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SPACE FOR EQUITABLE GROWTH

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KERBER, AZARENKA WIN;
EMMA OUT

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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AFTER SVK SUC-
CESS, SPECULATION
RIFE ON PARASURAM
PETLA'S NEXT FILM

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RUSSIA SCRAPS AGE LIMIT TO JOIN MILITARY

Russian lawmakers have passed a bill which removes age limits for professional soldiers joining the military and could be a way for the Russian armed forces to expand recruitment. The lower house of the Russian parliament passed the bill in all three readings on Wednesday to scrap an age limit of 40 for Russians signing their first voluntary military contracts. The chair of the parliament's defence committee Andrei Kartapolov said the measure would make it easier to hire people with in-demand specialisms. The website indicated older recruits could be suited to operating precision weapons.

FAILURE TO SHARE COVID-19 VACCINES WITH GLOBAL SOUTH 'RACISM'

United Nations Under-Secretary-General Winnie Byanyima on Wednesday said denying life-saving COVID-19 vaccines to people of colour is a form of 'policy violence' amounting to racism. Speaking at a session during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2022 here, she said 'policy violence' such as the refusal to share COVID-19 vaccines with the Global South is as racist as the police violence that ended the life of African-American George Floyd in Minneapolis two years ago. 'Racism is not only when black people or brown people cannot breathe because of police violence.

HYPERTENSION MOST COMMON CO-MORBIDITY: DELHI HOSPITAL STUDY

Doctors at a Delhi government-run hospital have conducted a study to examine the epidemiological characteristics of the pandemic by describing clinical profiles of COVID-19 patients, and found that hypertension was the most common co-morbidity among them. The outbreak of the pandemic in Delhi was first reported in March 2020. A total of 3,534 patients were enrolled in this study done by doctors at the 650-bed Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), aged 9-96 years.

ADs DISCRIMINATING ON GENDER NOW FACE ASCI ACTION

ASCI, a self-regulatory body for the advertising industry, on Wednesday broadened its code to make discrimination on the basis of aspects like gender identity and sexual orientation as a violation for ad-makers. The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) maintained that its code already required ads to not deride anyone on the basis of race, caste, creed, gender or nationality. 'However, new areas of possible discrimination or derision have now been included such as gender identity and sexual orientation, body shape, age, and physical and mental conditions.

Konaseema continues to simmer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A day after the violent protests, Konaseema continued to simmer on Wednesday though the situation has come under control. While additional police forces have been deployed to Amalapuram to bring the situation under control, protests erupted in Ravulapalem town on Wednesday evening. Police took many protesters into their custody on Wednesday.

The protest launched opposing naming the newly carved out Konaseema district after the architect of Indian Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar, had turned violent, pushing the serene Konaseema region into boil here on Tuesday. A minister and a ruling party MLA, along with their families, had to run for their lives as the mob set their houses on fire. The ruling party leaders have alleged conspiracy behind the violent protests. Transport Minister Pinipe Viswarup, whose house was burnt by the protesters, said on Wednesday that the government would not spare anyone who had taken part in the arson. He said rowdy elements had infiltrated into the mob and attacked his house and the government had all the evidence.

As curfew has been imposed, Konaseema region remained calm on Wednesday barring some stray

SITUATION IN KONSEEMA UNDER CONTROL: DGP 46 people taken into custody

AP DGP K Rajendranath Reddy has said that the situation in Amalapuram is under control and section 144 is imposed. The DGP reviewed the situation and the SPs briefed him on the latest developments in Konaseema. The DGP said seven cases were registered in the Amalapuram riots. Non-bailable cases were registered for torching the Collectorate, houses of Minister Vishwaroop and MLA Satish and three buses. The DGP said that 46 people were taken into custody by the police and special teams were formed to arrest 72 persons involved in the riots. All the rowdy sheeters in the district were taken into custody, said the DGP. He assured that the situation in Amalapuram was completely under control. The riots are treated as unexpected things due to false propaganda on WhatsApp groups. The DGP conducted a tele-conference with Eluru Range DIG Pala Raju and SPs. Later, DIG Pala Raju said the situation in Konaseema district was under control. He appealed to the people to cooperate with the police.



incidents. Some miscreants tried to pelt stones at the vehicle of East Godavari SP Aishwarya Rastogi and were detained later. Rastogi said that due to prohibitory orders in place, rallies, gatherings and meetings were not allowed across Konaseema district.

Last week, Section 144 was imposed in the Konaseema districts in the wake of protests against the proposal to rename the district and

Konaseema Sadhana Samithi (KSS) had called for 'Chalo Konaseema' march on Tuesday. Despite prohibitory orders in place, the protesters attempted to proceed towards the Collectorate in Amalapuram on Tuesday, crossing the clock tower area from different directions.

As they were prevented by the police, the protesters resorted to stone-pelting at the vehicles of SP KSSV Subba Reddy and

Amalapuram DSP Y Madhava Reddy. They set fire to a private bus and five other private vehicles that were parked at the site. A police vehicle was also burnt.

On May 18, the State government issued a preliminary notification proposing to change the name of Konaseema district to 'Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district' under the relevant sections of the AP Districts (Formation) Act 1974.

The government sought any objections or suggestions related to the name change from the general public from the jurisdiction of the district within 30 days of the issue of preliminary notification. They can submit the objections and suggestions, if any, to the District Collector in the stipulated period.

Konaseema was carved out of the East Godavari district on April 4, 2022 with Amalapuram as the district headquarters as part of reorganisation of 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh into 26. While Kakinada was another district that was carved out of the East Godavari with Kakinada town as the district headquarters, Rajahmundry was made the district headquarters of the remaining portion of East Godavari district. There had been several demands for renaming Konaseema after either former Lok Sabha Speaker GMC Balayogi or B R Ambedkar.



YSRCP suspends MLC Anantababu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Two days after his arrest, the ruling YSRCP has suspended MLC Ananta Satya Udaya Bhaskar alias Babu from the party. He was arrested by the police on Monday on the charge of murdering his ex-car driver Veedhi Subrahmanyam on May 19. Kakinada DSP Ravindranath Babu said that the MLC had confessed to have committed the crime.

He said the arrest was made based on a complaint from the mother of the deceased, Nooka Ratnam. She alleged that her son was murdered after he was taken away from home by the MLC.

A case was registered against him under Sections 302, 201 R/w 34 IPC, Sec.3 (1) (s) and Section 3(2) (V) of SC and ST (POA) Act, 1989.

AMARAVATI DEVELOPMENT

APCRDA to mobilise funds by selling plots

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) will conduct e-auctions to sell 331 plots situated in the Amaravati Township in Nowluru and Mangalagiri villages to mobilise funds for the development of Amaravati, said APCRDA Commissioner Vivek Yadav.

Speaking to media persons on Wednesday, the Commissioner said that the plots were of varying areas from 200 sq yd to 1000 sq yd and the price set by the government was Rs 17,800 per sq yd. He added that the APCRDA was following AP High Court orders regarding the development of Amaravati. The works on the quarters for MLAs, MLCs and All India Services officials would be completed by November.

He said that the APCRDA needed funds to develop Amaravati and it had planned to sell developed plots of the Amaravati Township to procure funds. They were expecting Rs 310 crore. He said

AP High Court orders regarding the development of Amaravati. The works on the quarters for MLAs, MLCs and All India Services officials would be completed by November

that the APCRDA consulted banks seeking Rs 3,000 crore loans for the development of Amaravati and the banks agreed to provide loans in two phases. Registration of reconstituted plots to the land pooling farmers started in Amaravati and the APCRDA abided by the agreement of developing plots.

The Commissioner said that the widening of Karakatta road had started and other development works in Amaravati would begin soon. The APCRDA is the only mediator in the Happy Nest project proposed in Amaravati.



Regulate tomato prices: Chief Secretary

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary to the AP Government Dr Sameer Sharma has instructed the officials to initiate measures towards regulation of tomato prices and ensure availability of all vegetables in the Rythu Bazaars. The price of tomato has crossed Rs 100 in the open markets and Rs 65 in the Rythu Bazaars. Prices of other vegetables have also increased. Chief Secretary Dr Sameer Sharma conducted a review meeting with various government departments in the Secretariat on Wednesday.

On the occasion, the Chief Secretary directed the officials concerned to monitor the prices of essential commodities on a daily basis and take necessary steps to control the price rise.

VIZAG TO BE STARTUP HUB

CM assures support to unicorn startups

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, on Wednesday, interacted with the founders and CEOs of unicorn startups on the sidelines of the ongoing annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos in Switzerland and assured that the State government would take measures to make Vishakhapatnam a unicorn startups hub.

During the interaction, the Chief Minister discussed the policy decisions to be taken to develop startups in Vishakhapatnam and said all required resources would be provided. BYJU'S vice-president Public Policy Susmit Sarkar said they would extend full support to the education sector in Andhra Pradesh and added that they would set up a research and development centre and also provide BYJU'S curriculum to State students.

Coin Switch Kuber founder and Group CEO Ashish Singhal discussed with the Chief Minister on providing scientific technology to



secure records of comprehensive land survey in Andhra Pradesh and offered all help in this regard.

The Chief Minister interacted with co-founder of EaseMyTrip Prasanth Pitti on the tourism sector in the State. Prasanth Pitti said they would give importance to tourism locations in Andhra Pradesh.

Meesho founder CEO Vidith Atreya, BYJU'S vice-president (Public Policy) Susmit Sarkar, Coinswitch Kuber founder Ashish Singhal, EasMyTrip founder Prashant Pitti, V.H. AI founder Satish Jaya Kumar and Courserra vice-president Kevin Mills were among those who met the Chief Minister.

TDP's poll strategist joins Congress task force

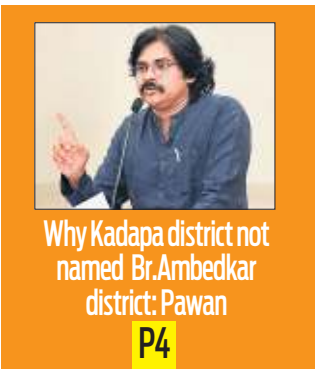
Sunil Kanugolu was roped in by TDP to handle its 2024 campaign

SNV SUDHIR

■ VIJAYAWADA

Politics makes strange bedfellows. In an intriguing political development, Sunil Kanugolu, chief of the poll strategy firm Mindshare Analytics that was recently hired by the TDP, was included in an important panel of the Congress at the national-level.

The panel was constituted by the party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi to bring back the grand old party to power in 2024.



Why Kadapa district not named Br.Ambedkar district: Pawan P4

The Congress on Tuesday announced that it had constituted three panels -- Political Affairs Group, Taskforce-2024 and Central Planning Group -- to revive the fortunes of the national party. Among the three, Taskforce-2024 is being seen as an important panel tasked to bring back the lost glory of the Congress

Political parties roping in poll consulting firms and hiring poll strategists to handle their campaigns and election management

has been a norm for almost a decade. And these firms offer their services externally as consultants. However, Sunil Kanugolu, who

PM reviews economic corridor, natural gas pipeline projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the progress of projects in various stages of implementation through videoconferencing with the Chief Secretaries and Union Secretaries on Wednesday. The Prime Minister enquired CS Dr Sameer Sharma on the progress of the Raipur-Vishakhapatnam economic corri-



dor and Kakinada-Srikakulam natural gas pipeline project. The Prime Minister also asked the

CS about the National Broadband Mission. The CS was directed to expedite the land acquisition works on the economic corridor.

The CS said the establishment of the economic corridor would be of great benefit to the States of Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

Atmakur bypoll on June 23

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The bypoll to the Atmakur Assembly segment in Nellore district will be held on June 23. The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the poll schedule on Wednesday.

The bypoll was necessitated due to the untimely demise of

Industries Minister Mekapati Gautam Reddy on February 21.

According to the schedule, poll notification will be issued on May 30. The last date to file the nominations is June 6. While the election will be held on June 23, counting of votes will take place on June 26.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has already cleared the

name of Mekapati Vikram Reddy, younger brother of Goutham Reddy, to contest from Atmakur. Vikram Reddy, along with his father and former MP Raja Mohan Reddy, met Jagan last month to formally convey their family's decision to field Vikram Reddy in Atmakur.



Power Min mulls new scheme to help discoms pay off dues P5

All eyes on Modi's visit to Hyderabad, politics turns hot

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All eyes are on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Hyderabad on Thursday. Although the visit is a private one to attend an ISB function, politics has heated up in the state. BJP leaders are critical of the CM avoiding Modi again and attending weddings.

Talasanani is reportedly the Minister-in-waiting representing the state government as Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is beginning his national tour by going to Bengaluru

to meet former PM HD Devegowda. BJP leaders decided to welcome the PM at the Begumpet airport along with the Governor and other officials. Although initially, the BJP had planned a roadshow, as per the itinerary, the PM would be flying from Begumpet airport to ISB in a helicopter.

Meanwhile, after a series of visits by BJP leaders like JP Nadda, Amit Shah and now Modi, the BJP's karyakartas are excited.

The statements of Nadda and Amit Shah at political meetings have

increased public interest in the Prime Minister's visit.

The BJP karyakartas are hopeful even though it is a private visit, the PM might make some befitting statements about the TRS government. The TRS is also in wait and watch mode to see the consequences of the PM's visit. It may be mentioned here that twice earlier the CM didn't meet the PM at the airport.

During the first visit, the PMO had asked them not to come. During the second visit, the CM was indisposed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the 20th-anniversary function of the International School of Business. He will address ISB graduates at the 2022 Academic Year Post Graduates Graduation Ceremony.

The police have tightened security during Modi's arrival. It is learned that Special Protection Group Commandos (SPG) have already taken control of ISB premises.

Drones, paragliders, and remote control microlight aircraft have been banned in the city from the afternoon of May 25 till 6 pm on Friday.



19 kids, 2 adults slain in US school shooting

PNS ■ HOUSTON

In one of the worst school shootings in the US, an 18-year-old gunman in body armour massacred at least 21 people, including 19 children and two adults inside one classroom at a Texas elementary school, prompting President Joe Biden to issue an emotional appeal to lawmakers to 'turn this pain into action' to enact tougher gun laws to curb such recurring tragedies.

The youth opened fire at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde town, Texas, 134 km from San Antonio, on Tuesday morning before he was killed by law enforcement officers.

All fatalities and injuries took place inside one classroom Uvalde, according to Lt. Chris Olivarez, spokesperson for the Texas Department for Public Safety.

The rationale for TS encouraging farmers to switch to alternative crops

The erstwhile Hyderabad State had a well-planned irrigation network of over 1.26 lakh tanks and ponds. Also, the region had medium irrigation projects like Upper Maneru, Pocharam, Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme, Dindi, Koilsagar and Kadem, besides Nizamsagar -- then the largest project in the state. The network of tanks and ponds dates back to the Kakatiya period.

After the State of Andhra Pradesh, which included Telangana region, was carved out in 1956 on linguistic lines, the irrigation system in the region was neglected intentionally by successive rulers of the state. This resulted in the destruction of the water bodies or their encroachment by vested interests. The Telangana farmer then had no alternative, but to bank on bore wells for irrigation. Over the years, the ground water table receded and, for want of power to energise the bore wells, agriculture turned out to be a loss-making proposition, forcing heavily indebted farmers to look for alternative vocations for their livelihood.

In the 1969 Telangana movement, launched against the discrimination shown by then rulers towards develop-

ment of the region, 369 persons became martyrs. The second phase of the movement for Telangana was kicked off in 2001 by the Telangana Rashtra Samiti, under the stewardship of K Chandrashekhara Rao, with the region demanding its share of water, funds, and appointments. Telangana attained statehood on June 2, 2014 as a result of the aspirations of people and sacrifices made by several persons.

Immediately, TS' first Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao gave priority to development of irrigation and took steps to complete pending projects on a war-footing. He also launched the Kaleswaram Lift-Irrigation Scheme -- biggest project of its kind in the world -- on River Godavari and the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift-Irrigation Scheme on River Krishna. In three years, he could complete the Kaleswaram project and provided irrigation facility to farmers.

Besides, KCR launched Rythu Bandhu- an input subsidy scheme - to ensure that farmers who had been alienated from agriculture due to the discriminatory policies of the erstwhile AP rulers return to agriculture. The state government gives an

input subsidy of Rs 10,000 per acre to farmers under the Rythu Bandhu and launched Rythu Beema to give insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to the bereaved families in the case of loss of farmers' lives due to any reason. For this, the state government pays premium to the insurance provider on behalf of the farmers. Further, it provides 24x7 power to the farm sector.

The state government also formed agriculture clusters, each one covering 5,000 acres, and appointed an agriculture extension officer in-charge for each cluster. It took steps to build 2,601 Rythu Vedikas at a cost of Rs 1.22 crore.

On account of the efforts of the Chief Minister, the area under various crops in Telangana increased to 2.15 crore acres by 2021 from 1.34 crore acres in 2014. Consequently, the paddy yield increased to 3 crore tons by

2021 from 45 lakh tons in 2014. Telangana, far from being a neglected area in irrigation, has become the rice bowl of the country in seven years. Paddy yield in Telangana exceeded that of Punjab state.

KCR, with his perspective of a visionary, provided irrigation facility, 24x7 power to the farm sector, input subsidy to farmers, insurance, which were hitherto not available to Telangana farmers.

The Market Research and Analysis Wing, specially set up by the state government, assesses the present condition of farmers, crops cultivation and the yield, local, national and international food needs as well as demand-supply position, among others. It encourages those farmers who had been sustaining losses cultivating traditional crops to grow alternative crops that enjoy good demand in mar-

ket.

The state government has studied soil types, resources needed for farming, climatic conditions, local geographical conditions, farmers' financial position, problems like small land holdings and so on. The objective of the government is to make agriculture profitable by linking it to technology, reducing input costs, and increasing productivity of the crops to increase farmers' revenue.

The Telangana farmers, however, are also witnessing certain undesirable developments. The ecological balance has been affected.

The input costs of farmers have increased manifold, leading to dwindling of their rev-

enues. The percentage of problematic lands has increased, leading to vast tracts of land becoming barren.

Overall, given Telangana's soil conditions, climate, amenities and encouragement being provided by the state government, farmers are in a position to cultivate a wide range of alternative crops. Farmers need to focus on cultivation of profit-making alternative crops, rather than sustaining losses cultivating traditional crops.

In Telangana, a large percentage of farmers cultivate paddy and cotton. Farmers cultivate paddy with the hope of getting the Minimum Support Price from the government.

As the farmers produce more than the required paddy, they are dependent on the government to sell paddy. Therefore, farmers should cultivate paddy as per the requirement and switch over to alternative crops so that the market comes to the doorstep of the farmer rather than farmer approaching the market. Despite a bumper harvest of the paddy, the Centre threw up its hands, expressing its inability to procure paddy from Telangana.

Depending on national and

global needs, there is extensive scope for increasing the area under cotton crop. Pulses and oilseeds enjoy good demand on the market.

People across the globe are now looking towards food crops that meet nutritional requirements. There is a huge demand-supply gap for pulses and oilseeds in national as well as international markets.

After cotton, there is scope for augmenting the cultivation of red gram. Therefore, the state government has urged farmers to cultivate red gram on a large scale. Consequently, the area under red gram crop has increased from 3.5 lakh acres to 11 lakh. Besides, there is scope for the cultivation of green gram, black gram, Bengal gram and other pulses. That is why the Government of Telangana is encouraging cultivation of these crops.

The country imports annually edible oils worth Rs 80,000 crore. Hence, the Government of Telangana has planned to grow oil palm in 20 lakh acres over the next four or five years.

The government is encouraging the cultivation of gingelly, groundnut, sesame seeds and sunflower. It has planned to establish food processing industries in all districts.

The present irrigation facilities in Telangana, coupled with the availability of power, are favourable for the cultivation of long-term crops like oil palm.

Going by rapid urbanisation and changing food habits of people, the Government of Telangana is encouraging the cultivation of vegetable and horticultural crops. The small and marginal farmers get more and more profits due to crop rotation.

Farmers have ample scope for earning more profits by using available resources efficiently, reducing input costs, improving crop yield and having good market demand for their crops.

There is room for improving exports and practising sustainable agriculture. Farmers are currently dependent on others to fix prices for their produce. The objective of the TS government is to ensure that farmers fix prices for their produce by cultivation of various crops that enjoy good demand in the market. The Government of Telangana is making efforts to lead farmers in this direction.

(The writer is the Minister for Agriculture, Government of Telangana)

YSRCP's RS candidates file papers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP's four Rajya Sabha candidates filed their nominations on Wednesday. YSRCP parliamentary party leader V Vijaysai Reddy, BC leader R Krishanaih, industrialist Beda Mastan Rao and senior advocate S Niranjan Reddy submitted their nomination sets to returning officer and Deputy Secretary of State Legislature PV Subba Reddy. They were accompanied by Government Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Botsas Satyanarayana, Merugu Nagarajuna and Deputy Chief Minister Amzad Basha.

According to the poll schedule released by the Election Commission of India on May 12, polling for the vacant Rajya Sabha seats will be held on June 10. The counting of votes will be held on the same day.

Since the ruling YSRCP has the adequate number of MLAs, it will bag all the seats. Suresh Prabhu, Y S Chowdary and T G Venkatesh from the BJP and V Vijaysai Reddy of the YSRCP will be completing their terms on June 21.

Techies opt for work from home

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With traffic restrictions put in place for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, some of the IT companies in Cyberabad have asked employees to work from home.

Although a majority of employees are still working from home, some of the employees who are coming to office were alerted about the traffic curbs and told to manage accordingly.

V. Kiranmayi, a techie from an MNC in Hitec City, said that they got a notice about the traffic advisory ahead of the PM visit and were asked to plan accordingly.

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

Eye on 2024 Lok Sabha polls, BJP kick-starts booth strengthening drive

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With an eye on the 2024 parliamentary elections, the BJP kick-started a week-long campaign on Wednesday to strengthen the organisation and boost outreach activities in around 74,000 electoral booths across the country where it is relatively weak.

BJP president J P Nadda on Wednesday addressed a 'Booth Empowerment Campaign' event at the party headquarters here, the party said in a tweet. The meeting was attended by several Union ministers and leaders from across the country. The campaign will continue till May 31.

To steer the campaign, the BJP has formed a committee

chaired by party vice president Bajajant Panda. Party vice president Dilip Ghosh, general secretary CT Ravi, and the party's Scheduled Caste (SC) Morcha head Lal Singh Arya are its members.

The party has identified around 74,000 booths across the country that are to be strengthened under the campaign.

All party MPs have been asked to strengthen 100 weak booths in their respective constituencies and a 30-member team will be formed for the purpose, party sources said.

Similarly, party MLAs have been given the task of strengthening 10 weaker booths in their constituencies, sources said.

The BJP's Rajya Sabha MPs have been given the responsibility of strengthening polling booths in those Lok Sabha constituencies where the party lost, sources said.

The weaker booths have been identified on the basis of the results of the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and state assembly polls, they said.

These booths have been divided into various categories on the basis of demography, organisational strength and other aspects, they said.

As part of this campaign, BJP leaders will have to form a team, train them and then carry out outreach activities in the area that comes under these weaker polling booths, sources said, adding that special focus will be



SINGARENI NIRANJAN REDDY

beneficiaries of various government schemes.

The broader idea behind this exercise is to expand the BJP's footprint and increase its tally in the next Lok Sabha elections, they said.

A similar exercise was initiated by the BJP in 2016 and the party had identified around 115 constituencies in six states -- Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala -- and the Northeast. The party had never been able to win these constituencies till that time.

Party leaders believe as a result of this exercise, the BJP improved its position substantially in Odisha and West Bengal and increased its tally in 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Atmakur...

Continued from Page 1

While there were reports that Goutham Reddy's wife Sri Kirthi may contest the bypoll, Mekapati family has decided to field Vikram Reddy. It is learnt that Mekapati family had already conveyed their decision to the Chief Minister through Government Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and Rajya Sabha member Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy a few days ago. Now, Jagann has taken a final call and cleared Vikram Reddy's name.

As per norms, the bypoll is conducted within six months from the day the seat falls vacant. Vikram Reddy, who is Goutam Reddy's younger brother, had graduated from IIT Chennai and did his MS in the USA. He has been managing the family business KMC Group. More or less it's going to be a unanimous election for Vikram as the Opposition TDP may not field any candidate.

APCRDA to mobilise funds by selling plots

Continued from Page 1

The sale of plots in Amaravati Township would be held on May 31 from 10 am to 5 pm through e-auction. He said that the committee had set a basic price of Rs 17,800 per square yard, and the auction would start from the basic price. On May 31, auction of plots in Lot-1 would be conducted. The total number of

plots in the lot is 29, of which 23 plots are of 200 square yards and the remaining six of 1000 square yard.

Vivek Yadav said that the plots were provided with the basic infrastructure facilities like drinking water, roads, drains and electricity in the layouts, which had not been generally provided in private ventures. He said that all the developmental activities in the

layouts were being held step-wise. The plots were located near the Guntur-Vijayawada National Highway-16 and the international cricket stadium. It is also near to AIIMS and NRI hospitals. The location of the plots was one of the reasons for setting a high price compared to the market price. He said that all the plots were designed with the three-sided connecting road.

Kapil Sibal quits cong files RS nomination as SP-backed nominee

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Announcing that he had resigned from the Congress last week, Kapil Sibal on Wednesday filed his nomination for the Rajya Sabha as an Independent supported by the Samajwadi Party.

Sibal, whose exit is another jolt for the electorally battered Congress, said his ideology is related to the party he has been with for three decades.

The former Union minister went to the Uttar Pradesh assembly premises to file his papers



with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Ram Gopal Yadav and other senior leaders. A prominent member of the G23, which had sought an organisational overhaul in the Congress, Sibal's tenure as Congress' Rajya Sabha MP ends in July.

"I have filed the nomination as an Independent candidate. I thank Akhileshji for supporting me," Sibal told reporters here.

"I resigned from the Congress on May 16 and am no longer a

senior Congress leader," he said. The SP chief later said Sibal was being supported by the Samajwadi Party.

On his leaving the party, Sibal said, "I had a deep relation with the Congress. It was for 30-31 years. This is not a small thing. I joined the Congress because of Rajivji (former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi). You must be thinking, how one can go from the Congress after 31 years.

19 kids, 2 adults slain in US school shooting

Continued from Page 1

The shooter barricaded himself in one room, killing two teachers and 19 children, he told CNN.

"Just goes to show you the complete evil from this shooter," Olivarez said, just 10 days since 10 people were killed in a mass shooting in New York.

All the victims have been removed, identified and their families have been notified, the

lieutenant said. Multiple children were wounded inside the classroom, according to Olivarez, but there is no exact number as to how many at this time.

"It's a small classroom, you can have anywhere from 25 to 30 students in there, plus there were two teachers in there. ... So don't have exact number of how many students were in that classroom," Olivarez said.

When asked if the school was a target, Olivarez said there are

still "a lot of unanswered questions." Investigators say the suspect was armed with a handgun, an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle and high-capacity magazines.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott identified the killer as Salvador Ramos, a resident of the area where the school was located. The shooter's motive remains unclear. The teenager is suspected of shooting his grandmother at the start of the rampage, US media reports said.

Chief of Police, Uvalde, Pete Arredondo said the "mass casualty event occurred at Robb Elementary School at about 11:32 this morning". He said the killer acted as a lone wolf - who was shot dead in a police exchange. The deceased children are in the second, third and fourth grades - aged between 7 years and 10 years, he said.

People in the largely Hispanic neighbourhood sat outside their homes after the shooting, some

with their families while others gathered with neighbours.

In a prime-time address on Tuesday, a visibly emotional Biden asked what it would take to convince fellow lawmakers that it's time to act.

President Biden again tried to comfort a nation grieving after a mass shooting, urging action to counter powerful gunmakers and repeatedly questioning why the country he leads lacks the backbone to stem the bloodshed.

Regulate tomato prices: Chief Secretary

Continued from Page 1

He directed the authorities to take appropriate action against the illegal stockpiling of essential commodities. He said that a special app would be made available to monitor the prices of essential commodities, which was being developed by the Director of Statistics. He further said that the app should be utilised by the Marketing Department, Civil Supplies Department, Weights and Measures Department, Vigilance and Enforcement to constantly monitor prices.

The Chief Secretary has

directed the CEO of Rythu Bazaars and Marketing Department officials to ensure that all kinds of vegetables were available in the Rythu Bazaars.

Especially since tomato prices are high at present, it has been ordered to buy tomatoes directly from farmers and make them available at specified prices in the Rythu Bazaars.

The meeting was attended by Girija Shankar, EO Secretary and Commissioner, Civil Supplies, Pradyumna, Commissioner, Marketing Department among others.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT

NIT No. 26-79/GNT/2022-23

TENDER NOTICE

Date: 23-05-2022

Online tenders are being invited through e-procurement platform for execution of 47 works in various villages to undertake repairs to protected drinking water schemes and for their maintenance under the limits of the Guntur Circle of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department at a cost of Rs. 3736.02 lakh under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Tender Documents from No. 29 to 45 would be available in the e-procurement site from 27-05-2022 and the documents from No. 46 to 75 would be available in the site from 31-05-2022. For further details, contact phone number 0663-2599439 or 9108121425.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer,

RWS&S Circle, Guntur.

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Indo-Bangla Naval exercise begins at Port Mongla in Bangladesh



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The third edition of 'Bongosagar' -- bilateral exercise of the Indian Navy (IN) and the Bangladesh Navy (BN) -- has commenced at Port Mongla, Bangladesh. The harbour phase of the exercise is scheduled to be held from May 24-25,

The harbour phase of the exercise includes professional and social interactions, and friendly sporting fixtures, in addition to the tactical-level planning discussions on the conduct of the exercises at sea.

which will be followed by a sea phase in the Northern Bay of Bengal

from May 26-27. Bongosagar is aimed at developing a high

degree of interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises and operations between the two navies. The Vizag-headquartered Eastern Naval Command (ENC)'s Kora, an indigenously built Guided Missile Corvette, and Sumedha,

an indigenously built offshore patrol vessel, are participating in the exercise. The Bangladesh Navy is being represented by BNS Abu Ubaidah and Ali Haider, both Guided Missile Frigates. The harbour phase of the exercise includes professional and social interactions, and friendly

sporting fixtures, in addition to the tactical-level planning discussions on the conduct of the exercises at sea. The sea phase will facilitate ships from both the Navies to participate in intensive surface warfare drills, weapon firing drills, seamanship evolutions and coordinated air operations in a tactical scenario.



160 AP sportspersons to participate in Khelo India

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister of State for Tourism, Sports, Culture and Youth Services RK Roja interacted with Andhra Pradesh athletes participating in the Khelo India Youth Games to be held in Haryana. She was the chief guest of 'Veera Thilagam Diddinamu - Vijayulai Thirigirandi' programme organised by the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

In all, 160 players from 19 disciplines from across the State have been selected for the Khelo India Youth Games to be held in Haryana. Minister RK

Roja congratulated all the players selected for the fourth edition of the Games. "Due to Covid, no one could step out of their homes for two years, but this year, 160 players from 19 disciplines were selected for the Games. A majority of them are girls," said the minister. She said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had been strongly supporting the youth and sports after assuming power. A young chairman had been appointed to SAAP and the steps taken by the chairman to promote sports and players were commendable. Summer camps had been started and about 45,000 people were being trained. SAAP Chairman Byreddy

Siddhartha Reddy said it would be a happy moment for all of us if the players won medals at the Khelo India Youth Games. He said that the CM Cup, SAAP League, and the summer camp were being organised with the aim to recognise the talents of the players. "Earlier, no player knew about SAAP. But now, the players can directly come and meet the chairman," he said, and added that sportspersons had a passion that no other had.

The SAAP chairman said that reservations would be given to those who get a certificate of Khelo India. He said the SAAP had brought in a toll free number and players can call and tell their problems.

Hanuman Jayanti observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In connection with Hanuman Jayanti, special events took place at the Hanuman Temple located opposite to Kodanda Rama Swamy Temple in Tirupati on Wednesday. Special Abhishekam was rendered to the Mula Virat

and utsava deities of Sita Rama Lakshmana Swamy on the occasion. Later, Hanumanta Vahana Seva took place from 7pm and 8.30pm. Temple DyEO Nagaratna, AEO Durgaraju, Pradhana Archaka Ananda Kumar Deekshitulu, Superintendent Ramesh and others were present.



Temple for heroes found at Kalvarala village

DEEPIKA PASHAM
■ HYDERABAD

Temple for heroes being worshipped by people of Kalvarala village in Wanaparthy district has been discovered. The temple has been home to heroes and idols of 14th and 15th centuries, said members of Kotha Telangana Charitra Brundam. Historians also said that this is also known as Veeula Gudi (temple for heroes). During research work the members Bairoju Chandrashekar and Shyam Sunder found that there is a temple dedicated to heroes. In front of the temple, a king with three wives is seen holding a sword and fans in the hands of the queens were noticed. "The king and queens are



seen with robes, jewels, and hair buns. It is a sculpture of the Sahagamana Sati. In another outer sculpture, the warrior is seated on a table-like seat. Apsaranganas are waving vinjamaram. It is a heroic symbol of their immortality," says Sriramou Haragopal, Convener, Kotha Telangana Charitra

Brundam. He further said there are three pairs of hero stones inside the temple and in all the three, the warriors had swords lowered to the ground while the wives standing next to them were holding hands. These three sculptures are carvings of three satsi companion warriors who died in battle. It seems that there are more such idols in surrounding districts and further we request these sculptures must be preserved by the heritage department of the government because villagers never agree to shift these temples. According to the style, these satsihilas are said to be belonging to the 14th and 15th centuries. These are the satsihilas that appear in a new style after Basara.

RMJC admissions from May 30



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Residential Minority Junior Colleges (RMJC) are seeking applications from eligible minority students for admission into the first year Intermediate in the state for the academic year 2022-23. RMJC Secretary RS Narasimha Rao said that the admissions will be on the basis of marks obtained in Class 10 during the academic year 2022. He said that they are offering admissions in the first year of Intermediate MPC BIPC and MEC groups and said that the teaching will be

in both English and Urdu mediums. Rao also informed that three Residential Minority Junior Colleges are located in Kurnool, Guntur and Annamayya districts across the State and 345 seats were available. He also informed that the interested and eligible candidates can submit their applications between May 30 and June 20. For details of applications and the college, one can visit <http://aprs.apcfs.in> and for further information, contact 9676404618 and 7093323250 during office hours.

Farmers stage protest against GO 80A

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On Wednesday, Warangal farmers held a protest at Hanamkonda on Hanamkonda-Hyderabad highway demanding the abolition of GO 80A brought by the Telangana government. Along with the farmers, leaders of BJP, Congress and Left parties also took part in the protest. Police officials said that they have deployed adequate number of police personnel to prevent any untoward incidents. Heavy traffic jam was reported on the Hanamkonda-Hyderabad highway. Farmers are protesting against the cancellation of GO80A as the government has decided to acquire land for the construction of 41 km Warangal Outer Ring Road in Warangal and Hanamkonda districts.

Beach volleyball court at RSC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

South Central Railway has inaugurated the Beach Volleyball Court at Railway Sports Complex, Secunderabad.

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager (In-Charge), South Central Railway has said that South Central Railway Sports Association has the best infrastructure facilities available at Railway Sports Complex, Secunderabad. It will be worth mentioning here that all the grounds are available at one place and Beach Volleyball court is added now

with an approximate expenditure of Rs 4 lakhs. The court dimensions are 92 feet X 52.5 feet X 0.8 inch with provision of Flood Lights. This Beach Volleyball Court inaugurated is the first of its kind facility made available for players on Indian Railways. Playing beach volleyball will be fitness training to sports persons of all disciplines. Indian Railways Beach Volleyball team first participated in Beach Volleyball Nationals during 2012 and won Bronze Medal, secured Bronze Medal in 2013 and Gold Medal in 2017.



AFTER CONQUERING MOUNT EVEREST

Anvitha plans to climb more mountains across the globe

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's ace mountaineer Anvitha Reddy Padamati was given a rousing reception by her fans and the management of the Anvitha Group, the sponsors of her Mount Everest expedition, at the RGI Airport, on Wednesday.

Anvitha Reddy was later felicitated at a glittering ceremony by Atchuta Rao Bopanna, the Managing Director of the Anvitha group, and her coach, Shekhar Babu Bachinepally, on her huge accomplishment of reaching the summit of Mount Everest. Padamati Anvitha Reddy, (24), a mountaineer from Bhongir in Telangana scaled the tallest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, which is 8,848.86 metres above mean sea level on May 16, 2022. She is an instructor at the



Ace mountaineer Anvitha Reddy along with coach Sekhar Babu, mother, father Madhusudhan Reddy and Atchuta Rao, MD of Anvitha Group, in Hyderabad

Rock Climbing School, Bhongir. The entire expedition of Anvitha and her training for the Everest expedition was sponsored by the Anvitha Group (Building Happiness).

Arriving in Hyderabad, Anvitha Reddy shared her experience. "I turned ecstatic on reaching the top of the world, as a moment I aspired for the last eight years had come

true. It was this moment that kept me going despite enormous challenges including convincing my parents who were averse to adventure sports due to financial limitations and more. I was educated about Everest trekking by my coach Shekar before I set out. That made me aware of how to go about while trekking on Everest, how to cope with the

different situations we encounter and how I should be mentally strong to reach the summit."

Earlier, Anvitha Reddy had climbed Mount Khadey (Indian Himalayas, Tso-Moriri, Ladakh) in February 2021, and Mount Kilimanjaro (the highest peak in Africa) in January 2021. She completed winter training with the help of Transcend Adventures, Hyderabad, at Leh and climbed Mount Elbrus (the highest peak in Europe) during winter in December 2021 and became the only Indian to do so.

Anvitha Reddy said that the saddest part of her expedition was seeing dead bodies. I saw two bodies of trekkers. Although I wasn't frightened, I felt sad as they couldn't go back home like me to celebrate their achievements with their families.

‘Absence of crop insurance exposes farmers to distress’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nalgonda Lok Sabha member N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Wednesday took Chief Minister K Chandrababai Naidu to task for failing to implement crop insurance scheme in the State. Non-implementation of crop insurance scheme has led to farmers suffering huge loss due to vagaries of the weather, he pointed out.

He was addressing a series of meetings in Vepala Singaram, Marrigudem, Karakyalagudem, Burugadda, Gopalapuram and Kachavarigudem in the Suryapet district on the day-5 of Rachabanda/Rythu Bharosa Yatra on Wednesday. So far, he covered 40 out of 300 villages proposed to be covered under the Yatra to highlight the Warangal

Declaration unveiled by AICC former president Rahul Gandhi on May 6. Uttam Kumar Reddy felt that the financial assistance of Rs 5,000 per acre under the Rythu Bandhu scheme would be of no use if the farmer loses his entire crop due to rains, floods, drought, pest attack or any other natural disaster. The High Court, he recalled, had given a landmark judgement in September 2021, directing the State government to pay compensation to 'severely damaged crops' within three months from the date of the judgement. The High Court orders, which were delivered after a PIL was filed by Rythu Swarajya Vedika, were yet to be implemented. The TRS government failed to learn anything from the observations made by the High Court, he said.



Nalgonda Lok Sabha member speaking at a meeting at Vepala Singaram in Suryapet district on Wednesday

The estimated losses due to heavy rains and floods in September/October 2020 were nearly Rs. 7,219 crore. This showed the magnitude of losses farmers could suffer due to natural disasters. The farmers can get some relief if they are covered under crop insurance schemes. But the farmers of Telangana are not getting this benefit since Kharif 2020. He pointed out that the

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was made voluntary from the Kharif 2020 season onwards. "When this issue was brought before the High Court, the KCR government tried to mislead the court by contending that the farmers could have enrolled in the insurance scheme voluntarily. But in reality, the State government did not notify either the PMFBY or any other alter-

native scheme, which meant that the farmer in Telangana had no option of even voluntarily enrolling in any crop insurance scheme," he said.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the TRS government has almost dismantled the mechanism to enumerate the losses suffered by farmers due to natural calamities and other factors. Thousands of farmers had lost their standing crops or the paddy stocked for disposal in their farmyards due to unseasonal rains in the last one week. Although the Chief Minister gave an assurance through a press release that the government would purchase the rain-soaked paddy, he was silent about giving compensation to those who lost their standing crops. He said that the District administration has no standing instructions to enumerate the crop losses

within a specified period. The Congress MP alleged that KCR was confusing the farmers by creating hype around the Rythu Bima Yojana. He said that the Rythu Bima was a group life insurance which is not helpful to a farmer who is alive although it provides financial relief to his family after he dies due to any reason. He said that the TRS government could save thousands of lives by introducing a crop insurance scheme, he remarked. Uttam Kumar Reddy demanded that the Chief Minister take immediate measures to introduce 100 per cent crop insurance for the ensuing Kharif season.

He claimed that the Warangal Declaration, announced by AICC leader Rahul Gandhi, would completely remove the stress being faced by farmers under the TRS-BJP regimes.

Man arrested for killing chowsinghas

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A wildlife hunter Korem Nageswar Rao was arrested on Wednesday on the charge of hunting and killing three chowsinghas (four-horned antelopes). He was remanded in judicial custody. Acting on a tip-off, the Forest Range Officer Renunka along with staff raided the house

of Korem Nageswar Rao and seized the severed heads and the meat of the wild animals from his possession. The officials said he had hunted the wild animals in Manubotulapadu forests under Aswapuram and Maugu forest ranges and sell the meat. The official said he had allegedly killed the four-horned antelopes on Tuesday night.



Why Kadapa district not named Br.Ambedkar district: Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Janasena Chief K Pawan Kalyan has asked the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy headed government why it did not name after Kadapa district Dr.B R Ambedkar district and attributed the government machinery's failure in Amalapuram violence.

Addressing a press conference in the JSP state office at Mangalagiri on Wednesday, he alleged that as part of YSRC's preplan, the violence incidents took place in Amalapuram.

"The YSRC led government, in a bid to divert the attention from the growing disenchantment among the Dalits against the YSRC government, created violence in Amalapuram", he flayed, adding that the burning of houses of Minister Viswaroop and MLA Satish as part of conspiracy. Before the mob attacked the minister's house the police shifted the family members of the minister to a

"The YSRC led government, in a bid to divert the attention from the growing disenchantment among the Dalits against the YSRC government, created violence in Amalapuram", he flayed, adding that the burning of houses of Minister Viswaroop and MLA Satish as part of conspiracy.



safer place which indicates their conspiracy, he slammed.

He warned that the caste conflicts are dangerous as if once they begin they spread across the country. The YSRC ministers are fomenting the volatile situation by speaking as they like instead of trying to subside the conflict, he charged. "The government did not mention naming a new district after Ambedkar in the

Gazette notification. But in a hurry it has taken a decision to name Konaseema district as Dr.BR Ambedkar Konaseema district. We suspect the government's act as part of a political conspiracy", he slammed.

The violence would not have taken place in Amalapuram had the government announced naming of BR Ambedkar district to the newly

created district on April 4, he opined. He questioned the probity of the government inviting objections for the notification after announcing the naming of Konaseema district as BR Ambedkar district.

Saying that the naming of districts after national leaders is a welcoming act, he recalled that the JSP demanded naming Kurnool district as

Damodaram Sanjivayya district. He also pointed out that there are demands to name NTR district after Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga district. The Janasena chief suggested that referendum should be conducted in Konaseema district to elicit people's views on naming the district as Dr.Ambedkar district.

Taking strong exceptions to the comments made by Home Minister Taneti Vanita, Pawan Kalyan asked the Home Minister what happened to 'Kodi Katti' case in which a person tried to attack Jagan Mohan Reddy in Visakhapatnam airport and what is the status of YS Vevekananda Reddy murder case? He said that if the JSP is voted to power he would go for referendum to name it after Kurnool district Damodaram Sanjivayya district. He said that Union minister Ramdas Athawala said that the highest number of atrocities 5,857 atrocities against the SCs/STs took place in AP.



Officials directed to expedite construction of govt buildings

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh directed the officials to take steps to expedite the construction of government buildings for village and ward secretariats, Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) and YSR health clinics. The Collector held a meeting and reviewed the land resurvey process, NREGA works, sanitation, ICDS, e-office implementation with the officials here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector expressed anger over the tardy manner of construction of village/ward secretariats, RHKS and Health clinic buildings at Agiripalli, Bhimadolu, Chatrai, Dwarka Thirumala, Denduluru, Jeelugumilli, T. Narsapuram, Jangareddygudem, Nuzvid rural areas.

He said that summer time is a favorable time for construction work and told them to expedite the work. He directed the NREGA and Panchayati Raj Engineering Department staff to work in coordination to complete the construction works of the building at the earliest. Jagananna Housing

plots should be distributed to the beneficiaries within 90 days, he told them, and asked the officers to submit a report detailing the reasons for delay in distributing the plots. .

Venkatesh said that summer was the ideal time to complete the NREGA works and steps should be taken to complete the works which were undertaken in the district. He said that the working days, prescribed for each zone, must be provided to the workers. The Collector directed the MPDOs to visit the field level at least two days a week to monitor the NREGA works. He told the officials to disburse compensation to the families whose breadwinner died of Coronavirus in the district.

He said the state government had provided Rs 50,000 each to the families of the victims' family members but disbursement of compensation to about 400 families had been delayed due to technical problems such as Aadhaar, bank accounts and so on. The Collector directed the authorities to take special care to ensure that the compensation is credited to their bank account within two days.

The Collector directed the officials to expedite the Covid vaccination process, stating that 8,000 children were diagnosed with malnutrition and anemia in the district and steps should be taken in coordination with the Anganwadi staff and the medical staff to ensure full nutrition for all of them.

The Collector directed the ICDS officials that the details of the health of the child, the treatment provided to them should be recorded in a special register and action should be taken without. Medical camps should be conducted every week in the Anganwadi centres to conduct health check-ups for the children.

Joint Collector P Arun Babu, ZP CEO K Srinivas, Deputy CEO Ravi Kumar and Agriculture Department Joint Director YS Ramakrishna, District Education Officer Gangabavani, Social Welfare Department JD Madhusoodhanarao, DMHO Dr. Ravi, Deputy of Housing P.D. Jilal, Panchayat Officer Balaji, Survey Department AD Manisha Tripathi were among those who were present.

One held for two-wheeler thefts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Special West Zone crime team of the Cyber Crime Station (CCS) on Wednesday apprehended a 36 year old Rapido driver in connection with vehicle theft. The accused has been identified as Abdullah Pasha and is a resident of King Koti in Hyderabad. According to the police, the accused has been involved in a total of 3 two-wheeler thefts. The crime team utilised CCTV footage and apprehended the accused within 24 hours and recovered 3 bikes from his possession.

Steps taken to maintain law and order effectively: SP

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Bapatla District SP Vakul Jindal said stringent steps have been taken to maintain the law and order and curb crimes in the district.

The District Legal Service Authority meeting was held in Guntur Medical College for which Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah (Executive Chairman, AP State Legal Service Authority, Amravati), District Sessions Judge M. Babita (AP State Legal Service Authority, Amravati), M. Venugopal Reddy (District Collector and Magistrate, Guntur), Shiv Shankar Lotheti, were attended as the guests.



Guntur district SP K Arif Hafeez, and Bapatla District SP Vakul Jindal attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion,

Bapatla district SP Vakul Jindal felt that if the accused is taken into custody as early as possible after committing crime,

and if he is punished by the court at the earliest, that would scare the criminals.

The government had provided additional resources for the police department as part of the implementing Disha Act and that forensic labs were being set up, he said, adding that the police and judicial authorities were working in a coordinated manner. The Disha Act would be implemented more effectively in the coming days, he made it clear. The SP said that the police are responding immediately to the problems of the complainants and are taking steps to ensure speedy justice for the poor.

Naidu to take part in bike rally from V'wada to Mahanadu venue

PNS ■ ONGOLE

TDP National President and former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will take part in a massive motorcycle rally from Vijayawada to the venue of the party 'Mahanadu 2022' in Ongole on Thursday. The TDP chief will hold the party politburo meeting in Ongole tomorrow ahead of the two-day Mahanadu conclave to be held there on May 27 and 28.

Announcing this at a press conference in Ongole, TDP state president K. Atchannaidu accused Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and his party leaders are doing cheap things to sabotage Mahanadu. The ruling YSRC was exposing its frustration at every step. They were even getting TDP Mahanadu banners, bunting and flags removed on the roads.

Atchannaidu warned that if the municipal commissioner would not make his staff to tie TDP bunting again, there would be serious repercussions in future. Jagan Reddy and his Ministers would not be able to stop the victory of Mahanadu. There was an overwhelming response to the TDP festival from all sections. The



TDP leader said they were receiving calls from party admirers who would like to come from even Telangana and other States and other countries as well. All sections of people were looking towards the TDP after seeing the ruthless activities of the Jagan Reddy regime. Chandrababu Naidu's Badude Badudu campaign had raised huge awareness over the YSRC misdeeds and misrule.

Atchannaidu said that Jagan Reddy had stooped to the level of making the RTC officials refuse to give buses to Mahanadu-bound TDP activists. It was at the orders of the Chief Minister's Office that the RTC buses were being denied to the TDP. At the same time, the RTC buses were being provided for the Ministers' bus yatra.

The TDP leader slammed the Chief Minister for coming

out with the Ministers' bus yatra only to counter the rising popularity of TDP Mahanadu. Even if the YCP leaders would do 'tapas' (penance) upside down, they would not be able to prevent people from attending Mahanadu. The TDP admirers would come in tractors, bikes and even on foot. Atchannaidu asked whether Jagan Reddy realised the importance of social justice after three years of his misrule. It was shameful to conduct the Ministers' bus yatra at this juncture. The people were feeling an aversion to endless cheap gimmicks of the Chief Minister despite the growing resentment to his rule.

On May 27, Mahanadu will hold the TDP representatives' meeting. On the second day on May 28, there would be a massive public meeting with 3 lakh people.

SP inspects accident-prone areas on NH 16

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Superintendent of police Vakul Jindal inspected the accident prone areas on the NH 16 here Wednesday and gave advice to the officials to take steps to curb them.

The SP, along with other police officials, inspected the black spots at Rajupalem checkpoint, Amaravati textile, Jonnatali cross roads, Alavalapadu cross roads, Venkatapuram

cross roads and growth centre black spots. He gave directions to the police officials to take steps to curb road accidents at the accident prone areas.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP said that the places where more number of road accidents had taken place for the last three years were identified as 'black spots'. He said that road accidents take place due to rash driving, and people from the nearby villages

entering onto the national highway suddenly cross the road. He said that he had noticed where there were speed-breakers and barricades on the highway. In the coming days many steps would be taken to curb road accidents in the Bapatla district, the SP added. DSB CI A Srinivasa Rao, DCRB CI Murali krishna and Enkollu CI Subba Rao and Adanki CI Rajesh Kumar were among those who were present.



I&PR officials told to create awareness among people

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Information and Public Relations department Commissioner T Vijay Kumar Reddy directed the Information department officials to take the welfare schemes, being implemented by the government, to the people and create awareness among them.

The I&PR Commissioner visited the I&PR office in Bhimavaram on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, he asked the I&PR officials to take the welfare schemes to the people in a comprehensive manner in the newly formed district.



Vijay Kumar Reddy said that the government is implementing many welfare schemes for the people but due

to lack of awareness and information many eligible people are not availing the schemes. All eligible poor should be part

of welfare schemes and I&PR officials should ensure that all eligible poor would receive the fruits of welfare schemes.

"The Information and Public relations department should play a significant role in the implementation of welfare schemes, in creating awareness and in providing a wide publicity for the welfare schemes", Vijay Kumar Reddy stated, and asked the officials to utilize the services of media in this regard.

He also underlined the need of I&PR officials establishing good relations with the media. He exhorted them to strive

hard to enhance the reputation of the Information department. "Steps are being taken to strengthen the I & PR department in the state keeping in view the growing digital media and the social media presence", he said.

Additional director L Swarnalata, Deputy director P Timmappa, DPRO D Nagarjuna, Additional PRO T Nageswara Rao, Assistant Executive Information Engineer CH Babu Rao, senior Asst and KTMKNS Raju, Publicity assistant Ch Srinivasa Nehru were present on the occasion.

Officials told to promote aquaculture in a big way

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Bapatla district Collector Vijaya Krishnan directed the officials to take steps to promote the aquaculture in a big way in the district. Addressing the aqua industry development committee meeting here on Wednesday she asked the officials to encourage the aquaculture farmers to take up aquaculture in a big way.

She informed that aquaculture is being taken up in over 20,000 hectares in Bapatla district. The government is extending subsidies in a bid to encourage and promote aquaculture, she said. The government is extending 60 per cent subsidies to the SC/ST women and 40 percent to general category aquaculture farmers. She said subsidies would be given to aqua farmers for ponds and hatcheries under the



She informed that aquaculture is being taken up in over 20,000 hectares in Bapatla district.

Prime Minister's Fisheries Scheme.

The Collector directed the authorities to take steps to immediately reopen the centres which were initially shut down by Amul in the district and conduct a survey regarding procurement of milk for Amul dairy. She told the officials that not less than 168 litres of milk should be procured in each milk procurement centre in the district and payment must be

made to the dairy farmers in this regard in time. The construction of building works for secretariats, RBKs, and YSR Clinics should be expedited. The Collector expressed anger over the engineers who failed to show progress in the construction of buildings.

Later addressing agriculture officials, she told them to set up hiring centres as the government is releasing water earlier for the rabi crop. She informed

that various crops are being cultivated in 1.24 lakh hectares in Bapatla district. The Collector said five farmers would have to buy a tractor together for each centre. The farmers have to purchase 6 tractors in a mandal, she said and asked the officials to prepare a plan for the same.

She said that 150 tractors would be required in 25 mandals of the district. She said farmers who cultivate agricul-

tural crops should buy tractors to give them for rent at cheap prices. She said that there are 220 seed and fertilizers shops in the district and directed the officials to inspect them. She said that 1,044 quintals of paddy seeds, 62 quintals of black gram seeds and 25 quintals of green gram seeds were kept ready for the farmers. She asked the officials to inspect the seeds. District Agriculture Officer Sheikh Abdul Sattar, District Fisheries Officer P Suresh, Agriculture Department JD Abdul Sattar, DPO Radha Krishna, Guntur Z P CEO Srinivasa Reddy, Prakasham ZP CEO Jali Reddy, District Water Resources Officer Murali Krishna, DRDA Project Director Satya Sai Housing Department Project Director Prasad and Panchayati Raj SE Ramesh were among those who were present.

Permission must from GMC to erect banners, hoardings

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Guntur municipal commissioner Keerthi Chekuri directed the officials to ensure that no banners and hoardings are erected without taking permission from the GMC. Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri made it clear that permission must be obtained from the municipal corporation to erect banners, hoardings and posters on the roads in the city and also print the permit number or challan on the respective banners, hoardings and posters.

The commissioner here on Wednesday visited Donkar Road, three bridges, Nehru Nagar Reservoir, Sanjeevayya Nagar railway gate, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar and other places and

inspected the sanitation and development works and issued appropriate directions to the authorities. Speaking on this occasion, the commissioner said that hoardings, banners and posters were not allowed to be erected to anyone in the city and the municipal corporation permission number or chalana should be printed on them. The town planning authorities were instructed to remove the unprinted ones. .

She said that the owners of printing presses in the city should also be instructed by town planning authorities to print their banners or posters permission number obtained from the municipality, otherwise they would be subject to legal action. She directed to identify

those who dump construction waste material on roads and levy fines on them. Planning secretaries were ordered to remove ramps or stairs built over roads and canals.

She directed that reservoirs in the city should be cleaned within the stipulated time, details should be recorded in the board and photos should be sent before and after cleaning. Keerthi directed the engineering authorities to expedite the pipeline works from Nehru Nagar Reservoir to HLR and to identify and repair the leaks as soon as they occur. Corporators A Kanakadurga, EE Santhi Raju, Sectoral officer Naga Srinivas and assistant city planner Kalesh were among those who accompanied her.

INDIA CORNER

President Kovind to open National Women Legislators' Conference today

President Ram Nath Kovind will open the two-day National Women Legislators' Conference-2022, which is expected to be attended by a host of women parliamentarians and legislators across the country, at the Legislative Assembly complex here on May 26. Hosted by the state Assembly, the first-ever such event is organised as part of the nation-wide celebrations planned under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav marking the 75th anniversary of India's independence. The President would arrive in the state capital in a special Air Force flight at 8.40 PM tonight and would proceed to Raj Bhavan later, an official statement said here. After the inaugural ceremony in the morning, he would leave for Pune by 5.20 PM in the evening, it added. Meanwhile, Speaker M B Rajesh said it is for the first time that a national conference of women legislators is organised on such a large scale.



Human rights institutions of various countries have to work together: NHRC

NHRC chairperson justice (ret'd) Arun Kumar Mishra has said that national human rights institutions of various countries have to work together to ameliorate the cause of human rights, as he also called for "exchange of best practices" through interactions at regular intervals. He said this while welcoming the visiting delegation of Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, the rights panel said in a statement on Wednesday. "National human rights institutions (NHRIs) of various countries have to work together to ameliorate the cause of human rights. For this, exchange of best practices through interactions at regular intervals among the NHRIs itself will be a best practise to begin with in this direction," he was quoted as saying in the statement. Justice Mishra called for enhanced interactions among these rights panels to share best practices.



NIA files chargesheet in Tamil Nadu's Ansarullah case

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a supplementary chargesheet against one of the founders of Tamil Nadu's Ansarullah group, a supporter of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, officials said on Wednesday. The agency has filed the chargesheet against Divan Mujipeer under section 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and provisions of the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). It is alleged that Mujipeer had conspired with co-accused Mohammed Ibrahim, Mohammed Sheik Maitheen, Meeran Ghani and Gulam Nabi Asath in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to form an extremist religious group -- Ansarullah -- with an intention to establish Islamic rule in India, especially in Tamil Nadu, through violent "jihad", the NIA said in a statement. "They had circulated a magazine named Thozhan for propagating extreme jihadi ideologies of ISIS and Al-Qaeda," it said.



Power Min mulls new scheme to help discoms pay off dues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The power ministry on Wednesday said it is working on a scheme for electricity distribution utilities (discoms) to pay off their dues mainly towards gencos, which has the potential to save Rs 19,833 crore on account of late payment surcharge.

"The inability of Discoms to pay dues impacts the entire value chain of the power sector. Considering this situation, the Ministry of Power is working on a scheme to mitigate the financial woes of the Distribution Companies (Discoms) that are unable to pay their dues," the ministry said in a statement.

Delay of payments by a discom to a generating company (genco) adversely affects the cash flow of the generating firm, which needs to make provisions for input supplies like coal, and for keeping adequate working capital for day-to-day operation of power plants.

As per data available on the PRAAPTI portal, as on May 18, 2022, the discoms' overdues



(excluding disputed amounts and Late Payment Surcharge (LPSC)) stood at Rs 1,00,018 crore. The LPSC dues were Rs 6,839 crore.

The proposed scheme would enable payment of financial dues in easy instalments by the discoms.

A one-time relaxation is being considered to be given to all the discoms wherein the amount outstanding (includes principal and LPSC) on the date of noti-

fication of the scheme will be frozen without further imposition of LPSC.

The discoms will be given flexibility to pay the outstanding amount in up to 48 instalments.

The liquidation of outstanding dues in deferred manner without imposition of LPSC will give discoms time to shore up their finances.

At the same time, the generating company will benefit from assured monthly payments

which otherwise were not forthcoming to them.

However, it stated that in case of delay in payment of an instalment by a discom, the late payment surcharge shall be payable on the entire outstanding dues which otherwise was exempted.

As a result of the proposed scheme, the discoms will save an amount of Rs 19,833 crore on LPSC in the next 12 to 48 months, the ministry added.

States like Tamil Nadu and

Maharashtra, which have large outstanding dues, will save over Rs 4,500 crore each as a result of this measure.

Uttar Pradesh will save around Rs 2,500 crore, while Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and Telangana will save in the range of Rs 1,100 crore to Rs 1,700 crore.

The savings by discoms will ultimately benefit the electricity consumer by reducing the burden of LPSC in the retail tariff, it said.

The measure is expected to provide timely liquidation of arrears which is very much important to the gencos than the amount foregone on LPSC.

At the same time, suitable measures are being put in place to ensure that discoms pay their dues to gencos on a regular basis, otherwise supply by the latter will be reduced.

Late payment surcharge is levied on the payment outstanding by a discom to a generating company at the base rate (pegged to SBI's Marginal Cost of Lending Rate (MCLR)).

Set up panels for energy transition: R K Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh has asked states and union territories to set up state-level steering committees for energy transition and make efforts for zero diesel use in the farm sector by 2024.

The steering committees will work under the chairmanship of the chief secretaries of the respective States/Union Territories.

"Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy, R K Singh has asked the Chief Ministers of all States, and Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories to set up State-Level Steering Committees for Energy Transition," a power ministry statement said. The Principal Secretaries of Power and New and Renewable Energy Departments, Transport, Industries, Housing and Urban Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development and Public Works Departments, etc. will act as members of these committees. The states and UTs will work on the annual strategy of energy transition under the mandate of the committee.



The minister reiterated in the statement that states/UTs have a vital role in meeting state-specific goals on sustainable development in the most energy-efficient way.

He added that the energy transition is the only means of reducing carbon emissions and fulfilling our commitments made at international forums.

He informed that some states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand have already constituted such committees.

Singh highlighted that for energy transition, the states and Union Territories have to work together on multiple tracks. He added that the first track is the

addition of Renewables (renewable energy) to the electricity generation mix to meet the nation's ever-increasing demand for electricity.

He said that the second track would be the promotion of energy efficiency while the third one would be more use of biomass and green hydrogen. He said that if we all work collectively on these points, not only we will be able to achieve our goals, but it will also create new jobs, accelerate development, and ultimately benefit every citizen of the country.

The minister urged the states to make efforts for zero diesel in agriculture by 2024 by limiting the consumption of diesel in the agriculture sector.

'Wheat ban hurting farmers, but exemptions helping exporters'



PNS ■ KOLKATA

The wheat ban imposed by the Centre has crashed prices in mandis, hurting farmer interests while exporters continue to reap the benefits of a global price spiral by continuing with shipments of the grain, charged Jai Kisan Andolan leader and renowned sociologist Yogendra Yadav on Wednesday.

Yadav also accused the Narendra Modi-led government of going back on its promise for a committee on the minimum support price issue and to withdraw cases against farmers.

Wheat prices crashed after the announcement of an

export ban, which meant a loss to farmers already hit by a heat wave that has reduced crop yield. At the same time changes in the ban order meant exporters could continue to export and profit (from high international wheat prices), said Yadav, who is also a leader of the Swaraj India party, at a press conference here. Wheat prices crashed from Rs 2,881 a quintal on May 7 to Rs 2,220 per quintal on May 13 after the ban was announced on export of wheat from the country, citing rise in prices. The MSP or the price at which the government guarantees wheat purchased in contrast stands at Rs 2,015 a quintal.

Hate speech: Court cancels bail of P C George

PNS ■ KOCHI

A Magisterial court in Kerala on Wednesday cancelled the bail granted to senior politician P C George in a case accusing him of making a hate speech against Muslims in the State on April 29.

The court allowed the plea moved by the police to cancel the relief granted to George on May 1.

Police, in its plea, had contended that the veteran politician violated the bail conditions and, therefore, the bail was liable to be cancelled.

The court allowed the plea of the police, George's lawyer -- advocate Ajith Kumar -- be confirmed.

The lawyer said the senior politician has been asked to appear before the Palarivattom police station in Ernakulam district of the State in connection with another case of hate speech.

Subsequently, when he arrived at the police station, workers of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) protested there seeking his arrest, according to visuals shown on TV channels.

The PDP workers were removed from there and soon thereafter, a large number of BJP workers and State presi-



dent of the party K Surendran, and its candidate in the Thrikkakara by-election A N Radhakrishnan, arrived at the police station.

Surendran said the action taken against George indicates the double standards of the LDF government as it did not take such steps against others who had in the recent past made communally charged remarks in public.

He said George would have the support of his party.

After he was questioned for some time at the Palarivattom police station, TV visuals showed him exiting the station along with his son and other BJP leaders including

Surendran. He was, thereafter, shifted to the Ernakulam AR camp where he is awaiting arrival of a police team from Thiruvananthapuram, a senior official said.

George has been granted interim protection from arrest by the Kerala High Court in the case lodged at Palarivattom police station.

On being asked whether he would appeal against the cancellation of his bail, advocate Ajith Kumar said his client would first obey the law and then would decide what to do next. The police had sought cancellation of his bail alleging that soon after he was granted the relief, George addressed the

visual media in front of the Judicial Officer's Quarters, Vanchiyoor, and said he is still sticking to what he had stated in the speech and was justifying the same which amounts to repetition of the same crime and spread of communal hatred further.

The police had pointed out that the Magisterial court, while granting bail, had directed the accused not to make and propagate controversial statements which may hurt the religious sentiments of others while on bail.

The police had arrested George on May 1 after registering a case against him under Indian Penal Code Sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion) and 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) at Fort Police station for allegedly making a communal speech against Muslims while addressing 'Ananthapuri Hindu Maha Sammelanam' on April 29. The 70-year-old former MLA had sparked off a controversy by asking non-Muslims in Kerala to avoid eating at restaurants run by the community.

AGAINST ILLEGAL SAND-MINING NGT needs to relax norms across Meghalaya: HC



PNS ■ SHILLONG

Meghalaya High Court has said that there is a need for the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to broaden its proceedings against illegal sand-mining across the entire northeastern state.

A full bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee was on Tuesday hearing a suo motu petition filed by the registrar general of the high court following reports of unregulated sand-mining destroying water bodies across the state.

"It is hoped that the NGT broadens the scope of the

proceedings before it and takes immediate appropriate measures to ensure that the law of the land is followed," the order stated.

The court said the petition was adjourned on April 19 upon noticing that a notification had been published by the state government on April 14 pursuant to the directions of the NGT issued on April 5, 2019 and February 26, 2021.

"An impression was given that the NGT was still monitoring all illegal sand-mining activities in the state and appropriate directions had been issued," it said.

Growing trees outside forests can offer benefits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Growing trees in agroforestry systems -- a landscape restoration technique where farmers add trees to their land -- and in and near cities can offer many environmental and socioeconomic benefits, according to a study by the World Resources Institute (WRI) India.

The study by the global research non-profit organisation also identified 10 types of incentives -- seven monetary and three non-monetary -- that policymakers use to encourage farmers to grow trees.

Subsidies for planting material like saplings and infrastructure -- greenhouses and irrigation -- emerged as the most commonly available and utilised incentives, followed



by direct technical assistance to farmers from government agencies.

The 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report from Working Group II on climate impacts, adaptation and vulnerability reveals that India is among the countries

that climate change will impact the most as temperatures and sea levels rise and weather patterns shift, the authors of the study noted. That challenge is accelerating as fragmentation and declining productivity of the country's terrestrial ecosystems, including 45 per cent of its farmlands, are undermining

the ability of dependent populations -- like farmers, forest dwellers and tribal or indigenous communities -- to sustain themselves, they said.

Ruchika Singh, one of the authors of the study, said a glaring critical gap is the lack of incentives for native species and traditional agroforestry models for restoration.

"Considering trade-offs while planning for landscape restoration and growing trees is critical. For instance, the sole impetus on increasing tree cover overlooks traditional agroforestry practices that communities have used to grow native trees within their landscapes," Singh, Director - Sustainable Landscapes and Restoration, WRI India, told PTI in an email interview. "Developing restoration strategies using an inclusive and

landscape approach, shifting incentives to suit the local context, and strengthening enabling conditions for existing incentives is crucial, she explained. The authors noted that there are multiple social, economic, and environmental benefits of growing native trees outside forest areas using a landscape approach where ecologically appropriate.

The benefits range from mitigating urban heat island risks, improving biodiversity and soil health in rural landscapes, and mitigating climate change. These are in addition to the benefits like improving water quality, jobs and livelihoods, and providing provisioning ecosystem services, such as food and fodder, for the communities dependent on the land for sustenance, they said.

Karnataka story different from that of other states, we compete globally: CM

PNS ■ DAVOS

With a number of Indian states lining up here at the WEF Annual Meeting to woo investors, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Bommai on Wednesday said his state is the "safest place to do business" and it is not competing domestically but at the international level and listed hydrogen and ammonia fuel as the next focus areas.

He also said that nearly half of the foreign companies present in India are already in Karnataka and all of them are planning to expand and diversify in the state while many more are evincing interest attracted by the robust infrastructure, talent pool and ease of doing business in the state.



In an interview to PTI at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2022 here, Bommai said the process to decongest the state capital Bengaluru is underway by developing many adjoining areas as well as tier 2 and tier 3 cities while four more airports would be built this year.

"Karnataka story is different from other states," he said.

Talking about his visit here, Bommai said Davos experience has been excellent and he has witnessed that the international investor community has recognised India as an emerging economic giant and particularly Karnataka.

Cost of ‘service’

The Govt is set to discuss the contentious issue of applying ‘service charge’ to restaurant bills

Tipping is not just about slipping some money to a waiter. Ideological battles were fought over it in the past. Today, the Governments square off with restaurateurs over it, pitting the customer’s right of choice against the waiter’s fruits of labour. On June 2, the Department of Consumer Affairs and the National Restaurants Association of India will meet to thrash out a contentious issue: Are eateries collecting service charge — tipping in legalese — by default even though it is voluntary. The question is, do restaurants ‘force’ them to pay the service charge? At least that is the allegation against the eateries. The other is that the service charge is fixed arbitrarily. Eateries are also accused of misleading customers about the legality of the service charge. The service charge is a transaction between the customer and the waiting or serving employees. It involves the staff offering the service of serving the customers and the latter, if happy, tipping the staff. When the tip is part of the bill in the form of a charge, it is called a service charge. Restaurants are not involved in this transaction at all, except by facilitating the voluntary collection of the service charge from customers instead of individual tipping. Why then is the Government inviting only the restaurants’ bodies for the talks and not the employees’ unions? Many customers are truly ignorant about service charge; many are still confused between service tax and service charge.

Many cannot be sure that the restaurant has calculated the service charge before charging GST and other taxes. The restaurants argue they have done their duty by mentioning the service charge on the menu card and the bill. For that matter, the Government is still not clear whether the service charge is taxable. The logic of the Goods and Services Tax is that all services are taxable. Even service charge, apart from service tax? The Government’s service charge guidelines of 2017 are only advisory. No legislation backs them. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, does not refer to tipping or service charge. Against this backdrop, what will the June 2 meeting achieve other than issuing “advice” to the restaurateurs’ body? In the meanwhile, who will protect the interests of the waiting staff? A tip attests to the waiter’s abilities. The best waiters corner the maximum tips. It is they who, apart from food and ambience, contribute to a restaurant’s popularity. The service charge, on the other hand, is a level playing field for all waiters. They receive an equal share of the charge irrespective of their efficiency levels. For all waiters, however, tips represent extra income that makes a major difference in their lives. There may be cases where the employers are keeping a portion of the service charge with themselves. Why not bring in legislation that protects the interests of these waiters by legalising tipping if the service charge system is so complicated? That is the real issue.

PICTALK



Tourists ride a horsecart as clouds hover in the sky at Dadar beach, in Mumbai

PTI

Warming warning

The unusual and unseasonal prolonged spells of high temperatures are here to stay, reveal studies

If alarm bells on deteriorating weather conditions in India are not ringing just about yet, it’s better to double-check the power supply. In a bad omen for our planet, it has been found that climate change made the extreme temperatures that baked north-west India and Pakistan in April and May over 100 times more likely and also increased the chances that such heat waves will occur more frequently by the end of the century. To put it in simpler terms, without accounting for climate change, a heat wave exceeding 2010’s average temperature could happen once in every 312 years, according to an attribution study published recently. Taking climate change into account, however, the probabilities increased to once in every 3.1 years in the current climate, and to once in every 1.15 years by the end of the century. Climate change is already making extreme weather events such as heatwaves more intense and more frequent, and will continue to do so in future. India and Pakistan’s heatwave is also extraordinary in its duration — extremely high temperatures started as early as in March.

In another surprising revelation, a study has found that, contrary to popular perception, biomass emissions (stubble burning and increased heating requirements) rather than bursting of fireworks drive the poor air quality in the Capital during the days immediately succeeding Diwali. The study, conducted by IIT-D researchers before, during and after Diwali, threw light on the pollution sources impacting the ambient air

quality in the Capital. The team discovered that biomass burning-related emissions rose steeply in the days following Diwali, with the average levels rising almost twice as compared to the pre-Diwali concentration. Also, the organic PM2.5 indicated a significant rise in both primary and secondary organic pollutants in the days following Diwali. Shockingly, the study discovered that the metal content in PM2.5 levels rose by 1,100 per cent ... and the fireworks alone accounted for 95 per cent of the metal PM2.5 during the Festival of Lights. However, the impact of the fireworks was noticed to plummet within around 12 hours after the day of the festival. What makes these studies important is the result which provides crucial insights into a topic of long-standing debate and concerns between air quality experts and the policymakers. Hopefully, this newfound knowledge will help alleviate the problems emanating from the extreme air pollution events in the Delhi-NCR areas.

Checkmate by the ‘Neutrals’ in Pak

No one in Pakistan has any doubt over the long, deep and dirty hands of the Pakistani military, called the ‘establishment’, in all sovereign decisions



BHOPINDER SINGH

The Pakistani Army’s complicated relationship with democracy started with its first native chief, Gen Ayub Khan. Ayub’s selection baptised the ‘institution’ with the political culture of out-of-turn nomination to the Chief of Pakistani Army Staff for posterity (Ayub was the junior-most Maj Gen in the Pakistani Army and his name was not even in the first consideration list). Soon the ambitious General took over the formal reins from the civilian politicians and promulgated the creatively deceptive concept of ‘Basic Democracy’ — a farcical system legitimising his iron-fisted dictatorship whilst providing a semblance of democracy. A similarly out-of-turn and ostensibly pliant General Zia-ul-Haq was to repeat the Ayub feat by deposing the civilian Government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The even more unhinged dictator in General Zia immediately promised a restoration to democracy after taking over, “My sole aim is to organise free and fair elections”, and within months shifted his stance to ‘retribution first, elections later’ — he stayed on for the next 11 years till he died in a mysterious plane crash. In 1999, yet another out-of-turn and supposedly ‘safe’ Gen Pervez Musharraf grabbed power in a *coup d’état* and promised ‘true democracy’ which he claimed wouldn’t be the ‘evil of sham democracy’ but he, too, hung around for another nine years! Much wisdom has dawned on the subsequent Pakistani Army Chiefs like Pervez Kayani, Raheel Sharif and, most recently, Qamar Javed Bajwa. All of them have preferred a more discreet, ‘democratic’ and highly effective way of running the show, without attracting international opprobrium. They have effectively ‘chosen’ civilian Governments as per their topical interests, extended their terms unilaterally to six-year terms (Pervez Kayani and Qamar Bajwa) or, like Gen Raheel Sharif, managed to twist



legislations towards securing their own interests in plum post-retirement roles (currently heading the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition).

No one in Pakistan has any doubts of the ‘establishment’s’ (Pakistani military’s) long and deep hands in all sovereign decisions. The once out-of-favour with the Pakistani military, Nawaz Sharif, had called the Generals as ‘*Khalai Mukhloog*’ (aliens or the invisible hand) as the ‘establishment’s’ hand in elevating Imran Khan to power in 2018 was undeniable. Obviously, as the beneficiary of the Pakistani military’s favour, Imran had dissed all murmurs about the military’s extra-constitutional abilities as he probably assumed that he’d be able to defang the Generals over time — he tried but failed miserably.

Ultimately, a desperately struggling Imran struggled to nuance the military’s claimed apolitical and neutral stand when the tables turned, and he had become an outsized nuisance for the Generals. Facing a no-confidence vote, Imran had invoked a stinging appeal for support by saying, “Allah did not allow us to be

ULTIMATELY, A DESPERATE IMRAN STRUGGLED TO NUANCE THE MILITARY’S CLAIMED APOITICAL AND NEUTRAL STAND WHEN THE TABLES TURNED, AND HE HAD BECOME AN OUTSIZED NUISANCE FOR THE GENERALS

neutrals as only animals are neutrals!” Clearly, the Generals were not amused and they remained ‘neutral’ to Imran’s extreme discomfort. Soon the dejected and ejected Imran was left lamenting, “Neutrals weren’t actually neutral.” Today, as the vainglorious Imran replots his journey back to political relevance, he is left hoping in sarcasm, “I also say to my Army that you said you are neutral, so now remain neutral.” Deep down, Imran would know better of the shift in tide and circumstances of his equation with these so-called ‘neutrals’.

Meanwhile, in a curious closing of the loop, it is the Sharif family (deposed and hounded out of Pakistan in the 1999 military *coup d’état*) that is singing hosannas of the Pakistani military’s ‘neutrality’!

Tellingly, no Pakistani Prime Minister has ever completed his/her tenure and almost all were tripped through extra-constitutional or judicial intervention that invariably could be traced back to the shadowy Generals at the Rawalpindi Military General Headquarters (GHQ). Only three Prime Ministers were able to go

beyond the four-year mark. The fissures in each case were triggered by political efforts to undermine or diminish the Pakistani Military — in Imran’s case, his grandstanding in delaying the transfer of his preferred spy chief ie, then DG of ISI, General Faiz Hameed, was tantamount to crossing the traditional ‘red lines’ of non-interference in certain matters. Imran could no longer be trusted to walk the line of the ‘establishment’s’ formula for Pakistani governance, and thus had to be removed.

Today, the Pakistani military has further denied any imminent threat to national security or the alarmist ‘international conspiracy’. Making it worse for Imran is the careful recalibration of the Sharif-Bhutto combine towards the Generals, and the deliberate assertion by the Pakistani military spokesperson that General Bajwa seeks no further extension == both moves deflate Imran’s expected aspersions and stridency against the ‘neutrals’. Somewhere along the line, Imran had managed to create a dangerous divide within the ironclad ‘establishment’ with purported factionalism between a General Bajwa and a possible faction led by Imran’s politically beholden/preferred, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. This was unprecedentedly and unexpectedly brazen interference into the insular affairs of the Pakistani military, even by the standards of the hugely egotistical Imran. For now, the possible succession of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed as the Pakistani military chief has been checkmated, as has been the possibilities of a civilian dispensation attempting to usurp the powers of the incorrigible Generals.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA MUST CONSOLIDATE GAINS

Sir — While India has joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), a forum to enhance cooperation among 13 countries in areas such as clean energy, supply chain resilience, decarbonisation, digital trade and infrastructure, it is seen as a counter to the RCEP, from which India has stayed away. At a time when every country is trying to secure its own economic interests, India must be wary that all IPEF members except India and the US are part of the China-backed trading agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and yet have chosen to be a part of the US-led initiative.

The dream of a win-win situation for all members can only be realised if this framework provides a level playing field. Otherwise, it will become only a tool for the assertion of America’s hegemony considering the fact that the latter’s previous initiatives like Blue Dot Network and Build Back Better Initiatives had made little headway towards changing the region’s infrastructural needs. India has a favourable balance of trade with the US, about \$33 billion of trade surplus from January to December 2021, the exports to America were valued at more than \$73 billion, way above imports worth around \$40 billion.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Sir — The Union Government’s decision to reduce the taxes on petrol and diesel to curtail the inflation rate is strategic in nature. The cost of movement of goods and people directly adds to the cost escalation of every product and it has come to a point where the “consumption” factor gets a hit and demand automatically goes for a nosedive under compulsion. If, therefore, leads to excess supply pushing the graph further down to hit the bottom of the line, drastically affecting the economy in the long run. This price reduction and correction process was supposed

America and its gun culture



Salvador Ramos, an 18-year-old gunman, opened fire at a Texas Robb Elementary School, killing at least 19 children, two adults (including a teacher) as he went from classroom to classroom. It was the deadliest school shooting since the 2012 massacre in Newtown, Conn. The US Constitution gives all its citizens the right to own a gun, and guns are as easy to find in stores across America as grocery shopping in any country. Hence no one

is surprised that how much untrue it is that America has launched a decisive fight against terrorism, and calls itself the ‘big brother’ of humanity. It may declare itself the champion of democracy in the world, but it has never been able to do anything to stop the prevailing gun culture there.

As a result, in the last five decades, more than 1.4 million people have died due to America’s gun culture. Interestingly, hours after the attack, US President Joe Biden who was in Japan appeared ready for a fight in an address to the nation. “As a nation, we have to ask when in God’s name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby?” Biden asked. “Why are we willing to live with this carnage?” It remains to be seen whether Biden will take specific action to control the powerful gun lobby.

Bidyut K Chatterjee | Faridabad

to be taken up much earlier by the Government.

Taxing corporations and companies drives them away to another country, resulting in more job losses, reduction in IT revenues, more NPAs from failed businesses, and so on. While the rich must be taxed more heavily than they are now, middle income groups need to pay up their fair share. The cess collected by the Union Government is used to pay back the loans borrowed by State Governments on account of the GST revenue deficit to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. When people didn’t have objection to collecting doles, they shouldn’t object to paying their taxes either.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

COURTS SHOULD DISMISS SUCH CLAIMS

Sir — The current situation of disgruntled communal elements trying to dig and explore mosques like Gyanvapi Masjid, saying Hindu temples existed under such structures, encouraged by politically-affiliated religious groups, has stemmed from the manner in which the Babri

Masjid was allowed to be demolished and the Supreme Court’s verdict to hand over the disputed site in Ayodhya to the Hindu claimants. It is also a blunder and flagrant violation of the law by the honourable courts by repeatedly entertaining such claims which are in contravention to the ‘Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991’.

It is an open secret that such moves are encouraged by the powers that be with a motive to reap political benefits. It is time the Supreme Court intervened, put an end to this menace and upheld the spirit of the Places of Worship Act and preserve communal peace. If this is not done urgently, India will have to lose its great name as a land of great values and heritage. Further, any more demolitions similar to that of the Babri Masjid would confirm that we too are a bunch of barbarians, like those who are said to have demolished other religious structures.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I’m absolutely sure the India-US friendship will continue to be a force for good.

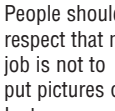


Prime Minister
— Narendra Modi



I’m committed to making the US-India partnership among the closest we have on earth.

US President
— Joe Biden



People should respect that my job is not to put pictures on Instagram... It’s to make good films.

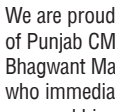


Actor
— Amitabh Bachchan



Thank you Roland Garros. Thank you, Mister Tennis. I love you (on retiring)!

French tennis professional
— Jo-Wilfried Tsonga



We are proud of Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann who immediately removed his Minister found involved in corruption.

AAP’s national convener
— Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

SOME BRANDS ARE AGGRESSIVELY CAPITALISING ON CANCEL CULTURE

A new public sphere in a network society



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY G REJIKUMAR

Understanding cancel culture and a new public sphere are becoming imminent. Constructing and deconstructing the suitability of such culture is largely contextualized and is heavily relied on the cultural context. It has invariably attempted to redefine Jürgen Habermas' public sphere, especially the future of the public sphere in a network society. In the digital arena, the argumentative discussions on the public sphere are increasingly relevant and yet problematic. There is a little denial that public sphere is subjected to dramatic change and re-change. Reasons and passion in the public sphere are many and it has been increasingly interdisciplinary in approach. Over the years, cancel culture is getting more apparent from comedy to cricket. A product of internet culture, it has spread its wings across the globe including India. Several celebrities have faced severe backlash for their alleged deeds or narratives which were deemed offensive and inappropriate in the public. The butterfly effect of social media is adding to the cancel culture. The dark holes of disinformation are becoming rampant. The pandemic situation across the globe had added to the woes of the public. On the other hand, it has different implications in brand communication. Some brands are aggressively capitalizing on this culture and using this trend as branding. Of course, this needs to be handled with utmost care. Whether cancel culture actually works or not, it remains debatable. Cancel cul-



ture has become a common phenomenon in our society. To be precise, cancel culture means a practice of withdrawing support for public figures or companies or even against an individual after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive. It is generally discussed in the social media in the form of group shaming.


Cancel culture attempts to enforce some degree of accountability on an individual even though it demands a series of arguments and deliberations on the topics or individuals or institutions. This culture surfaced across nations when the #MeToo movement gained traction in 2016 in the US where people resorted to social media to cancel or boycott public personalities of repute. Last year #BanNetflix was getting viral for alleged inappropriate content. Cancel culture as a medium of showing disbelief towards a person or any organization or thought is nothing new in India. In the year 2019, the former US President Obama appealed to discard the cancel culture. The actor and activist Jameela Jamil claimed that cancel culture as pointless and is a waste of time. The names of JK Rowling and Harry Potter rose to some extent. Cancel culture has shared some common space in the pandemic and online trolling. According to reports, online hate speech rose 20% during the pandemic. However, it was often normalized in most of the circumstances.

Cancel culture has its own implications on brands and brand communication. The trolling in the Internet has become a common phenomenon. It has caused a stir in the recent times. One of the renowned jewelry apps had to face the wrath of the consumers for one of their promotional advertisements. A popular TV show anchor is being alleged trolled for not providing promotional space for a film. Cancel culture has encroached into the space of marketing and advertising. Usually, brands are politically non-partisans. However, in a polarised world, brands are slowly taking political patronage. Boycotting has become a mainstream consumer reaction. Consumers are increasingly demanding the brands to take a stand on any social or political issue. Consumers are also aware of the fact that several brands use societal issues as a marketing ploy to sell more of their product. Cancel culture is thus negotiating its space in the public sphere.

(Chakraborty is an Assistant Professor and teaches at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow. Rejikumar is working as a professor at Department of Management, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kochi)

Messed up post-COVID job statistics in India

MGNREGA job demand was less in 2021-22, meaning people who migrated to villages after COVID got their jobs back in urban areas



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) says that though the GDP has bounced back post-Covid, its biggest impact has been on employment. Employment reached only 40.18 crores in 2021-22 as against 40.89 crores in 2019-20. Unemployment which was 3.29 crore in 2019-20 reached 3.33 crore in 2021-22 — an increase of only 4 lakhs.

The CMIE concludes that though the decrease in employment has been nearly 7 million i.e. 70 lakh, the increase of unemployment is only 4 lakh, indicating that the people who got unemployed during this period have given up hope of employment and they are now out of the race for employment.

It's notable that for some time, due to some reasons, the employment related data in the

country is not being published by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). It is natural that in the absence of official figures, the figures of institutions like CMIE get space in the media. However, their credibility is questionable.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) guarantees at least 100 days of employment in every financial year to every rural unemployed. So, when people are unemployed, they are entitled to get 100 days of employment under MGNREGA. In such a situation, even if a person is getting casual employment anywhere and if he remains unemployed for 100 or less days, then he can seek employment under 'MGNREGA'.

This logically means that if

merely 5 crores before the lockdown.

Interestingly, the period (2021-22) for which the CMIE report is talking about a rise in unemployment, demand for MGNREGA employment was actually 6.55 percent less than the previous year. That is, it can be said that during the Corona period, people who had migrated to the villages had got employment back in the urban areas. In this sequence, if we look at the figures of April 2022, it is found that in April 2021, 2.62 crore people had sought work under 'MGNREGA', whereas in April 2022, only 2.33 crore people sought work under MGNREGA, that is, a decline of 11.15 percent. Analysts believe that the fall in demand for employment under MGNREGA is due to increased employ-

ment in urban areas. This figure is in stark contrast to the report published by CMIE, which says that people have moved out of the labour force, giving up the hope of employment due to the loss of employment opportunities. Instead of giving its own value judgement about unemployment, CMIE should have taken note of the MGNREGA figures to arrive at a conclusion.

The CMIE report states that even if 7.5 percent GDP growth is achieved in 2022-23, the unemployment rate will increase rather than going down. For this they talk of employment elasticity with respect to GDP. But we have to understand that the recovery after Covid in the economy is not a normal recovery. This recovery accompanies some

fundamental changes in the Indian economy. All indicators of the economy are pointing towards these changes.

Significantly, in the last quarter of the last financial year (2021-22), the monthly average of GST collection was 1.42 lakh crore. The unprecedented GST collection of ₹1.68 lakh crore in the first month of this financial year (April 2022), is definitely pointing towards an upsurge in the economy. In March 2022, 7.7 crore e-way bills were generated, 13 per cent more than 6.8 crore e-way bills generated in February 2022. This clearly shows a sharp recovery in the economy.

Significantly, due to the shortage of semiconductors in the country, many of our industries including automobile, electronics, telecom have been

affected. Despite that, rising GST revenue is indicating an uptick in manufacturing in the economy. It is true that imports have also increased during this period, due to which the revenue of GST has increased, but where the revenue of GST has reached ₹1.68 lakh crore, the share of import GST in this revenue is ₹36705 crore, which is greater than import GST of March 2021 by 5608 crores only. It's notable that import GST in March 2021 was ₹31097 crore. This implies that domestic businesses have definitely grown during this period, resulting into this huge increase in GST.

The Government should soon publish robust official NSSO data and present the correct picture of employment in the country.



Pak oppression stoking Baloch 'azadi' fires

Balochs say the CPRC ignores them and is Punjab-centric. The Gwadar-Karachi route goes through developed areas of Punjab and Sind while bypassing Balochistan districts



PAKISTAN'S MAJOR FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY FLAW HAS PRIMARILY BEEN AN ANTI-INDIA APPROACH. VIEWING THE MUSHROOMING OF JIHADIST ORGANISATION FROM THIS LENS, IT HAS ONLY AIMED TO RECEIVE AID FROM EITHER OF THE POWERS WHILE TRYING TO DESTABILISE INDIA

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



Balochistan is Pakistan's biggest occupied province, making about 44% of the country's total land area. With a coastline of 770 kilometres, Balochistan also shares borders with Iran and Afghanistan, and 40% of the world's oil travels via Gwadar port, located near the opening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Pakistan's display of unified nationalism is met with ethno-nationalist opposition from Balochs, Pashtuns and Sindhis, who have been protesting against their political and economic marginalisation since the formation of Pakistan. The Punjab-centric planning and implementation of projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have worsened the conflict between the state and the Azadi-seeking forces. A takeover of Gwadar port and subsequent exclusion of the Baloch firms, workers and fishermen from Gwadar-linked CPEC projects, and various developmental policies apart from exploiting its natural resources have exacerbated pre-existing secessionist sentiments in Balochistan. Furthermore, the Eastern route or alignment of the Chinese Project connects Gwadar and Karachi through the developed portions of Punjab and Sind while leaving behind several districts of Balochistan. The Baloch mainstream parties have thus opposed the project entirely and have called for complete freedom.

Further, political discrimination against the Shia Hazara community in Quetta has also been a human rights issue. Shia Hazaras are considered Iranian spies by Sunni sectarians. Restrictive practices in Rawalpindi are evident in the massacre of Shia Hazaras and their lack of mention in the national media. Nevertheless, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) was the only region to achieve liberation from all forms of tyranny.

Today, the unification of various Baloch rebel groups- Baloch Republican Army (BRA), United Baloch Army, Baloch Raji Ajoit Sangar (BRAS) to form a Baloch National Army (BNA) or the 'Azadi brigade' might result in the establishment of a Baloch territory carved out from Pakistan. If Rawalpindi increases its atrocities, the Balochs might retaliate further by calling all the Balochs in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan to unite and form a 'Greater Balochistan'. The recent suicide bombing of Shari Baloch calls for the attention of the intensification of the freedom struggle in Baluchistan. Several disgruntled Pakistani factions have hailed Shari Baloch's decision to oppose the CPEC and Rawalpindi. On social media sites like Twitter, Sindhi separatists have expressed their admiration for her bravery. It is an indication that the Baloch National Army would expand to include Sindhi factions in the future.

Until now, the Baloch rebel groups' classic modus operandi used improvised explosive devices and hit-and-run attacks apart from the protests. Suicide bombing by Shari Baloch has commonalities with the

sophisticated nature of the attacks carried out by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates. The TTP aims to establish an Islamic Emirate of Pakistan, very similar to what the Taliban did in Afghanistan. TTP recruits are primarily from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and thus it has sympathies with the BLA. However, a catch is that the TTP swears its allegiance to the Afghan Taliban and is backed by Al Qaeda. This makes TTP a dicey player between BLA and the Pakistani forces.

Interestingly, is it possible that TTP's leader Noor Wali Mehsud has allied with the Baloch rebels? Till now, independent acts have been carried out by TTP (North-West of Pakistan) and BLA (South of Pakistan). However, that might not be the case any longer. From a Pakistani perspective, the Afghan Taliban's takeover might have driven out the US and posed severe issues for its allies, yet, the Taliban's aspirations and capabilities to function independently of Rawalpindi cannot be ruled out. There have been statements from the Taliban "ministers" seeking an independent role in its 'national' and regional affairs. Moreover, the Taliban might have the revenge objectives of post 9/11 developments wherein Pakistan cleverly helped the U.S. crush the Taliban. One might assume that the Taliban has been going slow to oppress TTP's rearming and a resurgence for the reasons mentioned above, apart from forging alliances with Baloch rebels.

If one can recall, in the early 2010s, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Balochistan (TTB) emerged on TTP lines. TTB aspired for the complete exit of foreigners from Baluchistan apart from fighting the Pakistani security forces and law enforcement agencies to convert Pakistan into a battlefield. The organisation recruited indigenous fighting units and foreign fighters primarily of the Afghan-Pashtun tribes. However, the Baloch are traditionalists and not fundamentalists, and hence the assumptions and possibilities of TTP and BLA finding convergences for their operational synergies is a strong possibility. The 'Azadi Brigade' can also be joined by the ISKP (Islamic State - Khorasan Province), proving further detrimental to Pakistan's interests.

Although the intensity and the number of attacks against the Pakistani military establishments increased after the US exit from Afghanistan, the recent extension of the ceasefire between TTP and Pakistan, mediated through the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, reminds us of 2020 when in a surprising move the truce and subsequent mergers between TTP with its splinter groups and rivals moderated by the Al-Qaida. Important groups which merged with TTP were a faction of the sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and the splinter groups of TTP- Hakimullah Mehsud faction, Jama'atul-Ahrar (JuA), and its sub-splinter Hizbul-Ahrar (HuA). The mergers gave a predominant position to the TTP, which equalled the Afghan Taliban's position in Kabul. Despite ideological and strategic divergences, the ceasefire raises essential questions. Rawalpindi might be trying to establish another regional Sunni proxy terror alliance in Balochistan with Jaish ul-Adl, first to suppress the Baloch movement and second to revive the Iranian Jundullah organisation while creating instability in Sistan and Balochistan province. Pakistan would want the

'destructive forces' to be diverted elsewhere.

Whether the BLA fights along with the TTP or Pakistan and finally succeeds in creating instabilities, the Chinese CPEC is bound to be in the doldrums for violence plays an essential role in the region. A pertinent question is whether Pakistan is playing the same game with China as it played with the U.S. in Afghanistan? By attracting the Chinese money and infrastructure to Balochistan and Iran; encouraging Iran to remain isolated while simultaneously attempting to bring the extremist group under a single umbrella to launch offensive actions against Baloch citizens, groups, as well as Iranian Baluchistan, does it not hint at the same methodology as it adopted in the last decade for ousting the US? If the violence between factions intensifies, the Chinese Projects and its citizens will be affected. In an extreme case, would not the Chinese be forced to abandon their projects the same way the U.S. and the NATO forces were forced to leave their airbases?

Pakistan's major foreign and security policy flaw has primarily been an anti-India approach. Viewing the mushrooming of the Jihadist organisation from this lens, it has only aimed to receive aid from either of the powers while simultaneously trying to destabilise India. Soon, Islamabad would be a victim of its homegrown terror and might enlist as a nation that dug its own grave. Joseph Nye once stated, "Important political leaders never just followed their interests - they were concerned about the interests of their people". Islamabad has never produced a leader of that kind. With more chaos, terror, external loans and inflation, it would not be wrong to predict that 'Azad Balochistan' would see the light of the day very soon.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

UTTAR PRADESH IS ON TOP IF WE LOOK AT THE STATISTICS ON CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN. THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS NOT SERIOUS. — SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV



ANY KIND OF CRIME IS UNFORGIVABLE. THE GOVT IS TAKING STRICT ACTION... ESPECIALLY THOSE COMMITTING CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN. — CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH



MONEY MATTERS

Greta Electric Scooters launches new model

Greta Electric Scooters on Wednesday launched a new model Greta Harper ZX Series-I with a base price of Rs 41,999 (ex-showroom) without battery. Battery and charger are sold separately and customers can choose these in line with their usage to fit the scooter for the best value, the company said in a statement. For the Greta Harper ZX Series-I, the company is offering four battery options starting from the 'V2 48v-24Ah' for 60 km per charge priced at Rs 17,000 to Rs 20,000 to 'V3+60v-30Ah' for 100 km per charge tagged at Rs 27,000 to Rs 31,000. "Depending on the customer's choice, the price of the charger would range from Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000," it said. The company said its new electric scooter can now be booked with a down payment of Rs 2,000 and deliveries will be made within 45-75 days as per the booking sequence. The electric scooter comes with three riding modes -- Eco, City and Turbo Mode.



PFC Q4 profit rises nearly 10 pc to Rs 4,295 crore

State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) on Wednesday posted a nearly 10 per cent rise in the consolidated net profit at Rs 4,295.90 crore in the March quarter mainly on the back of higher revenues. The consolidated net profit of the company was at Rs 3,906.05 crore in the year-ago period, a BSE filing showed. Total income in the quarter rose to Rs 18,873.55 crore from Rs 18,155.14 crore in the same period a year ago. The consolidated net profit in the fiscal year 2021-22 also rose to Rs 18,768.21 crore from Rs 15,716.20 crore in 2020-21. Total income in the fiscal year increased to Rs 76,344.92 crore from Rs 71,700.67 crore in 2020-21. The company's board has recommended a dividend of Rs 1.25 per equity share with face value of Rs 10 each for fiscal year 2021-22. This is in addition to interim dividends of Rs 10.75 per share for 2021-22, which is already paid by the company.



Coal India Q4 net profit rises 46 pc to Rs 6,693 crore

State-owned CIL on Wednesday posted a 45.9 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 6,692.94 crore for the quarter ended March, 2022 on the back of higher revenue from operations. The company's consolidated net profit was at Rs 4,586.78 crore in the year-ago period, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a BSE filing. The consolidated revenue from operations of CIL in the January-March period increased to Rs 32,706.77 crore in FY22 from Rs 26,700.14 crore in the year-ago period. The total expenses of the company during the period increased to Rs 25,161.20 crore compared to Rs 21,515.60 crore in the year-ago period. CIL's production for the quarter ended March 31, 2022 increased to 209 million tonnes over 203.42 million tonnes in the corresponding quarter of previous fiscal. The company's offtake of fossil fuel during January-March quarter also went up to 180.25 MT, as against 164.89 MT in the corresponding quarter of previous fiscal.



WTO's fisheries pact: India seeks space for equitable growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will agree to the WTO's proposed agreement on fisheries subsidies provided the deal is equitable and does not lock member countries into a disadvantageous position in perpetuity, government sources said on Wednesday. Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are negotiating the agreement with the objective of curbing harmful subsidies to promote sustainable fishing. Hectic parleys are going on in Geneva to bridge differences on the proposal to reach an agreement by the 12th ministerial conference, starting from June 12. "India is committed to concluding the negotiations so long as it provides space for equitable growth and freedom in developing fishing capacities for the future



without locking members into disadvantageous arrangements in perpetuity," sources said. However, they added that convergence is happening in areas of difference and India is actively involved in that process. "We hope that there can be an outcome because everybody has put in a lot of effort and we hope that something will emerge which will be an outcome and which will be a

win-win for everybody," one of the sources said. The chair of the negotiations, Ambassador Santiago Wills of Colombia, has called a week-long meeting - Fish Decision Week - of member countries from May 30 to resolve the issues. India has highlighted that developing countries not engaged in distant water fishing should be exempted from overfishing subsidy prohibitions for at least 25

Hectic parleys are going on in Geneva to bridge differences on the proposal to reach an agreement by the 12th ministerial conference, starting from June 12.

years as the sector is still at a nascent stage. The source said that India is keen to finalize the fisheries agreement in the upcoming MC-12 because irrational subsidies and overfishing by many countries are hurting Indian fishermen and their livelihood.

Info Edge arm joins US\$ 93 million funding round of US-based WSO2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Info Edge, owner of Naukri.com, has participated in a USD 93 million (about Rs 720 crore) Series E funding round of US-based IT firm WSO2 through its subsidiary RedStart Labs. Info Edge joins lead investor Goldman Sachs Asset Management Private Credit (Goldman Sachs), which completed the first tranche of the Series E in November 2021. Info Edge, through its RedStart subsidiary, will contribute strategically to WSO2's accelerated business expansion across India, the statement said. Over 35 enterprises in India, including government agencies and financial services, communications, healthcare and technology firms, use products and solutions of WSO2, according to the statement.

Auction of mineral blocks stabilised in country; 186 mines put on sale

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday said the auction of mineral blocks has stabilised in the country as 186 mines have been put on sale so far. Of the 186 mineral blocks, 28 were auctioned in the last two months and 46 were successfully sold in FY22, Mines Joint Secretary Veena Kumari Dermal said. "...186 to be precise blocks are allocated through auction. I am very happy to say that out of this, 46 (mineral blocks) were (auctioned) last year and this financial year in the first two months we have completed auction of 28 blocks. So, auction is stabilised in the country," she said during 'India Sweden Mining Day' here. The state governments, she said, are getting a very good share of revenue from the auctions and stressed that those states which were early birds in the whole race were really happy. The Indian mining sector is



vibrant, dynamic and has very good players, she said, and expressed hope that "the Swedish companies will also take part." Swedish companies, she said, are providing technological and automation support to the Indian mining industry. "Hope today's meeting will help us to kick-start the cooperation and take it forward," she added. Private participation in exploration is being encouraged and a very good legislative provision is made to encourage private participation in exploration also, the joint secretary said. Swedish Ambassador to India Klas Molin said, "India

Sweden Mining Day is precisely to look at opportunities for cooperation. We have all major companies who have long long experiences of working in mining in Sweden...and in India here today." And as we speak there's a panel going on collaboration, opportunities etc. So the day is really meant to look at those opportunities and I am sure lots of tie up and potential collaboration will follow." The mines ministry had earlier said that that the amendment in mineral auction rules will encourage competition that will ensure more participation in sale of blocks.

NHPC profit rises 7 pc to Rs 515 cr in Mar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned NHPC on Wednesday posted an almost seven per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 515.90 crore in the March 2022 quarter. The company had reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 482.35 crore in the quarter ended March 2021, a BSE filing showed. Total income in the quarter stood at Rs 2,026.62 crore against Rs 2,100.12 core a year ago. The consolidated net profit in fiscal 2021-22 rose to Rs 3,774.33 crore from Rs 3,599.88 crore in 2020-21. Total income in 2021-22 stood at Rs 10,152.84 compared to Rs 10,710.86 crore in 2020-21. The Board has recommended a final dividend of 5 per cent per equity share of



the face value of Rs 10 (Rs 0.50 per equity share) for the FY 2021-22, subject to the approval of shareholders in the ensuing annual general meeting. This is in addition to the interim dividend of Rs 1.31 per equity share for the FY 2021-22 paid in March 2022. The board also approved a proposal for raising debt up to

Rs 6,300 crore during 2022-23 through the issuance of secured/ unsecured, redeemable, taxable, non-cumulative non-convertible taxable Corporate Bonds in one or more series/tranches on a private placement basis and/or raising of term loans/external commercial borrowings (ECB) in suitable tranches.

Domestic solar capacity installations rise 50 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 3 gigawatt (GW) of solar energy capacity was installed in India in January-March 2022, Mercom India said on Wednesday. The installation was 50 per cent higher than the 2 GW added in the same period of 2021, the research firm said in a report. "India added over 3 GW of solar capacity in Q1 (January-March) 2022, a 21 per cent rise compared to 2.6 GW in Q4 2021. On a year-on-year basis, installations rose by 50 per cent compared to the 2 GW added in Q1 2021," the report titled 'Q1 2022 India Solar Market Update by Mercom India Research' said. During Q1 2022, 2.7 GW of large-scale solar was installed, registering a quarter-over-quarter (q-o-q) increase of 23 per cent and a 53 per cent rise on a



year-on-year basis. Large-scale solar accounted for 85 per cent of the installations, and rooftop accounted for the remaining 15 per cent during the reporting period. India's cumulative installed solar capacity now stands at 52 GW. The country has a utility-scale projects development pipeline of over 54 GW. Another 33 GW of projects tendered are awaiting auction. "...A little push from the gov-

ernment can help India surpass the 60 GW large-scale solar installation target set for 2022, which will be a great achievement," said Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group. Rajasthan became the first state to cross 10 GW of cumulative large-scale solar PV installations, with over 10 GW installed as of March 2022, and accounts for 24 per cent of the total installations in the country.

In Q1 2022, Rajasthan and Gujarat were the top states for solar, accounting for 52 per cent and 18 per cent of installations, respectively, followed by Karnataka (6 per cent). The report further said that tender activity for solar projects in Q1 2022 declined by about 18 per cent q-o-q from nearly 6 GW in Q4 2021. "With BCD (basic customs duty) applicable from April 1, 2022, on solar cells (25 per cent) and modules (40 per cent), the January-March quarter saw a significant increase in imports of the components," it said. In Q1 2022, developers procured almost 10 GW of solar modules and stockpiled them ahead of the advent of BCD, which took effect on April 1, as they wanted to avoid paying the additional duty and claim the amount later due to the cumbersome regulatory process.

Repos Energy raises Rs 56 crore from Ratan Tata, others

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Pune-based energy distribution startup Repos Energy on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 56 crore from Tata Sons Chairman Emeritus Ratan Tata and other investors. The fresh capital as part of pre-series A funding round is in combination of equity and debt, the company said. Repos Energy, however, did not disclose the identity of the other investors. This is the second round of investment by Ratan Tata in the company. Repos said it plans to use the funds in building its product line, expansion into different geographies in the country as well as team building.

Auction of Golden Life Agro India, Sunshine Agro infra on Jun 16

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To recover investors' money, Sebi on Wednesday said it will auction a total of five properties of Golden Life Agro India Ltd and Sunshine Agro Infra Ltd for a reserve price of Rs 11.5 crore on June 16. The two companies raised funds from investors without complying with regulatory norms. The properties put on the block include land parcels and a double storied building situated across West Bengal, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice. Inviting bids for the sale of recovery proceedings against Golden Life Agro India and Sunshine Agro Infra and their directors, Sebi said auction of the properties will be conducted through online mode on June 16, 2022 during 10.30 am to 11.30 am. Out of the five properties being put on the block, three

belong to Golden Life Agro India and remaining two relate to Sunshine Agro Infra. Total reserve price of these properties is pegged at Rs 11.53 crore, as per the notice. Quikr Realty has been appointed as the e-auction service provider. The regulator said the bidders should make their own independent enquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of properties put on auction and claims, among others, prior to submitting their bids. "The properties are being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to Sebi. Sebi shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/rights/dues, etc," the notice said. Sebi had earlier attached some of their properties after directives asking them to refund investors' money along with interest did not materialise.



Benchmarks retreat for 3rd day as volatility continues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex and Nifty reversed initial gains to close in the red for the third day running on Wednesday as investors continued to offload IT, consumption and metal stocks despite a largely positive trend overseas. Unabated foreign fund outflows and rising crude oil prices put further pressure on markets. Reversing course after a firm start, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 303.35 points or 0.56 per cent lower at 53,749.26. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty declined 99.35 points or 0.62 per cent to end at 16,025.80. Asian Paints was the top loser in the Sensex pack, plunging 8.04 per cent, followed by TCS, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, HCL Tech and SBI. In contrast, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, HDFC, Nestle India, ICICI Bank and ITC were among the major gainers, spurring as much as 3.84 per cent. "Domestic indices wavered tracking mixed sentiments from the global markets as investors assessed the possibility of a recession in the US followed by the Fed policy tightening.

NALCO Q4 profit rises to Rs 1,025 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Aluminium Company Ltd (NALCO) on Wednesday reported a 9.5 per cent rise in consolidated profit at Rs 1,025.46 crore for the quarter ended March 2022 on the back of higher income. The company had reported consolidated profit of Rs 935.74 crore in the year-ago period, NALCO said in a regulatory filing. The company's consolidated income during the January-March period increased to Rs

4,492.10 crore as against Rs 2,874.47 crore a year ago, the filing said. The total expenses of the company on the consolidated basis rose to Rs 3,124.04 crore. It stood at Rs 2,036.25 crore in the preceding year. NALCO -- a navratna CPSE -- has been operating its captive Panchpatmali bauxite mines for the pit head alumina refinery at Damanjodi, in the district of Koraput in Odisha and aluminium smelter and captive power plant at Angul.

1,400 bankers vie for global honours

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Nearly 1,400 bankers working in India for a multinational lender are competing for top honours by adopting sustainable lifestyle practices in their daily routine as part of a global contest. Bank of America has asked its employees across the world to opt for sustainable choices of living. The bank will choose the best team from a geography and business func-

tion perspective, apart from recognising the efforts taken by individual employees. "Everything we do as individuals to protect our environment will have a greater collective impact as we strive to reach our goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050," the bank's president, international, Bernie Mensah, said while launching the six-week sustainable living challenge in April.

Employees have to register on a portal and log in their sustainable activities regularly to earn points. The points of employees in a particular country and line of business are aggregated to choose the winning teams on both fronts. The winning teams will get to donate USD 10,000 to an environmental charity of their choice at the end of the challenge, which is on till June 3, Mensah said.

Paper exports jump 80 pc to Rs 13,963 cr in FY22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exports of paper and paperboard from India jumped nearly 80 per cent in FY 2021-22, touching a record Rs 13,963 crore, according to industry body IPMA. The export growth has straddled across different grades of paper, said a statement from Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) while citing data released by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S). "In value terms, exports of coated paper and paperboard increased by 100 per cent, uncoated writing and printing paper by 98 per cent, tissue paper by 75 per cent and kraft paper by 37 per cent," said IPMA.



Paper exports from India have been on an uptrend since the last five years. India is exporting papers to - UAE, China, Saudi Arabia,

Bangladesh, Vietnam and Sri Lanka." In volume terms, paper exports from India have gone up four times from 0.66 million tonnes in FY17 to 2.85 million

tonnes in FY22. Similarly in value terms, the figures for corresponding years rose from Rs 3,041 crore to Rs 13,963 crore," it said.

"Exports have been rising in the last few years due to capacity expansion and technological upgradation undertaken by Indian paper mills, leading to better product quality which has found wider acceptance globally," said Rohit Pandit, Secretary IPMA. In the last five to seven years, paper mills in India have invested over Rs 25,000 crore to create new capacities and induction of clean and green technologies, he said. "Domestic paper companies, in recent years, have also intensified their marketing efforts globally and invested in market development in foreign countries," Pandit added. In the last two financial years, India has become a net exporter of paper in volume terms.

Wanted Maverick to feel like Top Gun sequel and also tell our own story: Joseph Kosinski

Filmmaker Joseph Kosinski has vivid memories of Tom Cruise's 1986 hit *Top Gun*, and when he got the opportunity to direct its sequel thirty years later, the director says he wanted to ensure that the film felt like a worthy follow-up to the original. The sequel, titled *Top Gun: Maverick*, is now ready for release after being delayed by two years due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The much-awaited follow-up brings back Cruise as Pete Maverick Mitchell, the suave and daring US Navy aviator, alongside newcomers like Miles Teller, Jennifer Connelly and Jon Hamm.

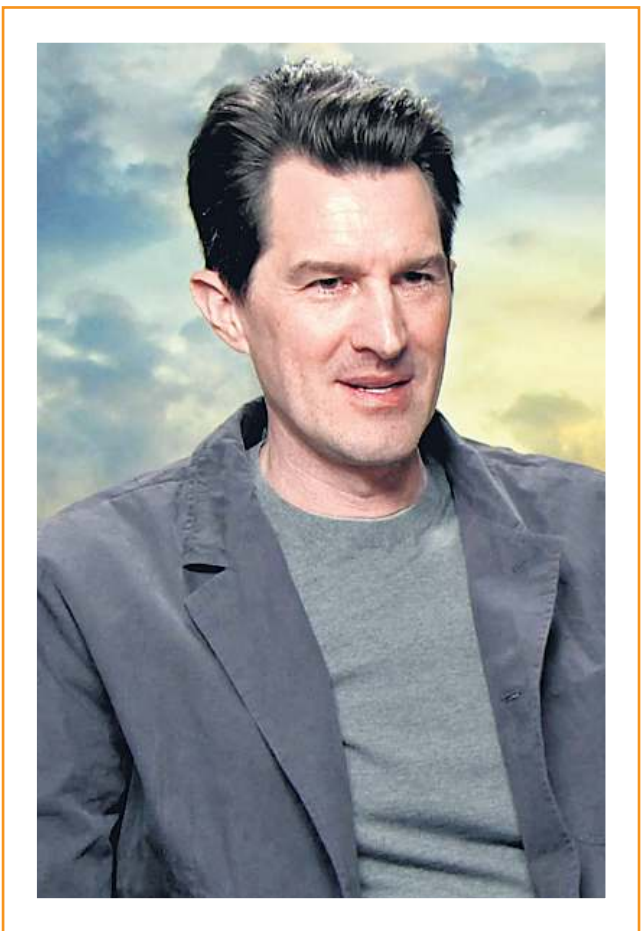
Kosinski, who had earlier collaborated with Cruise for 2013 movie *Oblivion*, said he tried to approach the sequel in a way that honours the original's legacy.

"The approach is a little different because *Top Gun* is such an iconic film that was embraced by everyone when it came out. It was the number one film in 1986. The concept of the film, the concept of a wing man is something that's just kind of pervaded our culture."

"The soundtrack was played endlessly on the radio that summer and I remember this as a 12 year old hearing it. So, it's different stepping into something that's so well-known and beloved. I wanted to make sure that this film felt like it was a *Top Gun* sequel," the 48-year-old director told PTTI in a Zoom interview.

Kosinski also wanted Maverick to come across as its own beast, said the filmmaker.

"I wanted to make it feel like it was in the world of *Top Gun*, but at the same time, figure out ways to make it our own, tell our own story and push the cinematography as much as the first film did. Now, audiences will decide if



we have achieved that."

Maverick is set over 30 years after the events of *Top Gun* and sees Maverick training a group of *Top Gun* graduates, including Rooster, the son of his late wingman Goose, for a specialized mission.

The action film, like the original, makes no mention of the enemy force, which is something that Kosinski said is in line with the first film.

Kosinski said, "Maverick deals with themes that are universal in nature and that's why there's no name or face on our enemy."

"This is a film about friend-

ship and sacrifice. It's about this team that comes together to keep the world safe. That was very much by design. And because the themes of this film are so universal, I don't think it makes any difference where you're from," he added.

Top Gun: Maverick is produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, Tom Cruise, Christopher McQuarrie and David Ellison.

Bruckheimer, who had also produced the original, said a sequel to *Top Gun* was always on the agenda but the team was not able to zero in on the story.

"We always wanted to make a sequel, we just had to come

up with the right story and we never quite did. Joe came up with a story that Tom embraced and we embraced. That's how it all got going about four or five years ago.

So it takes a while, but we finally got there and now the exciting part is to watch the audience and enjoy this film the way we enjoyed making it," the 78-year-old producer said.

The murmurs about a sequel first started in 2010 when both Bruckheimer and Tony Scott, who directed the 1986 movie, were in talks with studio Paramount Pictures for the project, which would bring Cruise back as Maverick.

But the project, which was in its nascent stage, suffered a setback as Scott died in 2012. It was only five years later that Kosinski came aboard the sequel as a writer and director.

Bruckheimer said Scott's vision for the sequel dealt with the drone technology vs the actual US pilots.

"Tony definitely was involved early on. In fact, the weekend when he unfortunately passed away, we were on a scouting trip to Fallon, Utah to meet with all the *Top Gun* pilots. He had a little different approach. He had drone technology in there and the combination of the drones and the actual pilots, and who is going to win out."

So he was looking at it from a little bit different perspective. And then Joe came in years later and pitched the new version."

Top Gun: Maverick also features Glen Powell, Lewis Pullman, Charles Parnell, Bashir Salahuddin, Monica Barbaro, Jay Ellis, Danny Ramirez, Greg Tarzan Davis with Ed Harris and Val Kilmer.

The Paramount Pictures movie is exclusively distributed in India by Viacom18 Studios and will release in theatres on May 27.

what's brewing?

Hansal Mehta marries Safeena Husain in 'impromptu and unplanned' ceremony

Filmmaker Hansal Mehta on Wednesday said he has tied the knot with longtime partner Safeena Husain in an intimate ceremony in San Francisco, US.

The 54-year-old filmmaker, known for films such as *Shahid*, *Aligarh*, *Omerta* (2018) and series *Scam 1992*, shared the news of his marriage to Husain on his social media handles.

"So after 17 years, two children, watching our sons growing up and chasing our respective dreams we decided to get hitched. As always in life this was also impromptu and unplanned."

Our vows however were truthful and but for this little ceremony they would never have been said. Ultimately love prevails over all else. And it has," Mehta wrote, alongside a series of pictures from the wedding ceremony, which was held at San Francisco's Taj Campton Place.

Safeena Husain, daughter of late actor Yusuf Husain, is a social worker and the founder of girl education organisation Educate Girls. The couple are parents to two daughters; Kimaya and



Rehana. Congratulatory messages poured in from Mehta's industry friends including filmmakers Vishal Bhardwaj, Anubhav Sinha, actors Rajkummar Rao, Manoj Bajpayee and Pratik Gandhi.

Mehta's frequent collaborator Rao congratulated the couple and commented on the director's post, "Congratulations my fav couple. You guys complete each other. I love you both."

Bhardwaj simply wrote, Lovely.

Mubarakaan.

"Best wishes and congratulations to both of you!! @mehta-hansal," Bajpayee, who worked with Mehta on *Aligarh*, posted.

Scam 1992 star Gandhi said, "This is lovely. Well it's inspiring and pressurising too. @bhamin-ioza is already giving me hard looks." Mehta was previously married to Sunita Mehta. They share two sons; Jay, who is also a director, and Pallava.

Elnaaz Norouzi to perform dance number in Jug Jugg Jeeyo

Actress Elnaaz Norouzi will be seen performing a dance number in the multi-starrer *Jug Jugg Jeeyo*.

She will feature in an item song in the movie. The song is said to be an essential part of the narrative and comes at a crucial point in the film.

Commenting on the same, the actress, who is a part of the second season

of the Emmy-winning show *Tehran*, said, "This song is a very important part of the film. Both Anil sir and Varun bring in great energy, the shoot was a lot of fun and the song is damn groovy. I'm very proud to be a part of a dharna production."

The recently released trailer of the film showed the glimpses of the song where Elnaaz is dancing with Anil Kapoor and Varun

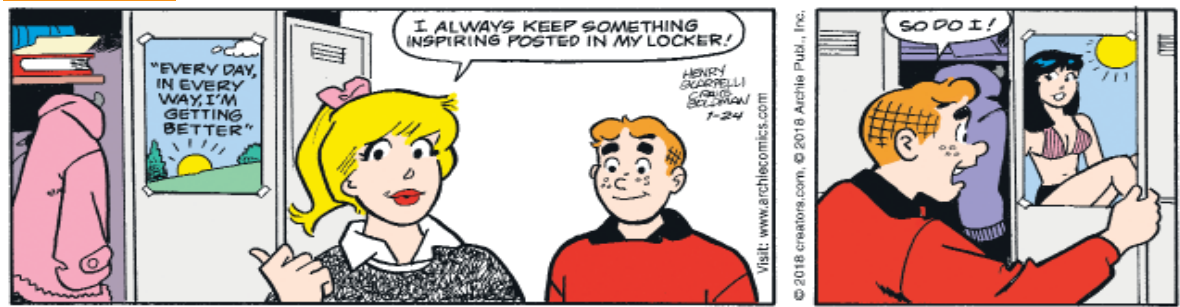
Dhawan.

Jug Jugg Jeeyo, produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions also stars Kiara Advani, Neetu Kapoor, Maniesh Paul and Prajakta Koli. The film, directed by Raj Mehta who has earlier directed *Good Newwz*, will debut in theatres on June 24.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



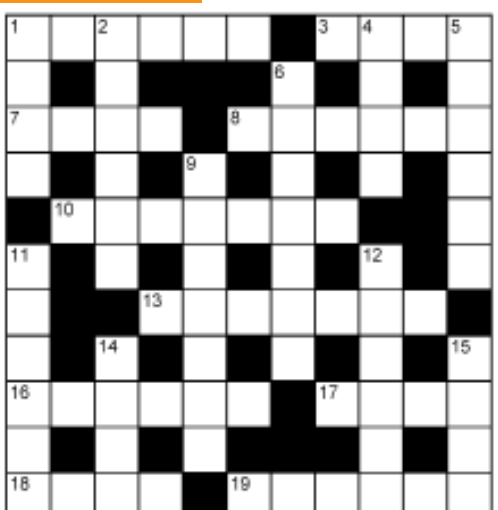
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

- Thief
- Tidy your hair with this
- Young woman
- A dairy product
- To turn round and round
- Gleam
- Truthful
- Bitter-tasting
- Thick card
- Deafened

DOWN

- Great anger
- A round wooden container with flat ends
- Above

5 A light wind
6 Trembles with cold
9 Find north with this
11 Book writer
12 Nearly
14 Cut something with scissors
15 This metal goes rusty

SOLUTION:

R	E	C	T	A	N	G	L	E
A	P	R	I	L	E	G	R	O
N	O	K	H	S	A	T	E	
I	C	S						
Q	U	I	V	E	R			
U	N							
E	L	E	C	T				
A	R	M	S					
A	S	S	E	M	B	L	E	D

Aashika Sripathi, COO and founder of Apartment Society Management and Accounting, is on a mission to make residential societies become self-sustaining and self-sufficient. But how? *The Pioneer* gets in touch with Aashika to know more about it

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Cities are growing and so is the opportunity to make them sustainable in any case. A prime example was when, for the fifth consecutive time, Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport won the silver award in the Airports Council International's Green Airports Recognition Programme for its efficient carbon management process. So you see? These days, this phenomenon is also spreading at the residential communities. If you see a society like this, it will be love at first sight for you. Another example could be of a Hyderabad-based eco-habitat founded on the core philosophy of Samvridhi by Battula, who believes in blending rural experiences with urban conveniences. This has resulted in their award-winning housing project called Organo Naandi. The organisation prides itself on being a net-zero energy community. Organic farming, earth air tunnel draught system, zero disposal of organic waste, zero wastewater discharge, in-house production of natural fertilisers and pesticides, and usage of local materials for construction are among its most talked-about values.

Making communities SUSTAINABLE

On the same emerging trend, Aashika Sripathi, COO and founder of Apartment Society Management and Accounting, who makes smart community living easy. Speaking to us, she shares, "Residential societies offer a safe setting for families, with varied levels of security. As cities become more turbulent, individuals are increasingly resorting to residential communities. Each community or neighbourhood offers a variety of features. However, the financial load in terms of upkeep is considerably greater. In our country, the new concept of sustainable development is being implemented to encourage environmental protection alongside industrialisation. This technological innovation paradigm is now being adopted by residential housing societies too to ensure that they become self-sufficient."

It is sometimes the result of lessons learned. By his own admission, the IT Minister of Hyderabad is working to cut down on the massive amounts of energy waste to reduce the temperature rise in the city that's contributing to monster heat waves these days. He continues to rethink his free-wheeling approach to development, or at least giving more green infrastructure by incorporating parks, trees, and natural water systems a chance in Telangana.

Residential societies have been around for several generations, and living in one is the first step toward streamlining lifestyles in terms of security and accessibility. The residential communities, in this scenario, may contain security personnel, a neighbourhood help desk, housekeeping, and an auditorium. Furthermore, they provide a variety of common amenities, including a gymnasium, a swimming pool, and a playground, which tenants can enjoy at their discretion. They also provide other benefits, such as the upkeep of society's architecture and the provision of aid for a number of reasons, as a result of the aggregation of countless consumers in one spot. She shares, "Garbage management is critical, since the bulk of our waste ends up in landfills, emitting greenhouse gases. In the long run, it is critical to implement an effective waste management plan. Every day, residential societies generate tonnes of trash. As a result, when a residential community makes the strategic

limitations that make all of these conveniences unusable since people cannot easily access or enjoy them. We live in a highly technological world where new innovations are occurring in every sector and play an important role in adapting to change. Adopting cutting-edge technology capabilities is the new norm for residential neighborhoods, ensuring residents have easy access to current amenities. This also guarantees that society has regular access to funds that may be utilised to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of basic services. These enormous reserves, when paired with an efficient culture, contribute significantly to society's exceptionally elevated maintenance standards."

As we see more and more environmentally friendly communities in our city, as citizens, it makes us feel that our cities' efforts to become more sustainable is not about politics or cultural theory. They really want to spread the green carpet. Adding to that, "A well-located residence attracts great tenants who value their participation in the community. This paves the way for the establishment of a self-sufficient and sustainable society. Waste segregation also aids in the correct management, recycling, and repurposing of trash within the community, allowing it to become self-sufficient and create a circular economy. This can only happen when residents benefit from technology in the form of applications designed for residential communities with numerous features that make common amenities widely accessible.

There are applications for all of this. She further concludes saying, "It implies that consumers may use the app to book and pay for services quickly and easily, utilise waste collection services with the push of a button, and access other resources and services. Such expanded capabilities reduce the need to personally visit a facility administration or schedule meetings with the appropriate authorities in exchange for access to a certain facility. Residents can ask for help from any location and at any time. It also allows for management of account reports and transactions, which eliminates the need for telephone conversations for bill explanation or arguments over incorrect or late payment charges. So, life in a residential society is inadequate in today's technologically driven world without these tech-based housing and neighborhood management solutions."

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effort to be accountable for their garbage through waste segregation and recycling, they benefit the environment in more ways than one by establishing a circular economy. This was one of the examples! We are implementing the same. Our state government's focus on renewable energy, green jobs and the environment is partly why businesses are flocking here. Moreover, "Sometimes, residents are particularly worried about more than just having direct access to each of these facilities. Having them all easily available and quickly, on the other hand, is an altogether different matter. A manually managed residential society has severe



Re-cycle and re-use e-waste

As electronic garbage has become the world's fastest-growing percentage of the conventional municipal solid waste stream, e-waste disposal is becoming a global environmental and public health concern.

The bulk of discarded electronic devices are maintained in households as people do not know how to properly dispose of them. This ever-increasing e-waste is incredibly complex in nature, but it's also a rich source of precious metals that may be salvaged and reintroduced into the production process.

According to allied market research, the global e-waste management industry was valued at \$49,880 million in 2020 and is predicted to increase at a CAGR of 14.3 percent from 2021 to 2028, to reach \$143,870 million by 2028.

Raj Kumar, CEO, Deshwal Waste Management Pvt Ltd shares, "The National Strategy for Electronics Stewardship developed by the Environmental Protection Agency serves as the foundation for new regulations and programmes for electronic gadget manufacturing and recycling. Among the proposed or implemented changes is a focus on a zero-waste, linear economy, and a focus on cyber security to improve system destabilization methodologies, and a major impact on proper e-waste recycling certifications, employees' rights, and ecological oversight for established service companies."

Although the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had issued E-waste laws in 2016 and subsequent updates, there are still barriers to effective waste management, including a lack of investment, infrastructure, and consumer education. Several individuals and firms have arrived to help the informal sector collect,

process, and recycle electronic waste.

Startups have begun to engage in a wide range of activities, such as e-waste disposal, credit monitoring, logistics and distribution, data security and disposal, CSR initiatives, and renovation, all with a real belief in the three R's of sustainability. They start by categorizing the trash into glassware, plastics, and metal. Following that, they treat all the hazardous substances and send the residues to be removed. The remaining plastics and metals are given to recyclers.

Methods for reducing and managing e-waste:

Purchase fewer goods and organize your belongings: Organise your existing electronic gadgets and avoid purchasing a device that the manufacturer cannot reuse or destroy.

Give your e-waste for a good cause or carry them back to the shop: If you don't need an electronic device, give it to someone who can benefit from it. If not for donations, try if the store would buy your old camera, computer, or related products before you go out and buy a new one.

Unused items can be sold: Sell your devices as quickly as you no longer need them; the value of newer models depreciates swiftly. There are numerous firms that will gladly purchase your used fitness bands, wearables, video game consoles, PCs, video cameras, and other electronic equipment.

Cloud Data Storage: Cloud data solutions are perfect for archiving and synchronizing your information across several devices without the requirement for a server.

Keep what you've got: Frequent servicing and upkeep can significantly contribute to the longevity of electrical products. Recycling centers can clean your device before recycling it, preventing cyber thieves.



The *Maragadha Naanayam* actors Aadhi Pinisetty and Nikki Galrani, tied the knot in a simple yet dreamy ceremony on May 18. Photographs from the wedding have gone viral since then. *The Pioneer* gets in touch with the celebrity designer, Ambika Gupta, who puts some light on the details of the wedding.

Aadhi, Nikki's wedding was a dreamy, all-white celebration: Wedding designer Ambika Gupta

PNS | HYDERABAD

Ambika Gupta, celebrity wedding designer and founder of The A-Cube Project, is well-known for designing destination weddings across the world and for her bespoke events for celebrities like Kajal Aggarwal. She is in the news now for designing the nuptials of actors Aadhi Pinisetty and Nikki Galrani, who got married on May 18, in the presence of their loved ones.

The actors who have famously worked together in films like *Maragadha Naanayam* and *Yagavarayinum Naa Kaakka* connected with Ambika through a mutual friend.

Ambika started the design process by keeping the bride and groom at the heart of the different ceremonies and making them fill in a questionnaire about their likes and dislikes, favourite decor choices, and holiday destinations. This is how the design and



colour palette for haldi, mehendi, the actual wedding, and the reception came into being.

Ambika says, "They were both very specific about their preferences but were sweet and kind enough to be open to my suggestions and invested a

lot of trust in the design team." We also got to know so much about their lives; how they met for their first movie and how their love story blossomed over the last 7 to 8 years. Everything they told us in some way helped us design the themes."

What set the decor apart was that it did not emerge from an ad-hoc approach but was very detailed. Ambika says, "We work like architects and interior designers, and we are very process-driven. We blueprint every idea down to the last detail. We are also very careful about the choice of lighting and how it interacts with colors, outfits, and cameras, and we make sure that every design element is personalised so that the couple feels connected to it. The decor must be intrinsic to their story and not just hurriedly slapped together."

For instance, Ambika named the haldi ceremony 'Amaltas', which is also known as the 'The Golden Shower Tree' of India, to indicate the abundant blessings surrounding the couple, as they are extremely family-oriented and also because Nikki loves sunflowers. Ambika shares, "We also wanted to depict how two people from completely different worlds are coming together, so we had two Amaltas trees under which the couple sat."

For Mehndi, Ambika channelled the couple's love for Bali.

"Bling it in Bali" was our theme as they had celebrated their

first new year after falling in love in this tropical paradise. The decor accents that Aadhi and Nikki loved, hence, ranged from green verdure to cane furniture to dull gold-painted Bali umbrellas. Be it a 360-degree photo booth or a fun chaat counter, we infused a lot of joy in every corner," she adds. For the wedding and reception, the theme was 'The White Blossom' to signify the purity of love, peace, divinity, and seamless infinity.

The wedding was a perfect culmination of a beautiful love story and Ambika concludes saying, "Our design story was a tribute to two people who share a very magical bond and we just wanted everything around them to be as beautiful as their relationship. Thankfully, that is exactly what we managed to achieve."



Kerber, Azarenka win; Emma out

AP ■ PARIS

Former Grand Slam champions Angelique Kerber and Victoria Azarenka advanced to the third round of the French Open on Wednesday.

Kerber, who won her first clay title in six years on the eve of the French Open, defeated French wildcard and 2020 junior champion Elsa Jacquemot 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) as she seeks the only Grand Slam missing from her collection.

The German 21st seed next plays Aliaksandra Sasnovich, the Belarusian who knocked out US Open champion Emma Raducanu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

"I think the last week was really important for me to get the title," former number one Kerber said of her Strasbourg triumph.

"I had a lot of confidence. It's great to be back here and I hope I can still play a few more matches.

"When you achieve everything you want, you play for the love of the game. I just love the sport. Let's see how long I can keep playing at a high level.

Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open winner, beat 2014 Roland Garros semi-finalist Andrea Petkovic 6-1, 7-6 (7/3). She meets Swiss 23rd seed Jil Teichmann for a place in the fourth round.

SAKKARI OUT

Greek fourth seed Maria Sakkari crashed out in the French Open second round, going down 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4) to Czech world number 81 Karolina Muchova.

Sakkari, a 2021 Roland Garros semi-finalist, is the fifth women's top-10 seed to lose in the first four days at Roland Garros.

Muchova has matched her run to the third round from 12 months ago and will next play 27th seed Amanda Anisimova, who reached the last four in Paris three years ago.

"It's very special, she's an amazing player. It was a big fight, a little bit of a test and challenge for me



and I'm happy I took it the way I did," said Muchova.

The 25-year-old reached the semi-finals at last year's Australian Open and the last eight for the second time at Wimbledon, but is playing just her fourth tournament since the US Open after struggling with an abdominal injury. "It's an amazing feeling I can play again fully."

Sasnovich also said she "respects" the controversial decision of the ATP and WTA to strip Wimbledon of ranking points.

That move has prompted a number of players, including former world number one and four-time Grand Slam title winner Naomi Osaka, to consider with-

drawing from Wimbledon which starts on June 27.

Wimbledon chiefs said the ATP and WTA decision was "disproportionate".

Russian men's star Andrey Rublev said the atmosphere in the sport is currently "toxic" while French player Benoit Paire believes "99%" of players want a Wimbledon with points.

"I'm sorry for Russia and Russians, but they are the ones causing all the trouble," he said.

Sasnovich said she talks to Ukrainian players in the locker room.

"I ask them how they feel. We talk about the war a little bit," added the world number 47 from

Wimbledon 'will never be an exhibition': Murray

AP ■ PARIS

Two-time former Wimbledon champion Andy Murray of Britain on Wednesday said that the tournament "will never feel like an exhibition" despite it being stripped of ranking points over the ban on Russian and Belarusian players.

The decision by the ATP and WTA to remove the sport's most prestigious tournament of ranking points has prompted some

players to say they may skip Wimbledon, the year's third Grand Slam.

"I'd hazard a guess that most people watching on centre court Wimbledon in a few weeks' time wouldn't know or care about how many ranking points a player gets for winning a 3rd round match," tweeted Murray.

"But I guarantee they will remember who wins. Wimbledon will never be an exhibition and will never feel like an exhibition."

Minsk.

"They have families there. It's a very bad situation for them. We try to live our lives and find the positives. These are tough times.

"I would have no problem if I had to play against a player from Ukraine."

On Wednesday, Sasnovich made the third round of the French Open for the first time by stunning US Open champion and 12th seed Emma Raducanu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

'AGAINST THE WAR'

Belarus tennis star Aliaksandra Sasnovich may be banned from Wimbledon but she insisted Wednesday that she opposed the ongoing war in Ukraine and supports players from the embattled country "100%".

Belarusian players such as Sasnovich, compatriot and former world number one Victoria Azarenka, as well as a host of Russians including men's world number two Daniil Medvedev, were declared persona non grata by Wimbledon in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

"I wanted to play Wimbledon so much, it's one of my favourite tournaments but I respect the decision," the 28-year-old said.

"Normally, I speak with some of the Ukraine players. We are not friends, we are just col-

leagues but I support them 100%.

"I want the war to finish as soon as possible. I don't support the war and am against the violence. I just want peace."

1ST SLAM MAIN DRAW WIN

Indian tennis player Ramkumar Ramanathan cherished his first ever main draw win at a Grand Slam as he combined with American Hunter Reese to beat the German team of Daniel Altmaier and Oscar Otte in the men's doubles event of the French Open, here on Wednesday.

Ramkumar, who has made umpteen attempts to crack a singles main draw of a Grand Slam without success, and Reese beat their rivals 7-6(4) 6-3 in their opening round of the clay court major.

The 27-year-old Indian had broken into the doubles top-100 early this year, following his maiden ATP Tour title win with compatriot Rohan Bopanna in Adelaide and at home in Pune, competing in the Tata Open Maharashtra.

Rohan Bopanna and his Dutch partner Matwe Middelkoop had progressed to the second round with 6-4, 6-1 win over local wild cards Sascha Gueymard Wayenburg and Luca Van Assche, on Tuesday.

Chelsea sale gets green light from UK Government

AP ■ LONDON

The UK government on Wednesday announced it had given the green light to Todd Boehly's proposed takeover of Chelsea football club from the sanctioned Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Nadine Dorries said she had issued a licence permitting the deal late on Tuesday, shortly after it won approval from the Premier League.

"We are satisfied the proceeds of the sale will not benefit Roman Abramovich or other sanctioned individuals," Dorries tweeted.

"Given the sanctions we placed on those linked to (Vladimir) Putin and the bloody invasion of Ukraine, the long-term future of the club can only be secured under a new owner," she said.

A consortium led by Boehly, a co-owner of baseball's Los Angeles Dodgers, had already agreed a record £4.25 billion deal to buy the Premier League club from Abramovich on May 7.

The Premier League said its approval hinged on the government sale licence "and the satis-



factory completion of the final stages of the transaction".

Officials wanted everything completed on Tuesday so Chelsea could meet all registration deadlines for next season's football competitions.

Abramovich put Chelsea on the market in early March, just before he was sanctioned by Britain following Russia's inva-

sion of Ukraine.

Completing the purchase has been a lengthy process due to government concerns over the potential for Abramovich to profit from the sale.

The total value of the deal smashes the previous record for the sale of a sports team — \$2.4 billion for the New York Mets baseball franchise in 2020.

Liverpool's Klopp named PL manager of the year

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp has been named the League Managers' Association Premier League Manager of the Year, it was announced on Tuesday.

The Reds won both the English League Cup and FA Cup, beating Chelsea in penalty shoot-outs at Wembley on both occasions.

But Liverpool lost out on the Premier League title to Manchester City by just a point after both Klopp's men and Pep Guardiola's side won their respective matches on Sunday's final day of a thrilling campaign.

Klopp, collecting his accolade at the LMA Awards dinner in London on Tuesday, said: "It is a great honour and it was an insane season."

"The last matchday when only two games were meaningless and in the rest, we all played for absolutely everything.

"It was not the best outcome for us, but we are already over it."

The German, paying tribute to his backroom team, added: "When you win a prize like this you are either a genius or you have the best coaching staff in the world — and I am here with all of my coaching staff, they know how much I appreciate them."

Klopp also collected the Sir Alex Ferguson Trophy, named in honour of the celebrated former Manchester United boss, which is voted for by the full membership of managers across all the divisions in English senior football.

"This being voted for by my colleagues



is obviously the most important prize you can get," Klopp said.

"I don't believe in individual prizes in football generally, it is a team sport and I would be nothing without these boys there."

"It is all about what we can do together and what we did together."

Liverpool may have been denied an unprecedented quadruple by City, but they will now try to add the Champions League to their impressive trophy haul this season when they face Real Madrid in a Paris final on Saturday.

India will put up fantastic show in U-17 WC: Aditi

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Star India women's football team goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan feels that the under-17 team is not short on preparation for the upcoming World Cup despite the absence of senior nationals in the country since 2019.

India organised its last U-17 National Championships in April 2019 before the coronavirus outbreak upset all plans.

But Aditi feels the Indian team is on the right track and would be one of the sides to watch out for in the U-17 Women's World Cup.

"This group has been preparing for this moment for quite some time," Chauhan said in an interview.

"They've been getting regular match time and training regularly and hopefully, they'll be able to gain more exposure and play more friendlies before the World Cup."

"I am confident that they will put on a fantastic performance in front of their home crowd at the World Cup."

India under coach Thomas Dennerby has already named 33 probables who are currently training in Jamshepur. There have been questions about the selection policies without a national tournament.

"I think India has a lot of potential in their U-17 squad and I have been lucky to play with a few of them."

"The young girls have shown their fighting spirit in their last SAFF Cup where they were the champions."

"The players have been practicing together for a long time and I am sure India will be one of the teams to watch out for," she said.

The tournament is slated from October 17-30 in the five cities of Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Guwahati, Ahmedabad and Navi Mumbai.

"The U-17 World Cup is going to be a huge opportunity for our girls to play and compete against the best in the world."

"It is important that we put on a good display because all eyes will be on our team from across the world."

"We can demonstrate that women's football in India is progressing on the right path by doing better here," she added.

In April last year, Aditi became the second Indian woman player after Bala Devi to ply her trade outside India, when she signed a one-year deal with Iceland's third division club Hamar Hveragerði women's team.

"We've also witnessed the standard of football in other nations by playing against them on a regular basis, and it's fair to say we're not that far behind."

"Of course we need to improve our game, but the differences are little. We have some extremely good players in our ranks, and I'm sure we'll see a lot of Indian players playing in foreign leagues in the coming years," the star goalkeeper from Tamil Nadu added.



India need luck, big win against Indonesia

PTI ■ JAKARTA

Defending champions India need to beat hosts Indonesia by a huge margin and hope Japan defeat Pakistan in the other Pool A match for advancing to the knockout stage of the Asia Cup men's hockey tournament here on Thursday.

India's fate is not in their own hands anymore as even a win against lowly Indonesia will not guarantee them a knock-out berth. Japan will have to beat Pakistan to keep India's faint hopes alive.

With a draw and a loss, India are placed third in Pool A behind Japan (6 points) and Pakistan (4 points).

Under the guidance of Sardar Singh, India fielded a young team in the tournament alongside a handful of seniors like Birendra Lakra and SV Sunil, who came out of retirements. But the senior duo looked well past their prime if their performances in the two matches so far are to go by.

India conceded a last minute goal to draw 1-1 against Pakistan in their

tournament opener before being thrashed by Japan 2-5.

But now, a 'next to impossible' task awaits the Indians as they not only have to score big against Indonesia but also hope that Japan beat Pakistan in the other Pool A match on Thursday if they are to progress to the Super 4 stage.

India have a goal difference of minus three as against Pakistan's plus 13. If Pakistan lose to Japan, India will have to beat Indonesia by a huge margin to go past their western neighbours in goal difference and advance further in the tournament.

Inexperience was the major reason behind India's below-par performances as the young players, mainly drafted from the last Junior World Cup squad, are finding it difficult to get a measure of the level of international hockey.

In the two matches so far, the Indians lacked cohesion in the three departments — defence, midfield and forwardline.

The Indians lacked a quality playmaker in the midfield, which was evi-



dent from their constant efforts of building attacks from the centre instead of using both the flanks more frequently.

Lakra looked a pale shadow of himself in the backline, which has crumbled big time when put under relentless pressure.

The forwardline has been wasteful with the likes of Tokyo Olympian Simranjeet Singh and youngster Uttam Singh not having the best of outings.

The lanky and strongly built Pawan Rajbhar is the only player who have impressed with his commitment and stick work in the two matches, creating chances and also scoring a goal.

Penalty corner conversion is another area where the Indians are struggling as they lack a quality drag-flicker in the side after veteran Rupinder Pal Singh pulled out at the last minute due to a wrist injury.

With the odds stacked against them, the young Indian players could be pepped up to give their best shot on Thursday and show they can rise to the occasion.



Rana Daggubati, Venkatesh Daggubati's Raina Naidu wraps production

Actors Rana Daggubati and Venkatesh Daggubati-starrer crime-drama series *Raina Naidu* has finished filming, filmmaker Suparn Verma said on Wednesday. Produced by Locomotive Global Inc, the Netflix series is an official adaptation of the popular American drama series *Ray Donovan*. Karan Anshuman, known for creating hit shows like *Mirzapur* and *Inside Edge*, is the showrunner and the director on the series. Verma, who last helmed the acclaimed *The Family Man* season two, is billed as a co-director. Verma took to Instagram and posted a picture of the clapboard writing, "It's a wrap". This is the first time that Rana, known for films like *Baahubali* franchise and his recent *Bheemla Nayak*, will be seen sharing screen space with Venkatesh, his uncle. According to the streamer, the action drama will follow the life of Rana Naidu, "the go-to guy for everyone in Bollywood when they have a problem." The format rights are licensed by ViacomCBS Global Distribution Group.

Dulquer Salmaan's Sita Ramam locks release date

Vijayanthi Movies presents the highly anticipated romantic saga *Sita Ramam* starring Dulquer Salmaan, and Mrunal Thakur playing the lead roles with Rashmika Mandanna in a very special role. Known for portraying love stories in mesmerizing way, Hanu Raghavapudi is directing the movie, while Ashwini Dutt is producing it under Swapna Cinema. After creating lots of hype with promotional content, the makers came up with release date of the movie. *Sita Ramam* will have grand release worldwide in theatres on August 5. The movie will have simultaneous release in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam languages. The film's musical promotions were begun recently and the first single *Oh Sita Hey Rama*, a romantic melody enchanted music lovers. The song became a chartbuster in no time and now there's huge anticipation for next songs in the album. PS Vinod is the cinematographer for *Sita Ramam* being made simultaneously in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam languages. Additional Cinematography has been rendered by Shreyas Krishna.



Samantha's special birthday message for Karan Johar



Ruth Prabhu, who is currently shooting for *Kushi*, also sent birthday wishes to Karan Johar on her Instagram story, "Happy birthday to the one and only Karan Johar. Wishing you a phenomenal birthday."

Karan Johar is best known for having directed films such as *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*.

As a producer, his Dharma Productions banner has been behind hits such as *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*, *Raazi*, *Shershaah* and *Gehraiyaan*. He is waiting for the release of *Jugjugg Jeeyo* next month.

It is also known that in Bollywood, Samantha is working with Varun Dhawan in *Citadel*.

Ra Ra Rakkamma from Kichcha Sudeep's Vikrant Rona out now

Ever since the teaser of the 3D Mystery Thriller, Kichcha Sudeep's *Vikrant Rona* has been released, the anticipation for the film has elevated to a new level.

While delivering the perfect dues for the audience wait, the makers have launched the dance number from the album *Ra Ra Rakkamma*, introducing the diva Jacqueline Fernandez as Gadang Rakkamma - The Queen Of Good Times. The song is sung by Mangli



and Nakash Aziz with the lyrics of Ramajogaiah Sastry which will get you to dance to its quirky beats and signature chorus to shout out in your party arena. It will bring a perfect blend of a party number with some amazing beats to dance on, that will come out as an electrifying dance number ever encountered on the screen.

As the film will be releasing in 5 different languages, the makers will be releasing all their contents in all 5 languages. The Kannada version was released on Tuesday, while the Telugu and Hindi version is released today.

Vikrant Rona stars Kichcha Sudeep playing the lead role and is directed by Anup Bhandari. The film also stars Jacqueline Fernandez, Nirup Bhandari, Neetha Ashok and others who play other important roles in the film.

Agent shoot moves to Manali

Akhil Akkineni, who scored a hit with his last movie *Most Eligible Bachelor*, is now working under Surrender Reddy's direction for *Agent* as the team has been shooting in Manali currently.

Agent is the first collaboration between Akhil Akkineni and Surrender Reddy, and the shoot for the high-budget stylish and action thriller is moving along quickly in order to meet the release date deadline.

The crew is currently shooting some high-octane action sequences in Manali, under the supervision of action choreographer Vijay Master. The shoot includes Akhil and other members of the film's prominent cast. In the recently released working still, Akhil, Surrender Reddy, Rasool Elore, and Vijay Master are spotted together in Manali.

The film will be action-packed, and Akhil underwent an extensive makeover to play a spy/Interpol officer. Malayalam

superstar Mammootty plays a pivotal role in *Agent*, with debutante Sakshi Vaidya playing Akhil's love interest.

Vakkannantham Vamsi wrote the screenplay for Ramabrahman Sunkara's film, which is being produced by AK Entertainments and Surrender 2 Cinema.

Agent is slated for release in August.



After SVK success, speculation rife on Parasuram Petla's next film

Parasuram Petla, who is currently savoring the blockbuster success of *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, will soon direct Naga Chaitanya as the two had a long desire to work together.

According to the latest reports, Parasuram has decided to give an interesting title *Nageswara Rao* (Nageswara Rao is Chaitanya's grandfather, a veteran Telugu actor). Despite the lack of official confirmation, this

Chaitanya was busy with other projects, Parasuram rolled his project with Mahesh Babu. Parasuram Petla is apparently working on the script and will soon direct Naga Chaitanya. Chaitanya, on the other hand, is hard at work on his latest project, a supernatural horror film titled *Dhootha*. The web series, directed by Vikram K Kumar for Prime Video, will premiere later this year. Chay's next film *Thank You* directed by Vikram Kumar will be

