these women are doing it like wow and how. Carrying the hopes of the entire nation on their shoulders, it was a tremendous Cannes 2022.



Raveena Mehta



Pooja Hegde

We spotted Pooja Hegde there too! Her dream debut came true: She said, "I have not come to the Cannes Film Festival with a brand, but I have come with brand India. I have come here as a representative. It could not be a bigger honour for me to come as an Indian actor celebrating Indian cinema. Representing Indian cinema on a global platform is a dream come true. It's a great validation of the direction I am heading in my career."



Niharika NM

We spoke to a celebrity stylist too. Rima Mishra suggested, "Fashion is representation in itself and Cannes, being the world's most glamorous film festival, is one of the biggest platforms of representation where statements are being made. A-listers and iconic influencers walk the red carpet in glamorous ball gowns by the world's most recognisable designers. It was the year 2017 when Aishwarya Rai changed fashion forever, wearing a voluminous icy blue gown by Michael Cinco."

This was not only her most iconic Cinderella moment but also one of her best red carpet moments, bagging the spotlight and representing India in an international film festival.



Deepika Padukone

He (Rishabh Pant) is just a young man and still learning captaincy. Being captain of a T20 team, especially in IPL, which is a high pressure tournament, is not easy thing to do

— RICKY PONTING

SRH POST 157-8 VS PBKS

► **pointstable**

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	GT (Q)	14	10	4	0	20	0.316
2.	RR (Q)	14	9	5	0	18	0.298
3.	LSG (Q)	14	9	5	0	18	0.251
4.	RCB	14	8	6	0	16	-0.253
5.	DC	14	7	7	0	14	0.204
6.	PBKS	14	7	7	0	14	0.126
7.	KKR	14	6	8	0	12	0.146
8.	SRH	14	6	8	0	12	-0.379
9.	CSK	14	4	10	0	8	-0.203
10.	MI	14	4	10	0	8	-0.506

Punjab Kings bowlers showed a lot of discipline against a demoralised Sunrisers Hyderabad, restricting them to 157 for 8 in an inconsequential final league game of the IPL here on Sunday.

Arshdeep Singh (0/25 in 4 overs) celebrated his maiden India call-up with another parsimonious spell but it was his state team colleague Harpreet Brar (3/26 in 4 overs), who was the pick of the bowlers with wickets of Priyam Garg, Rahul Tripathi and Aiden Markram.

With four qualifiers already decided on Saturday, there was little more than academic interest left in the game and the 'Orange Army' in fact looked jaded and more like going through the motions while batting before sprucing up their scores in the final few overs.

SRH's best batter of the season, Abhishek Sharma (43 off



► **boundarymeter**

4s **1903**
6s **995**

32 balls) once again got a start but should have converted it into a big one which didn't happen.

A solemn looking Tripathi (20) did cross a personal milestone of 400 runs for the season but disappointment of not making it to the national team was

written large in his body language as he failed to connect the big hits.

Brar didn't do anything extraordinary and kept it mostly on the stumps, stifling the opposition batters for runs.

It was left to Romario Shepherd (26 not out off 15

balls) and Washington Sundar (25 off 19 balls) to take the Sunrisers past the 150-run mark, as both of them used the long handle to good effect in their 58-run sixth-wicket partnership off only 4.5 overs.

In fact, 50-plus runs came in the last four overs as Nathan

Ellis (3/40 in 4 overs) erred in length despite a couple of back-to-back wickets that he got in the bargain.

Ellis did bowl a good hat-trick delivery which Bhuvneshwar Kumar averted only to get run-out of the very next delivery.

Thank you, Mumbai, we will remember this one: Kohli

PTI ■ MUMBAI

"Thank you, Mumbai, we will remember this one," said Virat Kohli after Royal Challengers Bangalore sneaked into the playoffs following Mumbai Indians' thrilling five-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in their last game of the IPL here.

On Saturday, MI chased down a victory target of 160 in 19.1 overs to knockout Delhi from the competition and paved the way for RCB's entry as the fourth and final team in the knockout stage.

"It was unbelievable. The emotions in the changing room were unbelievable. Thank you, Mumbai, we will remember this one," Kohli said in a release.

RCB had defeated table-toppers Gujarat Titans by eight wickets in their final league match to keep their hopes alive for a playoff, which depended on the clash between DC and MI.

Delhi needed to win the match to make it to the playoffs but they came a cropper against bottom-placed MI.

RCB skipper Faf Du Plessis said the entire team watched the match together and was cheering every move made by the Mumbai team.

"It was so good, I think first of all it was really nice to see that everyone was here from the start of the game, so we watched it together," he said.



"We were all shouting for every wicket that Mumbai got and then when they are chasing every boundary. It's good for everyone to watch together and then the celebration towards the end was awesome to be a part of."

RCB will now take on third-placed Lucknow Super Giants in the Eliminator at Edens Gardens on May 25.

"The last game we played we felt almost like we played our best game of cricket of this campaign so far and that is how you want to enter the knockout stages, so we need-

ed someone to do us a favour and Mumbai did that for us, we are very thankful for that," Du Plessis said. "Obviously now the work starts again, and we get our work mode back on." RCB has never ever won the IPL and allrounder Glenn Maxwell feels the team is very close to achieving that dream.

"Amazing result for us tonight. There is just one small step in us going further, we are that close to making history for RCB in this tournament. We needed another team, but from now on it's all us."



India face Pak in Asia Cup hockey opener

PTI ■ JAKARTA

A second-string Indian men's hockey team will have to tactfully deal with the pressure when it opens its title defence against arch-rivals Pakistan in the Asia Cup here on Monday.

While Pakistan has fielded quite a few new faces in the tournament, India will be represented by its 'A' team under the leadership of veteran Birendra Lakra, who came out of retirement after the Tokyo Olympics.

For India, the Asia Cup provides a platform to test its bench strength ahead of a busy season, that includes the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the FIH World Cup next year for which the Tokyo Olympic medalists have already qualified as the host nation.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is looking at the tournament to make the cut for the

2023 World Cup in Bhubaneswar. The top three teams in Asia will qualify directly for the January showpiece.

Both India and Pakistan have won the Asia Cup three each.

India had won the last edition in 2017 by beating Malaysia in the final in Dhaka.

India's 20-member squad, to be coached by former captain Sardar Singh, was originally supposed to be led by Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist Rupinder Pal Singh, who also came out of retirement but a wrist injury ruled him out of the tournament.

The Indian squad includes another veteran in SV Sunil, who too returned from retirement and is regarded as a livewire on the field.

Sunil, who had missed the Tokyo Olympics squad due to an injury, will serve as Lakra's deputy.

Umran, Arshdeep get India call up

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jammu and Kashmir pace sensation Umran Malik on Sunday earned an expected India call-up for the upcoming five-match T20 International home series against South Africa starting June 9.

Umran has picked up 21 wickets in 13 games for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL but it's his ability to bowl consistently at 95 miles per hour that has caught the imagination of all and sundry with calls for his immediate selection in top-flight cricket. Along with Umran, Punjab Kings' death overs specialist Arshdeep Singh has also earned his maiden national call-up.

As reported on July 14 by PTI, regular captain Rohit Sharma, star batter Virat Kohli, pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami have all been rested for the white-ball series in which Rishabh Pant will be the vice-captain.

Rohit, Kohli, Bumrah, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja will all fly to England on June 15 for the one-off Test against England at Edgbaston from July 1-5 and will be joined by Cheteshwar Pujara, who has earned a recall to the 17-member Indian Test team after a stupendous show in English County Championship for Sussex. Ditto for all-rounder Hardik Pandya, who has successfully led new franchise Gujarat Titans into IPL play-offs



and has been consistent with the bat, besides bowling a few overs at brisk pace.

While former players and experts have all spoken in unison about Umran's selection in the national team, it wouldn't have been a cakewalk had Lucknow Super Giants pacer Mohsin Khan been fully fit.

While Umran has 21 wickets (before Sunday's game), most of which came in the first phase when batters were getting used to his pace, it is understood that the selectors were far more impressed with Mohsin.

The Uttar Pradesh left-armers has taken 13 wickets from 8 matches at an astounding economy rate of 5.93 compared to Umran's 8.93 in 13 games. However, Mohsin's dodgy hamstring made the decision easier for Chetan Sharma's committee, which also picked Arshdeep especially for his death overs bowling for Punjab Kings.

Arshdeep bowls at early to mid 130's and has only 10 wickets in 13 games (before Sunday's game) but his ability to bowl the change-ups along with wide yorkers and deliveries in the block-hole has earned him a place in the squad.

Arshdeep was with the Indian team as a net bowler in an away series against Sri Lanka last year, while Umran was in the UAE, assisting the national team during T20 World Cup.

The selectors more or less picked up players who have played in last two T20I series for India with Dinesh Karthik, at 36 years of age and 18 years after he first played for India, making his umpteenth comeback.

Karthik's inclusion will certainly put Rishabh Pant under a bit of pressure as both are designated middle-order finishers unlike third keeping option Ishan Kishan, who is a specialist opener. As per indication in the team sheet, Karthik is second keeper and Ishan is a pure batter.

If there was one player, who would feel a bit let-down, it has to be Rahul Tripathi, who, before Sunday, had scored 393 runs at a strike-rate of above 160 and had three fifty-plus-scores to his credit.

Tripathi, who has been consistent in the IPL, may get his chance sometime during the season but he might feel hard done by, considering Suryakumar Yadav was left out due to a hand injury.

Jammu celebrates Umran's selection

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Jammu express Umran Malik Sunday earned the Team India cap after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced India's squad for the five-match T20 International Home series against South Africa starting June 9.

In Jammu, celebrations broke instantly in the old city area where his father Abdul Rashid Malik runs a fresh fruit/vegetable shop. He was greeted and garlanded by the local residents and a victory procession was also taken out in the main streets via Gujjar Nagar area.

The shopkeepers and passersby greeted him, distributed sweets in jubilation. Large number of youngsters were seen dancing on the drum beats in celebration.

Thanking God Almighty Umran's father prayed for his best performance in the upcoming series in South Africa.

"I am very happy. My son has made all of us proud by earning the cap of Team India. All his hard work has been acknowledged and he is going to realise his dream of playing for the country", said Abdul Rashid.

"Today I want to thank the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the people of India and all his

well wishers for blessing my son and backing him while he was performing well during the IPL series".

Ever since Umran started bowling in the ongoing IPL series he won hearts of cricket lovers with his best performance on the field. He bowled fastest bowls of the season and earned 13 awards in a row for bowling fastest deliveries.

Back home, his sisters and mother were busy receiving visitors who assembled at their residence to greet the family and celebrate the selection of their youngest son in TEAM INDIA.

Political leaders and sports administrators congratulated him on earning the cap of TEAM INDIA.

Former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah tweeted Well done Umran. "Well done Umran Malik. We will be watching the forthcoming T20 series against the Proteas very keenly".

Senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Prof Nirmal Singh posted a tweet congratulating the Jammu speedster.

"Congratulations to Speedster of Jammu Umran Malik for his selection in the Indian Cricket team for the upcoming T20 series against South Africa. A proud moment for J&K".

Secretary J&K sports council Nuzhat Gull in a tweet said.



Rohit not losing sleep over poor form

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma admitted that a lot of things didn't go his way with the bat but he is not losing sleep over his "disappointing" season as he is just one "minor adjustment" away from finding form again.

Rohit endured his worst IPL season, failing to score a single half-century for the first time since his debut in the inaugural edition in 2008. The swashbuckling opener managed to score just 248 runs at an average of 19.14 and a strike rate of 120.17 in 14 outings. "A lot of things that I wanted to do didn't happen. I am very disappointed with me season. But this has happened with me earlier as well, so it's not something I am going through for the first time," Rohit said after MI's last match of the season on Saturday.

"I know cricket doesn't end here; there is a lot of cricket ahead."

Thiem exits French Open on 1st day

PNS ■ PARIS

Two-time French Open runner-up Dominic Thiem said he was "a few more months" away from returning to his best after crashing out in the first round at Roland Garros for the second straight year.

Thiem's ranking has slipped to 194 after a lengthy battle with a wrist injury. He has lost 10 tour-level matches in a row following a 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 defeat to Hugo Dellien of Bolivia on Sunday.

The 2020 US Open champion has yet to win a match in six attempts since his comeback in March. His last victory came in Rome just over a year ago.

"It's not the greatest feeling to go in a Grand Slam knowing that all is not perfect in practice. I



don't play like I would like to in practice," said Thiem. "It was not a good

match at all, but it is what it is. I knew that it's going to take time, that the level

is extremely high from all the players competing here and I'm not there yet."

The 28-year-old Austrian, a former world number three, reached at least the quarter-finals at Roland Garros five years running from 2016 to 2020. He finished runner-up to Rafael Nadal in 2018 and 2019.

"The key is just to be patient, continue being patient, work on the stuff which is not working and then it will come back, but it will take time," said Thiem.

"I cannot say now I'm disappointed, I'll work hard for a week and then next tournament I'm playing super well. I have to be patient and I think it's going to take a few more months until I can really say, okay, now I'm ready to beat those top guys again."

Dellien, ranked 87th, recorded only his third Grand Slam main-draw win. He made the second round of the French Open and US Open in 2019.

VERSTAPPEN WINS SPANISH GRAND PRIX

AFP ■ MONTELEONE

Sergio Perez took second for Sa Red Bull 1-2 at the Montmelo circuit behind the world champion where in 2016 Verstappen had opened his F1 account as a teenager.

Leclerc was sitting comfortably in the lead from pole until lap 23 when a sudden loss of power proved fatal to his Ferrari.

The man from Monaco arrived in Catalonia 19 points in front in the title race, but left it six points behind Verstappen ahead of his home race next weekend.

Verstappen had to overcome being blown off the circuit and into the gravel by a gust of wind early on and some technical niggles.

"Difficult beginning but a good end! I tried to stay focussed, which is not always



easy," he said. Mercedes showed improved form after a bumpy start to the season with George Russell claiming third.

Lewis Hamilton in the other Mercedes threaded his way through the field after being forced into the pits shortly after the start with a puncture to take fifth.

B-town star kid to debut with Vijayakumar

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Kudipudi Vijayakumar, a known producer in the Kannada film industry will be now seen debuting as a director. Sources close to us reveal that a Bollywood heroine is on his cards and ready to roll for his new project downtown south.

Electing to direct all these years, he was waiting for the right script and our little birdie tells us, he has found one. He always had this pique interest in filmmaking craft don't believe us?

Hear it from the horse's mouth himself, "This industry isn't a new playground for me, I have had my seven golden years of experience in diverse categories of filmmaking here. If we go back in time, I started as an assistant director and moved on to a writer associate. I truly blossomed when I became a creative producer and then a producer. Now, I have my total command in the industry. This helped me shape myself as a filmmaker too, and commenced more interest in it. To let you know, it's going to be a really influential debut with a Bollywood star kid as the lead actress. I am extremely confident that my storytelling will grab eyeballs. The lead actress, which is currently a hush-hush secret, has shown her liking for the script and that's all I can reveal."

Bringing to us is a psychological thriller that will shake us up. The actress will be seen affected by a disorder, paranoid schizophrenia.

"It's a fully woman-centric film, the very choice to sign the particular actress was only because she needs no introduction even in the south region. Though just a couple of movies old, she has garnered enough attention to drive the legacy of her star parent into the audience all over India. Initially, this was a Bollywood movie, however, with the changing scenarios in both the reach of scripts and canvas across the whole country, it was only apt for me to make this into a pan India film originating from Bollywood," added the upcoming director.

The visuals are going to roll off the lenses from Karthik Palani who is the DOP of Prabhas' next big movie *Adipurush*, raising the bar for his directorial debut.

Furthermore, he says, "I totally believe in the content and the very content will drive the commercials and box office this time too. While the big scale and budget movies like *RRR* and *KGF* hold their position. The very recently made *Kashmir Files* is an example of the right content reaching out to the maximum audience. While I agree my storyline may be more focused on a particular medical challenge and disease, the thriller structure would keep the audience at the edge of

their seat. The span of this story with a relatively less budget can still get its name and money."

He has all the gratitude for the Telugu film industry, and he ceases,

"The Telugu film industry where cinema is a religion in itself, needs no special mention of liking towards it. I have always breathed stories and excitement on the sil-

ver screen to begin with. The very reason I have taken inspiration and guidance from Chandrasekhar Yeleti Sir, who is known for his experimental and trendsetting film *Aithe* which was a revolution at that time in filmmaking shows my interest. He has always given importance to novelty in his stories and I too can't wait to make my name as a director in the market soon."



Prashanth Neel shares collage poster of his movies, leaves audience guessing

A collage poster shared by *KGF: Chapter 2* director Prashanth Neel has left everyone guessing. Audiences and movie buffs are wondering about the message the star director has conveyed through his poster.

Prashanth Neel has shared a post on social media which contains the collage photo of his three projects. *KGF:*

Chapter 2 and his upcoming movies *Salaar* with Prabhas and *NTR-31* with Jr NTR.

The statement of producer Vijay Kiragandoor of Hombale Films that *KGF: Chapter 3* would have super-heroes like Hollywood has piqued interest.

The fans are also guessing that the characters of all three movies would get connected at one point. The fans are further guessing that the charac-

ter of Rocky Bhai in *KGF 2* and Prabhas' character would meet in the upcoming movie *Salaar*. Fans are also surmising that even the character in *Bagheera* for which Prashanth Neel has written the screenplay would also be a part of the upcoming ambitious project.

However, Prashanth Neel has not reacted to any comments and speculation in this connection.

Vishal, Rana Productions pan-India film *Laatti* releasing on August 12

Known for doing mass and commercial entertainers, Vishal will next be seen in a Pan India film *Laatti*. A Vinoth Kumar is directing the movie, while Rana Productions is bankrolling it. Sunaina is the female lead in the movie being produced jointly by Ramana and Nandha under the banner of Rana Productions.

The makers announced release date of the movie through this intense and powerful poster. *Laatti* will hit the big screens worldwide on August 12. Vishal who is severely injured is seen flashing smiles. This shows the intensity of the character.

Laatti is a powerful object that influences bringing a big change in the society. The movie has the same title for all the languages. Although it is a commercial entertainer, director A Vinoth Kumar penned a novel story with a racy screenplay. Vishal is playing an action-packed role in the movie.

Laatti will have some amazing action sequences. In fact, the second half of the movie will have 45 minutes of action blocks. Dhilip Subbarayan is the other stunt master.

Sam CS is a music composer. Balasubramanian cranks the camera, while Pon Parthiban is the writer.



Actor Sudhakar Komakula, wife blessed with a baby boy

Actor Sudhakar Komakula, who is known for his stint in films like *Life is beautiful*, *Manasutho*, *Oka v chitram*, *Vundile Manchi Kalam Mundu Munduna*, *Nuvvu Thopu Ra*, is now a happy father.

The actor and his

wife Harika Sandepogu are blessed with a baby boy in Chicago, USA.

Both mom and baby are healthy and doing good after the delivery. The couple has named their son 'Rudra', meaning one who drives away evil, one who is praiseworthy, and also another name and form of Lord Shiva.

The couple is extremely elated that he was born a week before their wedding Anniversary and feels that their precious baby is the best gift ever from the almighty for their special occasion.

Netizens shower blessings on the newborn Rudra Komakula and the couple.



Meeting between Lokesh, Mahesh Babu sparks speculation

The news that director Lokesh Kanagaraj met Mahesh Babu recently during his visit to Hyderabad for the promotions of *Vikram* starring Kamal Haasan, is causing quite a stir in Tollywood circles. The two had an hour-long conversation, according to industry insiders.



According to reports, Mahesh may be interested in working on this project with Lokesh Kanagaraj if everything falls into place.

Mahesh Babu has unquestionably established himself as one of the most bankable actors in recent years.

His appeal to both young people and families is unparalleled. On the other hand, director Lokesh Kanagaraj is on a roll, with back-to-back superhits to match Mahesh's incredible run.

As a result, the pairing appears to be advantageous to both. For now, Mahesh Babu will soon join Trivikram Srinivas for *SSMB28*, which will have actress Pooja Hegde as the heroine. Later, the *Nani* actor will act under SS Rajamouli's direction, which marks their first-time collaboration.

Lokesh Kanagaraj currently awaits the release of *Vikram*.



Pooja Hegde on making more films for women, inspiring Indian girls to dream big

South star Pooja Hegde, who has made her debut at the 75th annual Cannes Film Festival, is hoping to inspire young Indian girls to dream big.

She was invited to represent her homeland at the Cannes Film Festival where India is the country of honour this year, reports Deadline. The rising star, who

works across Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi movies has a number of hit credits to her name and is currently shooting *Kabhi Eid Kabhi Diwali* opposite Salman Khan, while her turn in Rohit Shetty's comedy *Cirkus* is due in December.

Hegde also has a lot more stories to tell, saying, "I want to do more films for women because I genuinely think that we are not represented enough. When I see a powerful woman on film, I want to emulate them, I want to be them,

and I hope I can be a small part of that in terms of inspiring girls in India to just dream a little bigger and tap their inner potential."

Indian films have increasingly seen great box office success on a global stage, including the recent hits *KGF: Chapter 2* and *RRR*.

That's encouraging to Hegde, both within and outside India.

Citing Oscar winner Bong Joon-ho, Hegde said, "I think that it's time we stop looking at languages as a barrier; it's like

the director of *Parasite* said at the Oscars that if we get over that one-inch barrier of a subtitle we would be privy to such amazing content across the world and across India."

India, she noted, is "so culturally diverse and so culturally rich as a country, and I think the film is a way to make us understand other people in a much more insightful way and the personal way. We have it in us we just need to continue to tell our stories the way we want them to be told."

