

- Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM chief P 2

Avinash Reddy had failed to appear before the CBI three times this month.



# Telangana’s special efforts in conservation of forest resources

The landmark Forest Conservation Act of 1980 provided ample scope for the conservation of precious forest resources while putting down the indiscriminate use of forests. To ensure balance between development and sustainability of environment, the Government permitted the use of forests for various non-forest purposes under certain conditions, including the provision of equivalent non-forest land for compensating loss of forest by way of planting in equivalent non-forest land. One of the main purposes behind this condition was to compensate for the depleting forest cover resulting from diversion of forest land.

As per one study, nearly 14,000 sq.km of forest lands have been diverted for various non-forestry purposes since

1980 in the country and, barring a few categories of works like those related to public utility up to a certain extent, use by Central or State government for various projects of national importance etc, all other categories of diversion have been permitted under the mandatory condition of handing over equal non-forest land and its notification as reserved forests.

A cursory examination of most forest land diversion cases post-1980 reveals a lackadaisical approach on the part of the authorities concerned in respect of notification of non-forest lands as reserved forests as mandated in the conditions of approvals of diversion of forest land. The ever-increasing scarcity of land, and its skyrocketing market value, coupled with poor monitoring of the progress of notification

**A cursory examination of most forest land diversion cases post-1980 reveals a lackadaisical approach on the part of the authorities concerned in respect of notification of non-forest lands as reserved forests as mandated in the conditions of approvals of diversion of forest land.**

and lack of priority among forest and revenue authorities, have also resulted in the neglect of this important aspect of notification of non-forest land as reserved forests.

In the absence of effective demarcation and legal instrument of notification, coupled with huge demand for land, especially in growing cities, to meet the challenges of rapid economic growth and other infra needs, many of these lands handed over to forest staff are subject to problems of

encroachment, counterclaims by revenue and other agencies etc. In most of the State Forest departments, the notification and related tasks are considered less attractive or even a punishment posting compared to other tasks, due to which they do not get the required attention.

**TELANGANA STANDS OUT**

The new Indian state of Telangana has accorded environmental conservation and protection as one of the top



MOHAN CHANDRA PARGAIEN

priorities and launched a flagship programme 'Telangana Ku Haritha Haram' aiming to increase the forest cover to 33 %. In addition to various proactive policy changes, the notification of forest blocks was also given equal importance by the government.

Sl.No.	Period	Number of Non-Forest Blocks	Area	
			Ha.	Acres
1	1996 - 2016	14	498.540	1231.890
2	2017 - 2023	103	3501.23	8651.5
3	Under processing	18	1631.678	4031.876
Total		135	5631.456	13915.3251

Another highlight of this notification was adopting land description using the geo-coordinates taken using a state-of-the-art DGNSS survey thereby providing an accurate, foolproof and modern method of land demarcation. In many states, this is being done in a very formal and routine manner without accuracy and proper description of the land, which makes these lands prone to manipulation and likelihood of being exploited by people for their

benefits. From 1996-2016, 14 blocks were notified for an extent of 498.54 hectares, while the Telangana government after its formation, in 2016 notified 103 blocks covering 3501.23 ha over seven years. There are 18 blocks covering 1631.67 ha which are likely to be notified shortly. Showing its equal commitment and concern towards conservation of forests and this neglected aspect of notification of non-forest land nearly 5,132 hectares or

12,676 acres of area has been protected legally.

As per the recently released State of Forest Reports of Forest Survey of India, Telangana registered a remarkable increase of 6.85 per cent in its forest cover from 2015 to 2021. This timely notification of land, based on latest technology, is providing availability of dispute-free and legally supported land for talking up tree planting of various species under the Compensatory Afforestation programme to the forest department. This will help the Telangana to continue its mission to further increase its green cover in addition to improving the biodiversity of local regions.

*(The author is a senior IFS Officer Telangana. He tweets as @pargaian Views are personal)*

## Amit Shah has a house at Shamshabad: Asaduddin Owaisi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said that a big businessman constructed a house for Amit Shah in Shamshabad.

He said that Amit Shah will stay here for some days in his Hyderabad house. Owaisi said that the Telangana government should be alert or else the BRS party would be at the receiving end.

While speaking to the media on Wednesday, Owaisi said that Amit Shah will stay here and focus on Telangana state to win the next elections.

Finding fault with the BJP leader's allegations, Owaisi said that the Hyderabad Old City development would have taken place if BRS steering was in his hands.

He said that several development activities would have taken place along with Metro Rail.

## Kishan: Don't raise south vs north issues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Decrying IT Minister KT Rama Rao's recent statement that southern states would be affected by the proposed delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies based on population, Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy said that leaders should not raise matters in terms of south vs north. He pointed out that leaders from the south had become Prime Ministers. The Centre was focused on the development of southern states, Kishan Reddy said.

While addressing the media in Delhi on Wednesday, Kishan Reddy said that delimitation of constituencies would take place as per the Constitution. He said that it was better to not comment on anyone in this matter as it would create dif-



**He said that it was better to not comment on anyone in this matter as it would create differences and provoke people.**

ferences and provoke people. Referring to those 'working to promote differences between south and north', he asked: 'Do they not see the

programmes being undertaken by the Central government in the name of 'Ek Bharat - Shresth Bharat'?

In the context, Kishan cited keeping 'Sengol' from Tamil Nadu in Parliament as well as the conduct of Kashi-Tamil confluence, Tamil-Saurashtra confluence, Kashi-Telugu confluence, 'Vistata' programme combining Kashmiri and Tamil traditions, as examples of the Centre's pan-India vision.

## Govt to sell up to 3% stake in Coal India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday proposed to sell up to three per cent stake in Coal India Ltd through the offer for sale route from June 1. The Offer for Sale (OFS) will be open for retail and non-retail investors on June 1 and 2.

The proposal is to offload 9.24 crore shares amounting to a stake of 1.5 per cent in the coal producer. Besides, there will be a green shoe option for selling an equal amount of stake in case of over subscription, according to a regulatory filing. At the closing price of Rs 241.20 apiece on BSE on Wednesday, the sale of 3 per cent stake in Coal India would be worth around Rs 4,400 crore. "The seller proposes to sell up to 9,24,40,924 equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each of the company (representing 1.50 per cent of the total paid-up equity share capital of the company) (base offer size), on June 1st and 2nd for retail investors and non retail investors," the filing said.

## Science, Arts most popular streams: MoE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Science and Arts have been the most popular streams among students over the last 10 years while commerce has stagnated with only 14 per cent students opting for it, according to a study conducted by the Ministry of Education.

The study, which is an assessment of Class 10 and 12 board exam results, noted that there are huge variations in choice of streams across states.

"Only 2 per cent students in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana opt for Arts stream but in states like Tripura and Gujarat over 82 per cent students choose the stream while in states like Punjab and Rajasthan the percentage of such students is above 70," it said. Similarly, the popularity of science stream is extremely low in Punjab, Haryana and Assam where just about 17 per cent students opt for it, whereas in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, more than 60 per cent students choose

science to study after class 12.

"In Goa and Karnataka, distribution of students is almost similar in major streams," the report said.

A large difference in performance of students from various boards, significant variation in pass percentages and no level playing field for students in terms of standard are among the challenges identified by the ministry in the assessment.

According to School Education Secretary, Sanjay Kumar, this difference between pass percentages of various states has led the education ministry to now look at standardising the assessment pattern for all 60 school boards across states in the country.

Currently, there are three central boards in India Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Apart from these, various states have their own state boards, taking the total number of school boards to 60.

## BRS MLCs...

Continued from page 1

In Mahabubabad, the fight is between Shankar Naik vs MLC Talakalappalli Ravinder and in Warangal east, the tussle is between MLA Narendar and Basvaraju Saraiah. While some of these faceoffs were exposed during Atmeeya Sammelanams, now with the decennial celebrations, BRS legislators are keeping their fingers crossed to avoid any public embarrassment.

Sources in the party said: "Having competition is good. It is not opposition but the competition starts from the party itself. But this should only be up to the point of distribution of ticket. After that, everyone should work together". An MLA who is facing similar contest said: "CM KCR has the final say in tickets and so constantly there is a possibility of attempt to expose incumbents. You see a lot of candidates' lists being circulated; then, suddenly a few issues come out on incumbent MLA to write off all the good work of the candidate".

## Centre's TS Formation Day fete at

Continued from page 1

He said that 1,200 people were martyred in the Telangana movement and all communities had a role in the movement.

The Union Minister mentioned that Telangana Formation Day was organized in Delhi last year. This time it would be organized in Golconda Fort under his auspices.

On June 2nd, the tricolour would be hoisted on the Golconda Fort and a parade of the armed forces would be held. According to Kishan Reddy, cultural programmes would be organized in the evening, including performances by Shankar Mahadevan, Dr. Ananda Shankar and team, Manjula Ramaswamy's team, while Mangli and Madhupriya will sing songs reflecting Telangana traditions and the

movement.

He said that Painting and Photo competitions were organized for school students on the theme Qila aur kahani.

Kishan said that the Centre had decided to organize Telangana birth celebrations in different states.

People of Telangana living in various states had been invited to the Raj Bhavans. Arrangements had been made to conduct the programmes under the auspices of Governors.

He said that in the spirit of Ek Bharat - Shreshtha Bharat, the Centre had decided to celebrate the foundation days of all the states everywhere.

In Telangana, Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan will conduct the celebrations at Raj Bhavan. Telangana Foundation Day celebrations will be held under the leadership of Lt. Governor in Delhi as well.

## KCR showers sops

Continued from page 1

In honour of Mahamahopadhyay Kolachalam Mallinatha Suri, who had highlighted great poet Kalidasa's literary excellence, the Telangana government will start a Sanskrit University in Kolacharam (Medak district), birthplace of the great man. KCR said, "We are currently increasing the monthly stipend given to Vedic scholars by the Brahmin Parishad from Rs.2,500 to Rs.5,000. Eligible age for receiving this allowance has been reduced from 75 years to 65 years. Presently, the Dhupadipanaivedhya scheme is applicable to 3,645 temples in the state. We will extend the Dhupadipanaivedhyam scheme to another 2,796 temples across the state. With this, 6,441 temples in the state will

receive maintenance expenses under the Dhupadipanaivedhyam scheme".

The CM said: "As of now, the government is providing Rs.6,000 per month to priests for maintenance of the temples under the Dhupadipanaivedhyam scheme. We are increasing this amount to Rs.10,000." He said Rs.2 lakh given for maintenance of Vedic schools will be given as an annual grant from now on. "We will also take a decision to apply the fee reimbursement scheme to Brahmin students studying in prestigious institutes like ITM and IIM. Similarly, rest assured that the issues of hereditary priests will be discussed and resolved soon in the cabinet," he said.

KCR said that the Telangana

government had been working to support people. "The Telangana Brahmin Welfare Parishad" was constituted by the Telangana government on 1st February 2017. We are allocating funds totalling Rs 100 crore to 'Brahmin Parishad' every year. Various welfare schemes are being implemented with these funds. For students who wish to study abroad, so far 780 students have been supported through 'Vivekananda Scholarship'. A scheme called BEST (Brahmin Empowerment Scheme of Telangana State) is being implemented for the livelihood of poor Brahmins. Under this scheme, the government is providing a maximum grant of Rs.5 lakh under investment assistance. The government has spent Rs. 150 crore towards this till now".

## Advantage KCR...

Continued from page 1

It is interesting to note that a study by the American Political Science found that campaigns have "an average effect of zero" in the General Election. In fact, many people decide whom to vote long before the campaigns begin. In the past, political circles used to analyse which party has more influence among the people based on attendance at the public meetings conducted by political parties. Nowadays most people have stopped attending public meetings conducted by political parties. So, political parties have started mobilising people by offering free transport and "daily wages" in addition to biryani packets and liquor. In this process, the size of the crowd at public meetings organised by any political party is almost same and linked to their resources.

## Ponguleti and Jupally...

Continued from page 1

Before that Ponguleti and Jupally Krishna Rao may share dais with BJP leaders-Konda Vishveshwar Reddy, Eatala Rajender, Boora Narsaiah Goud and others besides balladeer Gaddar in the 'Alai-Balai' meeting to be held at Bhongir on June 4th. BJP senior leader and Telangana protagonist Jitta Balakrishna Reddy is organizing this program to unite Telangana protagonists. He has invited Congress leaders also, including Madhu Yashki Goud.

So, sources explained, the Bhongir gathering could become a turning point in Telangana politics in case Ponguleti and Jupally announce their next move.

Jitta Balakrishna Reddy told The Pioneer that he had invited many leaders to participate in the programme. All the invitees expressed their wish to participate in the meeting.

Meanwhile, Ponguleti and Jupally have initiated discussions with leaders of other political parties. While speaking to the media on Wednesday, Jupally said that they had "a perfect plan" to topple the KCR government. However, the other significant leaders, "in touch with Ponguleti and Jupally", will come out of their respective political parties only after the modalities of the group are finalised. After forming that group, all the leaders will discuss whether to float a new political party or join existing political party.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Dwadashi: May 31 01:46 PM to Jun 01 06:48 AM

Trayodashi: Jun 01 01:39 PM to Jun 02 12:48 PM

Nakshatram: Chitra: May 31 06:00 AM to Jun 01 06:39 PM

Swati: Jun 01 06:48 AM to Jun 02 06:53 AM

Rahukalam: 1:51 PM to 3:28 PM

Yamagandam: 5:44 AM to 7:22 AM

Variyam: 12:25 PM to 02:02 PM

Gulika: 8:59 AM to 10:36 AM

Amritakalam: 10:03 PM to 11:39 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:48 AM to 12:39 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 39°

Humidity: 37%

Sunrise: 5:41 AM

Sunset: 6:47 PM

Updated: MAY 31, 2023 5:00 PM

## TSPSC bars 13 more...

Continued from page 1

Otherwise, they will be barred from writing the examinations to be conducted by TSPSC till further orders.

The names of those barred on Wednesday are Poola Ravi, Rayapura Vikram, Rayapuram Divya, Danavath Bharath Naik, Madhusudhan Naik, Pashikanti Rohit Kumar, Gade Sai Madhu, Lokini Sathish Kumar, Boddupally Narsing Rao, Guguloth Srinu Nayak, Bhukya Mahesh, Mudavath Prashanth, Vadithya Naresh and Poola Ramesh Kumar.

## Wrestlers 'vow...

Continued from page 1

On Tuesday, they threatened to immerse their medals into the holy river Ganga but the farmer leaders stopped them from taking the extreme step.

"They were crying since morning. It is not easy to throw away even a medal won at district level and they were ready to throw away those big international medals. They were shell-shocked, not a word was coming out of their mouths," said a member of the protesting group. "They had taken a silence vow for Tuesday and that's why they did not speak with anyone in Haridwar. All have returned to their respective homes but Sakshi is still in Delhi," he added. While the wrestlers did not address the media, they were seen having discussions among themselves, whispering in each other's ears.

The mood was sombre when

the wrestlers arrived at the famous Har ki Pauri with their medals as they wept and were being consoled by their family members.

They did not carry out their threat and returned with their medals after farmer leaders sought five days to sort out their issues.

The wrestlers have been demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan, who they have accused of sexual exploitation.

Two FIRs were filed against him, including one in POCSO act, but it is now being claimed that the 'minor' who has filed a complaint against the WFI chief is actually not a minor.

The oversight panel, which was formed by the government to probe the allegations, did not make its findings public but sources had claimed that the six-member committee did not find any incriminating evidence against Brij Bhushan.

## TS HC grants...

Continued from page 1

The MP had not appeared before the CBI in Hyderabad on May 16 and May 19. On May 16, he cited prior-fixed official engagements in Pulivendula as the reason and sought four days' time.

On May 19, he conveyed to the CBI that his mother was ill. She was admitted to a hospital in Kurnool and the MP was also staying there. The Central agency issued a fresh notice on May 19, directing him to appear before it at its Hyderabad office on May 22. Amid reports of CBI officials reaching Kurnool for a possible arrest, he wrote to the CBI seeking exemption from appearance till May 27 in view of his mother's condition. Former AP minister Vivekananda Reddy was murdered at his residence in Pulivendula on March 15, 2019, weeks before the elections.

## Oppn insulted country's sentiments: PM

PNS ■ AJMER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday attacked the Opposition for boycotting the inauguration of new Parliament building, saying the Congress "insulted" the sentiments of the country and the hard work 60,000 labourers.

"India got a new Parliament building three days back. I ask you whether you are proud of it or not. Did you feel the joy on the increase in India's prestige? The Congress and some parties like it hurled the mud of politics on this too," he said at a rally in Ajmer.

The Congress and 20 other parties boycotted the inauguration of the new Parliament building by the prime minister on Sunday, saying it was an insult to President Droupadi Murmu, a tribal woman, that she was not invited by the gov-



ernment to do the honours.

Modi said such opportunities come once in generations, but the Congress used this for its "selfish protest".

"They insulted the hard work of 60,000 labourers and the sentiment of the country," he said, adding the Congress is unable to digest the progress the country is making.

Referring to main Opposition party Congress, Modi said they are angry

because a "son of the poor" is not allowing them to do what they want and is "raising questions on their corruption and parivarwad (dynastic politics)".

The prime minister accused the Congress of following a policy of misleading the poor and keeping them deprived during its rule. "Fifty years ago, the Congress guaranteed that it will remove poverty. But it turned out to be their biggest betrayal to the poor."

"It has been a policy of the Congress to mislead the poor and keep them deprived. The people of Rajasthan have also suffered a lot due to this," Modi said. The rally was organised to mark the completion of nine years of the Modi government across its two terms.

The nine years of the BJP government were dedicated to the service of people, good governance, and welfare of poor, he said.



NEW CYBER SECURITY AND ANTI-NARCOTICS BUREAU LAUNCHED

# Every crime has a cyber component to it: DGP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana police announced the establishment of two new bureaus, namely the Telangana State Cyber Security Bureau (TSCSB) and the Telangana State Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TSANB).

State Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali and Prohibition and Excise Minister Srinivas Goud inaugurated the departments at the Telangana Integrated Command and Control Centre building on Wednesday.

During the inauguration, Telangana Director General of Police Anjani Kumar emphasised the importance of cyber security in combating crime in the digital age.

"Technology has become an integral part of policing. Every crime has a cyber component, whether in its execution or investigation, due to the increasing integration of technology in criminal activities. The line between con-



ventional crime and cyber crime is becoming blurred. So this bureau strengthens the police department. Drug culture is not as rampant in India as it is in the West but we must rise to the occasion. Our Strength lies in how well we can manage our exceptions," said DGP Anjani Kumar.

The Ministers also launched logos for the new bureaus. Hyderabad Commissioner of Police CV Anand will act as

the Director of the new TSNAB while Cyberabad Commissioner of Police Stephen Raveendra will act as the Director for TSCSB.

The newly established Anti-Narcotics Bureau will consist of five wings and employ 300 police personnel. It will serve as the Secretariat for the Anti-Narcotics Task Force in the state, focusing on investigating drug trafficking cases. Additionally, four new Narcotic police

stations will be established in Hyderabad, Cyberabad, Rachakonda, and Warangal, covering multiple districts within the state.

The Cyber Security Bureau will establish auxiliary units in all districts and six different commissionerates. It will also function as the Joint Cyber Crime Coordination Centre for six states.

Equipped to address emerging threats such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Cloud Infrastructure security. The bureau aims to stay ahead of cyber criminals.

Minister Srinivas Goud emphasised that the introduction of these high-tech bureaus and robust policing capabilities will attract industries to invest in Telangana.

He expressed confidence that these initiatives will enable the police to stay one step ahead in maintaining law and order.

## Constable saves a passenger's life

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A routine day at Begumpet railway station took a heroic turn when RPF constable K. Sanitha rescued a lady passenger from a life-threatening situation on May 30. Amidst the hustle and bustle of the station, train No. 47176 (Lingampalli-Falaknuma Express) was in motion when Sanitha noticed a passenger attempting to board the moving train. Realising the imminent danger, she swiftly sprang into action.

Constable Sanitha rushed to the aid of the passenger, who was at risk of falling into the gap between the train and the platform. She managed to catch hold of the passenger and successfully pulled her out, saving her life. The rescued passenger, Saraswathi, expressed gratitude for the selfless action taken by constable Sanitha.

Sanitha, a resident of Nalgonda district, joined the Railway Protection Force in 2020 and has since been serving at Begumpet railway station. After this incident, she has earned the recognition within the department.

## Hyd tops sales share of new housing units

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad accounted for the highest sales share of new units. Of approximately 14,280 units sold there in the first quarter of 2023, approximately 46% were launched in the same period.

The city is ranked first among the list of housing supply in top seven cities, which also includes the National Capital Region of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Bengaluru and Kolkata. The Anarock group conducted a survey regarding housing supply.

Shedding light on sales of ready to move houses, Anarock Group Chairman, Anuj Puri said, "For the longest time, ready-to-move-in homes remained in highest favour with home-buyers because of the previously abysmal project completion track record in many areas of the country. This is now changing - under-construction homes in new launches are increasingly finding takers, though ready-to-move homes retain the top demand slot."

He then explained the reasons for the preference. "Firstly, much of the new sup-



ply is by well-funded by branded developers who will comply with RERA regulations and complete their projects as per schedule. In Q1 2023, 1.14 lakh new units were launched in the top seven cities. The branded vs non-branded developer share ratio stood at 59:41 while back in 2015, it was the reverse at 41:59. Secondly, investors are back on the housing market. Early-stage under-construction homes offer the kind of cost arbitrage that make residential real estate attractive to investors, who have largely given housing a miss over the last 3 to 4 years. It is a heart-

ening trend for the residential market in remaining 2023."

The trend requires observation as it has strong mid-to-long-term implications for the Indian residential property market. While the return of investors is positive for overall sales, an end-user driven market helps keep prices in check. Accelerated investor activity has historically led to unreasonable price hikes which eventually throttled back the overall housing market growth.

In Q1 2019, approx. 4,020 units were sold, of which 24% sales were of newly launched units.

## Registration for SC, ST & BC scholarships open till June 15

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government on Wednesday opened scholarship applications for students under the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for students from the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Class.

The applications will be available on the TSe-Pass website from June 1 to 15. The registration of colleges and students for the academic year 2022-23 on the TSe-Pass website for process

and sanction of scholarship applications commenced from August 15, 2022 and closed on March 31, 2023.

The students of TSECET, TSEAMCET, TSICET, TSED-CET and TSCPGET programmes, SW-II Minority College, Government Degree College, Quthbullapur, Medchal Malkajgiri district, Osmania University and Kaloji Narayanrao University of Health Sciences have not applied on TSe-Pass portal due to various

reasons.

"All the regulatory authorities and college managements must ensure that all colleges & students who wish to register in e-Pass will upload their data from June 1-15 for sanction of renewal and fresh scholarships for the academic year 2022-23. All Welfare Departments are requested to educate the public on the registration process for renewal and fresh scholarships and ensure that the registration process be completed by June 15."

## Goldstone Tech, Quantron JV set to focus on using AI solutions

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based Goldstone Technologies on Wednesday announced partnership with Quantron AG, a German e-mobility major, to establish a joint venture to address the high potential fleet management market valued at around Rs 5.8 lakh crore by 2032.

The two firms will set up headquarters in Hyderabad and Augsburg in Germany. They also plan to set up an office in the US by the third quarter of 2023. The joint venture will emphasise on the global electric mobility market and hydrogen economy.

The joint venture is already focusing on enhancing its AI-supported solutions for sustainable integrated operations, catering to the demand in Europe, the USA, India, and the Middle East. By focusing on zero-emission transport, the JV aims to offer OEM-agnostic Mobility as a Service (MaaS) solutions, addressing efficiency and digitalization challenges. With their combined expertise, the company is well-positioned to shape a cleaner and more efficient future for mobility and logistics.



### VALEDICTORY OF CM CUP HELD

## 18 different sports featured

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The four-day state-level tournament of CM Cup came to an end on Wednesday. The closing ceremony was held at the Saroornagar Indoor stadium.

Telangana Legislative Council Chairman Gutta Sukhender Reddy was the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, Reddy said, "Telangana state will see a lot of growth in the field of sports as the government is working hard to provide a platform for athletes from the state."

The Chairman further stated that Chief Minister K Chandrasekar Rao has felicitated those who have performed well at the national level and it should be an inspiration for all the athletes from Telangana.

Reddy also lashed out at the recently concluded Indian Premier League and said, "The league is highly commercial, leading to betting which has resulted in people losing money through betting."

Approximately 10,000 sportspersons from 33 districts of Telangana participated in the tournament

which comprised 18 different sports. Nagarjuna Sagar MLA Nomula Bhagat, Telangana Sports Authority Chairman Anjaneya Goud and others attended the closing ceremony.

Earlier, CM Cup Shooting Championship was conducted at the Shooting Range. City Mayor Vijayalakshmi asked women to compete with men equally. "I would like to inform you on this occasion that the government will provide 0.5 per cent reservation for professional courses and two per cent for government jobs," she added.

## 69% deliveries in govt hospitals of TS in April

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's government hospitals have delivered 69 per cent of the babies born in April 2023, with more than 80% of deliveries in government hospitals having taken place in Sangareddy, Narayanpet, Medak and Jogulamba Gadwal.

Across the 16 districts of Telangana, 70% of deliveries have been registered in government hospitals. Rangareddy district marked lowest government hospital deliveries with only 48%. Hyderabad stood at 77 per cent at the sixth place.

On this occasion, Health Minister Harish Rao said, "The number of births occurring in government hospitals has more than doubled from 30% in 2014 to 62% in the year 2022-23. This substantial increase is a testament to the effectiveness of maternal and child care measures implemented under the visionary guidance of Chief Minister KCR, as part of the Arogya Telangana initiative."

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of Andhra Pensioners Party. The office of the party is located at H.No.8-6-666, Sri Balaji Nagar, Near B.N. Reddy Nagar, Vanasthalipuram, Hyderabad, R.R. District - 500070. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29 A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 - Names / address of the office bearers of the party are as follows:

**President : P. Subba Rayan,**  
H.No.8-6-666, Sri Balaji Nagar, Vanasthalipuram, Hyderabad, R.R. District - 500 070.  
**Secretary General : P.S.N. Murthy**  
H.No.4-12-197, Bhagyalatha Colony, Vanasthalipuram - 500 070, Hyderabad

**Treasurer : T. Nagabhushanam**  
H.No.2-111, Santhi Nagar, Vanasthalipuram, Hyderabad  
If anyone has any objection to the registration of Andhra Pensioners Party they may send their objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi - 110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

## Free entry to Golconda Fort on June 2 & 3

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The public will be allowed to enter the Golconda Fort for free on June 2 and 3, as the Union Ministry of Culture will organise "Qila aur Kahania" and "Wonder Caves" events.

The ministry has announced the two events as part of the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" under the aegis of the theme 'Cultural Pride'. Golconda Fort is under Archaeological Survey of India. The Hyderabad Circle has been selected for the 'Qila Aur Kahania' in collaboration with the South Zone Cultural Centre (SZCC).

Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy will inaugurate the event on June 2 by hoisting the Indian flag, which coincides with the Telangana Formation Day and it will be open for the general public as well.

This will be followed by the inauguration of photo exhibitions set up by various departments under the Ministry of Culture in Telangana. A cultural event comprising performances by renowned singers, classical and folk dances by various artists will be held. The closing ceremony on June 3 will comprise a cultural event in the evening.



## Agri drones for farm solutions unveiled

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Magellanic Cloud, a city-based drone manufacturer on Wednesday unveiled its agri drones. It also aims to enter the defence sector in the future.

Shedding light on the drone type and its usage, Joseph Sudheer Reddy Thumala, CEO, Megallanic Cloud said, "These are being developed as part of Scandron, a firm which was acquired last year. Approximately Rs 30 to 40 crore is being spent on related research and development.

These drones are being used to spray pesticides in the fields. These are programmed to fly at a height of 20-50 meters based on the area which needs the pesticides."

"Drone technology is one of the fastest growing sectors

and hence it was necessary to tap into it. The firm entered a contract with the DRDO to manufacture inspection-centric drones.

The 'make In India' initiative and the promotion of drones by the Government of India was also a factor in taking up the initiative," he explained.

"These are indigenously built except for a few technical components which are imported from Germany and China. These can be classified into cargo drones as well which can carry a payload of 2-100 kgs, in the range of 5-60 km.

The firm has also designed beyond the sight drones which are indigenously built. The latest focus is on anti-drone system which could help identify drones entering the territory. Depending on

the detection the drone will act accordingly."

Shedding light on the various types of inspection Thumala said, "As part of inspection, these are designed to navigate through confined spaces, along with inspection of defence submarines."

The company is also aims to tap into the business sector while being in compliance with National Logistics Policy and Kisan Drone Shakti.

The e-surveillance system and advanced delivery system is a factor enabling the firm to tap into defence, real estate, pharma, e-commerce, agriculture and other sectors.

It has completed the stage two testing of the low range drones and will begin trials for the heavy-duty army drones. It awaits clearance from DGCA and Airport Authority of India.

## Destination weddings of celebrities catching on

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The destination weddings of celebrities have an impact on the weddings in general. For instance, when a person is buying a house, he negotiates if the price can be reduced, but when it comes to a wedding, they only request to do the needful and this has become an emotion now.

At least 85 per cent of the Indian population now saves to ensure their daughter is married on a grand scale. Society stigma has moved in that fashion and weddings have been one conglomerate where different cultures are mixed, said Balam Babu, President of Telangana

Chamber of Events Industry (TCEI).

He elaborated on top-trending topics as he launched Telangana Chamber of Events Industry (TCEI) Website of the largest congregation of national and international wedding planners to happen in Hyderabad on July 24 and 25 at HICC and HITEX, Hyderabad.

The programme is supported by the Telangana Tourism as it sponsors one of the dinners.

The wedding experts also said that on the other side of the cycle there are couples who prefer temple weddings and transition is part of the trend these days.

"We have a lot of international



speakers added for the second edition such as Teddy Manuel from Philippines, Joseph Radhik who covered grand celebrity marriages

such as Kiara Advani and Sidhartha Malhotra, Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma."

The caterers who served food for

Ambanis and all the big names who are involved in global big weddings will visit Hyderabad, Bahrain tourism, Turkey, Thailand, Dubai, Hungary and Bali.

The hosts conduct panel discussions, interactions and master classes for people who want to learn wedding decors and event management.

The South Indian Wedding Planning Congress will also feature themed dinners and lunches, showcasing the best of Indian hospitality. Attendees will be treated to a culinary experience that highlights the rich flavours and traditions of Indian cuisine.

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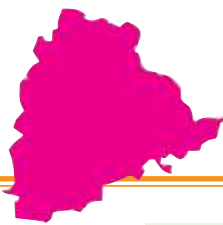
**Tender Notice No. 03/2023-24 of Spec. No. 08/2023-24 to 10/2023-24 of SE/OP/MNCL**  
Sealed tenders were invited from TSNPDCL registered Contractors for execution of various electrical works in Operation Circle, Mancherla. The details of works and other information can be obtained from our website [www.tsnpdcl.in](http://www.tsnpdcl.in)  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Operation Circle, Mancherla

**Short Tender Notice No.20/23-24 of DEE/OP/Nizamabad**  
Sealed tenders are invited from TSNPDCL registered Contractors of Nizamabad District (Eastwhile) for various electrical works in Nizamabad Division of operation circle Nizamabad. The details of the works and other information can be obtained from our website [www.tsnpdcl.in](http://www.tsnpdcl.in)  
Sd/- Divisional Engineer Elect., Operation, Nizamabad.

**Short Tender Notice No.05/23-24 of DEE/OP/Metpally with Specification No. 05/ 2023-24**  
Sealed tenders are invited from TSNPDCL registered contractors of Jagtial District for the various works in Metpally Division. The details of works can be obtained from our website [www.tsnpdcl.in](http://www.tsnpdcl.in) Sd/- Divisional Elect., Engineer, Operation, Metpally

R.O.No: 238-PPCL-AGENCY/AGVT/12023-24





# Etala reconciled to three options

K VENKATESHWARLU  
■ HYDERABAD

BJP national executive committee member and Huzurabad MLA Eatala Rajender, who recently made sensational comments in a chat with the scribes, has three options only: obey the BJP high command's decision which entails continuing Bandi Sanjay as party State unit president, maintain silence, or quit the BJP, according to party sources.

BJP senior leader and former MLA Yennam Srinivas Reddy, who batted for Rajender to make him BJP State unit president, told the media that the Huzurabad MLA has only three options now.

Srinivas Reddy, while speaking to The Pioneer, said that it



It is learnt that Rajender may not take any hasty decision. He said time and again that he would not quit a party till the party sent him out. Rajender also stated that he did not quit TRS/BRS, he was sent out by the party

is up to Rajender to take his own decision.

Srinivas Reddy said, "It is true that we tried to make Eatala the president of the Telangana BJP, thinking that the party may win more seats with as party State unit president. But the party took a decision to continue Sanjay as the president. I follow the party's

decision as a party leader. I don't know about future developments."

However, it is learnt that Rajender may not take any hasty decision. He said time and again that he would not quit a party till the party sent him out. Rajender also stated that he did not quit TRS/BRS, he was sent out by the party.

However, not only political observers, but the BJP leaders like Srinivas Reddy stated that Rajender's chit-chat on May 29 reflected that the Huzurabad MLA is somewhat unhappy with the decisions that the party has taken.

In fact, BRS suspended leader Jupally Krishna Rao and stated that leaders like Rajender will come along with them (Jupally and Ponguleti) to topple Chief K Chandrababhan Rao.

Clarity on developments may emerge in June as BRS suspended leaders Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Jupally Krishna Rao will reveal their next move in June.

Efforts to seek clarification from Rajender did not yield results as there was no response from his office.



## Bickerings in Cong come to fore

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Internal bickering in the Congress bickering came to the fore once against, this time in Warangal. Clashes broke out between rival factions in the party at a meeting in which former mayor Errabelli Swarna took oath as Warangal district unit president on Wednesday.

Chaos and confusion ruled the roost at the meeting. Former MLA Konda Surekha, supported by her supporters and rivals raised a ruckus at the meeting. The Congress activists belonging to rival factions fought with other with footwear and other weapons. The activists were seen with torn clothes.

It may be recalled that Surekha was one of the contenders for the post of Warangal District unit president. The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee, however, appointed Swarna as DCC president.

# BRS, BJP have secret 'pact,' says Bhatti Vikramarka

PNS ■ MAHABUB NAGAR

The BJP and BRS have a secret understanding with each other, alleged Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. But, they were level charges against each other in public only to hoodwink the people, he said.

The BRS leaders in their 10-year rule had looted public wealth to last for 100 years. Yet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who charged the BRS government with unbridled corruption, were reluctant to take any action against the KCR government, he pointed out.

Addressing media persons at Dedinepalli as part of his Padayatra that entered its 76th day on Wednesday, the CLP leader said that people had clearly understood that BJP and BRS were two sides of the same coin.

He said that lakhs of people in hundreds of villages during his people's march from Pippiri in Adilabad to Kollapur complained against the government. The people were seething with anger against the BRS government. They decided to put an end to KCR's rule.

Asserting that the Congress Party would take inspiration from former Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, the architect of modern India, Bhatti said the



Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka addressing a media conference at Dedinepalli in Nagarkurnool district on Wednesday

party would achieve the goals of Telangana State building social Telangana with progressive thoughts. As part of the ongoing realignment of political forces at the field level, people were gearing up to elect Congress Party candidates with a huge majority. The Congress Party would win over 100 seats in Telangana, he predicted. As it is becoming evident that the Congress Party would win not less than 100 seats in the next elections, BRS and BJP leaders were looking towards Congress Party.

Emphasising the promises of the Congress Party, he said the construction of all projects on Krishna and Godavari that were taken up during the tenure of the previous Congress government would be completed once the party came to power, he said.

Though the Congress Party completed Kalwakurthy lift irrigation project, its distributary canals, and branch canals about 10 years ago, the BRS government neglected the project without digging irrigation channels/canals. The Congress party would complete the irrigation channels within one year of coming to power, he said.

The Congress government which completed Srisailem, Nettekoppu, Nagarjuna Sagar and Bhima projects, would complete Palaru -Ranga Reddy lift irrigation project and also Lakshmi Devi Pali Reservoir once it came to power in the next election to bring Krishna waters to agricultural lands, Bhatti asserted. Similarly at Tummidu Hatti on Godavari, Pranahita Chevella project would be completed without delay. Water would be given to Devadula fully by completing Indira and Rajiv Sagar.

# Traffic advisory for TS Formation Day fete

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Traffic Police have issued a traffic advisory in view of the upcoming Telangana Formation Day on June 2. The advisory states that moderate traffic congestion is expected due to the movement of invitees from 6 am to 2 pm. To ensure the smooth flow of vehicles and minimise inconvenience to the general public, specific traffic diversions will be implemented.

The main event will take place at the Secretariat, and the traffic will not be allowed between VV Statue, Necklace Rotary, NTR Marg, and Telugu Thalli

Junction. Traffic coming from Khairatabad, Panjagutta and Somajiguda, and intending to go towards Necklace Rotary, will be diverted at VV Statue towards Shadan-Nirankari. However, during VVIP movement, traffic from Shadan Nirankari/Somajiguda will be temporarily stopped.

Traffic coming from Nirankari/Chintalbasthi and intending to go towards Necklace Rotary will not be allowed to use Khairatabad flyover. Traffic coming from Iqbal Minar Junction and intending to go towards Tankbund, Ranigunj and Liberty will not be allowed towards Telugu Thalli

Jn/Ambekar Statue/Tank Bund and will be directed to take the Telugu Thalli flyover towards Katta Maisamma Junction and Lower Tank Bund. Traffic coming from Tank Bund and Telugu Thalli, intending to go towards NTR Marg, will be diverted at Telugu Thalli Junction towards Iqbal Minar Junction. Traffic coming from BRKR Bhavan towards NTR Marg will be diverted at Telugu Thalli Junction towards Iqbal Minar Junction.

Traffic coming from Bada Ganesh lane towards Imax/Necklace Rotary and Mint lane will be diverted at Bada Ganesh towards Rajdoot lane.

## Adilabad Police bust child trafficking racket

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Adilabad Police on Wednesday busted a child trafficking racket and arrested nine people, including three women.

According to District Superintendent of Police D Uday Kumar Reddy, two children were rescued during the operation and they were sent to a childcare home.

The arrested are S Ramana alias Rama, G Bala Balaji, Raj Kumar, D Mamatha Balgi, Sujatha and Shinde Jagannath from Karnataka, Shaik Abdulla alias Sharuk, M Gangadhar and M Ashok from Telangana.

The police detained Gangadhar when he was allegedly about to sell a child to a couple. The police launched an investigation following a complaint by the District Child Welfare Officer, the



Superintendent of Police said.

Gangadhar, during interrogation, spilled the beans and it led to the arrest of the gangsters. He confessed to having agreed to sell his two daughters to a couple for Rs 2.50 lakh. He told the police that Sharuk had helped him to make a deal with the couple. He said that he had agreed to sell his children following the death of his wife, the police said.

# Harish calls for grand decennial fete

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Minister for Finance T Harisha Rao on Wednesday appealed to the people's representatives and officials to organise Telangana State decennial celebrations on a grand scale in the district and it should set an example for others to follow.

Reviewing the arrangements for holding the celebrations at a meeting here, the Minister advised the people's representatives and officials to ensure that the progress made during the last 10 years after the formation of Telangana State is spread to every nook and corner in the district.

District Collector Prashant Jeevan Patil, Additional Collector Muzammil Khan, officials and people's representatives attended the meeting.

Harish Rao stressed the need to ensure that a festive atmosphere prevails during the celebrations. "Siddipet became synonymous with development. We are at the forefront of development. We achieved development after hard work," he said. He said the decennial



Minister for Finance T Harish Rao speaking at a review meeting in Siddipet on Wednesday

celebrations would be held for 21 days, he said.

"If we are able to explain the progress made to the people, we will prove successful in our mission," he said and added that the officials and people's representatives should disseminate the development achieved during the last nine years to people at the ground level. Cautioning the people's representatives against laxity, the Minister asked everyone to take part in the celebrations.

Harish Rao recalled that the people used to reel under drinking water crisis in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh.

Now in the new State of Telangana, water has been

brimming in wells and tanks even in summer. The people in Maharashtra were still facing drinking water scarcity, he said. "If truth is not told firmly, lies will rule the roost," he warned.

None dreamt about bringing Kaleshwaram water to the district to irrigate lands and provide potable water to the people. The State government has already procured 2 lakh tonnes of paddy and one more lakh tonnes of paddy is likely to arrive at the procurement centres, he said.

## 'Kiran Kumar Reddy is now in darkness'

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao on Wednesday took a dig at the last chief Minister of United Andhra Pradesh N Kiran Kumar Reddy for passing "disparaging remarks" against Telangana. He played a video clip containing Kiran Kumar Reddy's comments that "dark days" were ahead. "Now it is necessary to explain the development that took place in Telangana. We are not in the darkness. It is Kiran Kumar Reddy who is in darkness," he said sarcastically. "Some people with vested interests are spewing venom against Telangana. We must give a befitting to those people," he said and stressed the need to challenge the false propaganda. Harish Rao called upon people to uphold the truth and counter the false claims.

# Kavitha supports women wrestlers' cause

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha came out in support of protesting women wrestlers who were protesting for the arrest of the WFI chief Brij Bhushan Singh, accused of sexual harassment.

She said that women wrestlers brought pride to our country with their victories across the globe and that absolute silence by the government at the Centre was no response to the emerging issue. She demanded action by the government that is in the national interest and that of the dignity of the athletes.

She tweeted, 'It is the hard work, dedication and patriotism of our women #Wrestlers that showed this talent of India to the world. The government of India must think in the interest of the country in these five days. Even after a serious



charge like POCSO, the accused is out in public, justice in no way can be denied to the victim, and the ongoing brutality with these gold medal-awarded women players is absolutely reprehensible.

The government must know that the entire country wants an answer and the world is watching, said Kavitha, former MP and daughter of Telangana Chief Minister. She demanded action against the accused amid protests by women wrestlers in Delhi.

# Cong accuses BRS of neglecting minority welfare

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress party has launched a scathing attack on the BRS government's handling of minority welfare, accusing the ruling party of persistent neglect and failure during Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao's nine-year rule.

These allegations were made during a special executive meeting of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Minority Department held at Indira Bhavan in Gandhi Bhavan premises on Wednesday.

The meeting saw the participation of All India Congress Committee (AICC) Minorities Department chairman and Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratapgarhi, Nalgonda Lok Sabha member N Uttam Kumar Reddy, TPCC Minorities Department chairman Shaik Abdullah Sohail, and several senior leaders.

During the meeting, a charge sheet was released, outlining the failures of the BRS government in upholding the welfare of minority communities in Telangana.

An audio-visual presentation on various issues concerning minority welfare was given. The Congress party highlighted several areas where they believe the BRS government has fallen short, including unemployment, housing, education, the Urdu language, the Shaadi Mubarak Scheme, the safety of religious structures, rising crime rates, Wakf prop-



erty, the minority welfare budget, and diminishing Muslim representation in top positions.

The Congress expressed concerns about the unemployment rate among minority youths, estimated at 15 lakh. They alleged systemic discrimination in loan issuance and job placements, particularly affecting Muslim candidates from the Old City of Hyderabad. The party also emphasised the lack of adequate housing allocation, citing the Sudhir Commission report, which states that 43% of Muslims in Telangana live in rented homes and fewer than 1,000 families have benefited from the promised 10% allocation under the 2BHK housing scheme.

On the education front, Congress revealed the closure of over 80% of minority institutions and the absence of scholarships or fee reimbursement for Muslim students. They also expressed concern about the shutdown of hundreds of government schools in minority-dominated areas. The party accused the BRS govern-

ment of neglecting the Urdu language despite its recognition as a second official language, resulting in limited appointments of Urdu officers and translators and the dysfunction of the Urdu Academy.

Allegations were also made regarding the Shaadi Mubarak Scheme, claiming that thousands of applications for financial assistance towards marriages are pending, causing hardship to impoverished families who have been awaiting their cheques for years. The Congress party expressed concern about the demolition of six mosques, including two on the Old Secretariat premises, and the failure to rebuild them.

The rising crime rate in Muslim-dominated areas, such as the Old City of Hyderabad, was highlighted, with the Congress party citing unchecked instances of murders, drug abuse, and liquor abuse. They also accused TRS leaders of encroaching on Wakf properties worth hundreds of crores and criticized the lack of judicial powers given to the Wakf Board.

## Kavitha, Bandi greet each other: Video goes viral

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) MLC K Kavitha and BJP State unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar greeted each other for the first time at a private function on Wednesday.

The two leaders, who are political rivals, came face to face at a function here. The video showing the two leaders greeting each other with a smile went viral on social media.

It may be recalled that Sanjay has been alleging that Kavitha was involved in the Delhi liquor scam. He has also been criticising the Chief Minister and his family time



and again.

Kavitha and the BRS leaders have been going at Sanjay Kumar hammer and tongs whenever the opportunity arises. The BRS leaders have been accusing the BJP-led Central government of unleashing the CBI and Enforcement Director against rivals.

# 10-yr-old's trauma with a bandicoot at AMB theatre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The cinema theatres in the city not only have expensive tickets and food to offer, but are washing off hands when any inconvenience is reported by the viewer.

On Tuesday night, when one of the families in the city has gone to watch a Telugu movie in AMB Cinemas at Gachibowli, their 10-year-old has encountered a dangerous experience with a bandicoot on the glue trap right under the seat.

Narrating the incident, the child's father Ravi Korukonda

said, "My child with a relative, sat in the front row and we were sitting behind them, and as the movie was about to wrap up, my daughter began crying. When we rushed to her we saw the blanket she carried got stuck on the sticky pad and as it was not coming out. The kid has put her hand on the glue pad and saw a scary bandicoot."

"My kid cried continuously and I ran around to find people. The house-keeping team neglected the issue saying "Oh sorry." The manager on duty also ignored my complaint though my people did

not wish to carry blanket worth Rs 2,000. We spent Rs 1,500 and this is the way the famous theatres treat us," he added.

Social Activist Harish Kumar Daga said, "There are people struggling in single screen theatres where the situation is pathetic. There are bandicoots everywhere and there is a process to catch them. I got to learn that these glue traps were banned in Telangana in 2021 but they are easily available in shops. The theatres must function with amenities when people are paying them for service."

# TS government committed to welfare of farmers

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Minister for Prohibition and Excise V Srinivas Goud has said that Telangana is the only state in the country which is committed to the welfare of farmers.

He was taking part in a spree of development projects in Kodugal village of Jadcherla Assembly constituency of Mahabubnagar district on Wednesday.

The Minister said that no previous regime in the past 70 years that ruled the united AP created amenities in Telangana. However, the BRS regime in the new State of Telangana developed infrastructural amenities in villages and towns.

Besides implementing schemes like Rytu Bandhu, Rytu Bima, and CMRF, the State government is striving to provide irrigation facilities to the farmers through Palaru-Rangareddy LI Scheme, he said adding that other states are emulating the Telangana scheme. He reiterated that Telangana is the only state that protects the interests of the farmers.

In the new State of Telangana, remarkable development has been achieved during the past nine years. He dwelt on establishing residential schools to make corporate school education accessible to poor students.



INDIA CORNER

CBI books Maharashtra postal department employee for embezzlement

The CBI has booked a postal department employee in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri for allegedly embezzling Rs 63 lakh from 260 dormant savings accounts of beneficiaries of government welfare schemes, officials said on Wednesday. Gajanan Parasram Gutte, during his posting at Anjarla sub-post office from 2018-20, prepared forged withdrawal vouchers faking the signatures and thumb impressions of the beneficiaries who were either dead or too old to come to the post office regularly, they said. Gutte targeted savings bank accounts of beneficiaries of social welfare schemes such as Sanjay Gandhi Yojana, Shraavan Bal Yojana and Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme. He could smoothly embezzle funds citing inability to run central banking software Finacle due to poor internet connectivity as an excuse, according to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials.



Committed to implement guarantees, K'taka cabinet will decide on June 2

Asserting that his government will implement the five poll 'guarantees' promised ahead of the assembly polls, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said officials have shared their inputs on financial implications, and the cabinet will meet on June 2 to decide on the implementation. The cabinet meeting was earlier scheduled for June 1. In view of the implementation of guarantees, the Chief Minister today held a meeting with all the Ministers and senior officials of the concerned departments at Vidhana Soudha, the seat of state secretariat and legislature, here. "We had given five guarantees to the people, regarding these five guarantees concerned officials and finance department officials have made a presentation together. All the Ministers have seen the presentation, it has all the details - proposals and financial implications of the implementation," Siddaramaiah said.



Eating junk food linked with reduced deep sleep quality: Study

Consuming an unhealthy diet is associated with a lower quality of deep sleep, according to a small-scale study. Deep sleep, the third stage of sleep, repairs and restores necessary functions such as memory, muscle growth, and immunity. Researchers at Uppsala University in Sweden analysed how junk food affects sleep. Healthy participants consumed an unhealthy as well as a healthier diet in a randomised order. The study, recently published in the journal Obesity, shows that after eating the junk food, the quality of the participants' deep sleep deteriorated, compared with those who followed the healthier diet. "Both poor diet and poor sleep increase the risk of several public health conditions," said Jonathan Cedernaes, Associate Professor at Uppsala University. A total of 15 healthy normal-weight young men participated in two sessions of the study.



Energy, trade ties focus of Modi-Prachanda talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Boosting India-Nepal cooperation in areas of energy, connectivity and trade is set to be the focus of talks on Thursday between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.



capacity as the Nepalese prime minister.

"PM @cmprachanda of Nepal arrives in New Delhi on his first overseas visit after assumption of office. Warmly welcomed by MoS @M\_Lekhi at the airport. The visit will impart renewed momentum to the close and unique India-Nepal relationship," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted.

A high-level delegation is accompanying Prachanda. He and Prime Minister Modi will hold talks on Thursday following which both sides are expected to ink a number of agreements.

The Nepalese prime minister is also scheduled to call on President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Nepal is considered an important country for New Delhi as it shares a border of over 1850 km with five Indian states Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Prachanda arrives on 4-day visit to India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Wednesday began a four-day visit to India that is expected to inject a fresh momentum in the already close relations between the two countries.

It is the first bilateral trip abroad by the 68-year-old Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) leader after he assumed the top office in December 2022.

He was received at the airport in Delhi by Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi.

"PM @cmprachanda of Nepal arrives in New Delhi on his first overseas visit after assumption of office. Warmly welcomed by MoS @M\_Lekhi at the airport. The visit will impart renewed momentum to the close and unique India-Nepal relationship," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted.

Mamata takes to streets on 'manhandling' of wrestlers

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday took to the streets here to protest against the alleged manhandling of wrestlers at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar after they tried to march towards the new Parliament building following its inauguration three days ago.

Holding a placard with the message, "We Want Justice", written on it, Banerjee participated in a rally which started at Hazra Road crossing in the southern part of the city and culminated at Rabindra Sadan, the cultural hub of the eastern metropolis.

Banerjee joined the 2.8-km rally at Bhabanipur, her own constituency.

She was flanked by former women footballers Kuntala Ghosh Dastidar and Shanti Mallick, ex-soccer players Alvito D'Cunha, Rahim Nabi, and Dipendu Biswas and several other sports personalities and common people.

State minister Arup Biswas



and cricketer-turned-minister Manoj Tiwary spearheaded the rally organised by the sports department to show solidarity towards the protesting wrestlers.

The wrestlers are demanding the arrest of the Wrestling Federation of India's former chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh who is accused of sexually harassing several women grapplers.

The rally was organised a day after the country's top wrestlers, including Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat and

Bajrang Punia, along with hundreds of their supporters, reached Har ki Pauri to immerse their medals in the river Ganga but were persuaded by Khap and farmer leaders not to do so.

The wrestlers, who were protesting at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi since April 23 demanding the arrest of Singh, were removed from the site by the police on May 28 after they tried to march towards the new Parliament building.

They were detained, before being released later.

3-pronged approach to restore peace in Manipur

PNS ■ IMPHAL

The Centre is working on a three-pronged approach to bring the warring Meitei and Kuki communities into a narrow common ground for lasting peace in trouble-torn Manipur, sources said on Wednesday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is currently visiting Manipur, has given clear instructions that violence must end immediately and peace should be restored in the northeastern state as early as possible.

The government is working on a three-pronged approach to restore peace in Manipur. These include dialogue with the affected people, rehabilitating those who had to leave their homes with enhanced security and control over insurgents, the sources privy to the development said.

The major task before the government is to build confidence between the Meitei and Kuki communities.

Hence, the Centre is making all efforts to reach out to every segment of the society in Manipur and working to bring them into a narrow common ground for lasting peace, the sources added.

There has been a concern that several terrorists have moved away from their designated camps and efforts are on



to bring them back, they informed.

Security forces are also asking the members of all communities to hand over weapons if they have any, the sources said. Some of the affected people belonging to both the Meitei and Kuki communities, who were moved to safer areas, want to return to their homes.

The administration is being instructed to provide them a safe environment so that they can restart their normal life, the sources said.

Shah, whose trip is part of the confidence-building measures in the northeastern state, is speaking to all segments of the society and visiting the violence-hit areas.

The home minister has said the peace and prosperity of Manipur are the government's top priority and instructed

officials to strictly deal with any activity that disturbs peace. This is for the first time that the home minister is visiting Manipur since ethnic clashes broke out in the northeastern state on May 3.

The state has been witnessing sporadic violence ever since.

The death toll from the clashes has gone up to 80, according to officials.

The violence first broke out after a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the hill districts of the state on May 3 to protest the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The violence was preceded by tension over the eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations.

Covid curbs reduced aerosols' 'masking' effect, upped warming

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new research has found that Covid pandemic restrictions led to stronger climate warming.

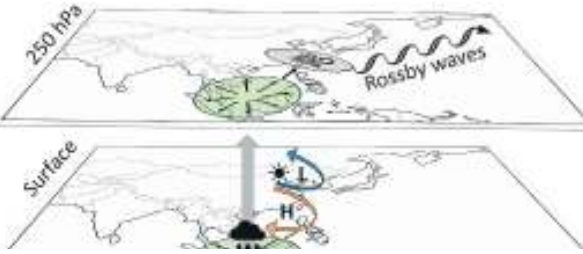
The study from Stockholm University, Sweden, said that this was because the restrictions reduced the aerosol content in the air mass over South Asia, mainly Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, but had no effect on the concentrations of the longer-lived greenhouse gases.

A lower aerosol content meant less cooling, because of less reflection of incoming solar radiation back into space, and

thus less 'masking' of the warming effect of the significantly longer-lived climate gases.

Measurements taken at the same time over the northern Indian Ocean revealed a 7 per cent increase in solar radiation reaching the Earth's surface, thus increasing temperatures. Measurements were taken at Hanimaadhoo, a measuring station in the northernmost Maldives off the coast of India.

The results published in NPJ Climate and Atmospheric Science showed that a complete phasing out of fossil fuel combustion in favour of renewable



energy sources with zero emissions could result in rapid 'unmasking' of aerosols, while greenhouse gases linger.

In the spring of 2020, pandemic restrictions significantly reduced industrial activity and

demic became a 'natural' experiment to examine what happens to the climate if gas and aerosol emissions were rapidly reduced.

"Through this large-scale geophysical experiment, we were able to demonstrate that while the sky became bluer and the air cleaner, climate warming increased when these cooling air particles were removed," said Orjan Gustafsson, professor at Stockholm University, lead researcher and responsible for the measurements in the Maldives.

NSUI protests against inclusion of course on Savarkar in DU syllabus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NSUI activists on Wednesday staged a protest outside Delhi University Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh's office over the recent changes in the BA (Political Science) syllabus, including the inclusion of a course on Hindutva ideology Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Teachers on Saturday claimed that the university has replaced a paper on Mahatma Gandhi in the fifth semester Political Science syllabus with one on Savarkar.

On Wednesday, students affiliated with the Congress-

backed National Students' Union of India (NSUI) alleged that the university has included the course on Savarkar following pressure from the Centre.

There is also a proposal to drop a Philosophy course focusing on the works of Dr BR Ambedkar.

The protesters submitted a memorandum to the university administration opposing the changes to the syllabus.

"The Delhi University administration recently decided that an elective course on the philosophy of Dr BR Ambedkar will be removed from the Philosophy

(Honours) undergraduate programme. It is also proposed to teach Savarkar in the Political Science course," the NSUI said in a statement.

The NSUI demanded that instead of removing Ambedkar from the elective course, an additional chapter should be added on him and efforts made to motivate the students to do maximum research on him.

Kunal Sehrawat, the Delhi unit president of the NSUI, said in the release that Ambedkar was an indigenous thinker of the social aspirations of the majority of the country's people.

DIALOGUE IN MANIPUR

When will life be back to normal, wonder villagers

PNS ■ SANGAITHEL/SAHEIBUNG (MANIPUR)

As Kuki and Meitei villagers pick up their lives after one of the worst bouts of ethnic clashes in this northeastern state, they have only one question in mind when will life be back to normal? Normal for most of them meant being able to chat with a fellow Manipuri, without worrying whether he or she belonged to another tribe, ride a motorcycle to the next district in search of a bargain or see a movie in the evening without worrying about an arson attack at the cinema hall.

"Politicians need to step out and work towards a milap (friendship) Only then, there will be peace and all will be able to sleep in their own homes. Otherwise, there will be no end to this madness," said N Sundee Meitei told PTI in Sangaithel village in Imphal West district.

L Bimol Meitei, an ex-BSF personnel, said that his village Sangaithel is adjacent to a Kuki village and before the violence began, there was a cordial relationship between them with both sides visiting each other.

"There was trade happening between the two tribes. After



May 3, there is an atmosphere of fear because attacks took place in some nearby places. So, the contacts have stopped now," he lamented.

In the neighbouring Kuki village of Saheibung, located in the foothills of Kangpokpi district, Village Chief S Athang

only time will say that," he added.

Haokip said that houses in his and other neighbouring Kuki villages were not burnt by people from Sangaithel or any other nearby Meitei settlement, but by attackers who came from distant places.

The village chief said, "Kukis have nowhere to go, Meitis are in the same boat. If violence continues after the Army leaves, we have no option but to fight. We have to fight until both of us are finished."

"The BJP government says it is double-engined and they can do anything. Such a fast

and strong government will have solutions ... Unless there is a solution, this war will go on." Hoping that Shah's visit will provide some solutions to the problem, Haokip requested the Central government to do whatever is needed to bring normalcy back.

Bimol Meitei said there must be a dialogue between the two communities and the state or central government should take the initiative to that end.

He said that people from Sangaithel and Saheibung met once after the violence started mainly due to an initiative taken by the armed forces.

The Congress government has broken the dreams of youths in the state and they are filled with anger, he alleged.

"The unemployed youths are being provided assistance through this scheme, but I would be happier when you get employed," he said while addressing the gathering of youths present there.

Advertisements for recruitment into various departments are continuously being released. At the same time, the government has also been imparting skill development training so that youths could

Chhattisgarh CM transfers Rs 32.35 cr as dole to 1.05 lakh beneficiaries

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday disbursed Rs 32.35 crore as the second instalment of the unemployment allowance into the bank accounts of 1.05 lakh beneficiaries, and said he would be happier if these youths actually get jobs.

Under the scheme, the state government pays Rs 2,500 monthly allowance to each beneficiary. The first instalment of Rs 16.54 crore was transferred into the bank accounts of 66,256 beneficiaries on April 30, officials said.

The chief minister transferred the second instalment amount during a function held at his official residence here.

"The unemployed youths are being provided assistance through this scheme, but I would be happier when you get employed," he said while addressing the gathering of youths present there.

Advertisements for recruitment into various departments are continuously being released. At the same time, the government has also been imparting skill development training so that youths could

start their own business. Unemployment allowance is just a small assistance through which you could achieve your goals, he added.

This allowance will help in buying books for competitive exams and other things. The state government has waived the examination fees for the youth of Chhattisgarh in exams conducted by the Chhattisgarh Professional Examination Board and the Chhattisgarh Public Service

Commission (CGPSC), he added.

Meanwhile, opposition Bharatiya Janata Party's Chhattisgarh unit chief Arun Sao accused the ruling Congress of misleading the youths in the state.

The Congress government has broken the dreams of youths in the state and they are filled with anger, he alleged.

During his Republic Day address this year, CM Baghel had announced that unemployed youths will be given a monthly allowance of Rs 2,500 in the state from April. It was one of the key promises made by the Congress ahead of the 2018 Assembly election, in which the grand old party returned to power in the state after a gap of 15 years.







FIRST COLUMN

EFFICACY OF SATSANG MUST BE UNDERSTOOD

Satsang is association with good people; It is also about the inner quality of ‘sattva’ or purity



RAVI VALLURI

It was a desolate sight to see my nonagenarian grandmother. A deeply religious person whose life was dedicated to the Almighty, she lay afflicted by Alzheimer’s, in an incapacitated condition in a small nursing home in Bangalore. There was just a nurse to attend to her needs. Misty-eyed, I entered the room along with two gentlemen.

Grandma was quite unexpectedly injected with vital prana as she stared at us. “Moorty garu!” she exclaimed, much to the astonishment of the nurse who was involved in an animated conversation with Moorty garu. As we left, my grandmother looked forlorn and her benefactor blessed her. A somnolent 94-year-old woman abruptly awakening upon seeing Shri VSR Moorty, obviously meant that the satsangs he rendered were exemplary. There was one rendition of the Narada Bhakti sutras at our house in Hyderabad which is etched in my memory bank.

The year was 2014 and it was a crisp and cool morning in early November. I was posted in Secunderabad on South Central Railway. As I was poring over files, I walked Shri VSR Moorty. Moorty Garu focused his attention on my computer screen. Pictures of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar were flipping across the monitor. He looked at Gurudev’s photograph quite intently and uttered, “Ravi, I would like to have an interaction with Guruji.” This interaction or satsang would be recorded by Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel (SVBC).

My jaws fell in astonishment. Millions of devotees of Gurudev wait to have a glimpse of the Master and I had this onerous task of organising an interaction with the Master himself. But that is a challenge for any seeker and I promptly sent a mail to the Master and his secretariat seeking an appointment.



He then shared, “Ravi, the Sankalpa needs to be pure, rest Almighty God will take ensure that things fall in place, Sai Ram.” I was stunned that evening when the Secretariat agreed to fix the appointment at such short notice. We made the peregrination to the Bangalore Ashram of the Art of Living along with the staff from SVBC. For three days and three nights, we were witness to something transcendental. The interaction ranged on a variety of subjects from ancient Hindu practices, and various schools of Hindu philosophy to the present day. It is well-nigh impossible to decode the divine and pen the interaction.

A senior teacher of the Art of Living, Shri Vinod Menon was to tell Moorty Garu, “This is the closest one could unravel divinity, you are indeed blessed, coming so close to the Divine.”

In the amphitheatre on my mind the graphic scene of BR Chopra’s Mahabharata, the television serial played out, where Lord Krishna tells Bhishma, “Arjun woh nar hai jo Narayan ke darshan karwayega.” (That is, Arjuna is the person who will be the medium to reveal the resplendence of Narayana himself). So, this was satsang ... What does one mean by Satsang?

(I quote Yogapedia to describe Satsang) Satsang is a Sanskrit term derived from two roots: sat meaning true and sangha meaning community, company, or association.

It can be translated as “associating with good people” or simply “being in the company of truth.” It refers to the act of gathering like-minded, uplifting people, especially those on a spiritual path. Satsang is associated with the inner quality of sattva (goodness or purity), which is one of the three gunas (natural attributes) alongside rajas (passion) and tamas (inactivity). A sattvic person makes a natural Satsangi, or “seeker of truth.”

So let us all be satsangis in quest of the quintessential truth.

*(The writer is an author and a spiritual teacher)*

# Manual scavenging is a curse, must end now

## To end this menace Govt must provide alternative employment opportunities and encourage mechanised cleaning technologies

“Death does not discriminate, but the system does,” cried out Rukmani Devi, a grief-stricken relative who lost her cousin, Nand Kushwaha, and his son Nitesh, in a horrifying incident that unfolded in Bahora Ramnagar village. The tight-knit community mourns the loss of four lives, all victims of the archaic and inhumane practice of manual scavenging. On a sombre Sunday morning, tragedy struck as these brave souls descended into a septic tank, unaware of the deadly consequences that awaited them.

The incident occurred under the jurisdiction of the Nebua Naurangia police station in the Kushinagar district of Uttar Pradesh, a region plagued by the persisting men-

BISWAJEET BANERJEE

*(Writer is Political Editor, The Pioneer, Lucknow)*

ace of manual scavenging. Despite numerous promises and legislative measures to eradicate this degrading practice, it continues to thrive, claiming innocent lives and shattering families.

Manual scavenging, a practice that involves the manual cleaning of septic tanks, drains, and dry latrines, has been banned in India since 1993 under the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act. However, the law remains largely ineffective, with thousands of individuals still forced into this hazardous occupation due to poverty, social discrimination, and a lack of alternative livelihood options.

Incidentally, the government, which has introduced

several measures to prohibit manual scavenging and rehabilitate those involved, does not consider septic cleaning as manual scavenging, despite the National Human Rights Commission’s (NHRC) recommendation to expand the definition of manual scavengers. The incident serves as a stark reminder of the hazardous conditions faced by manual scavengers. “Nand was our sole breadwinner,” sobbed Rukmani Devi, her voice heavy with grief. “We had hoped for a brighter future for Nitesh, but now he is gone too. Why does no one care about our lives?”

The tragedy that befell the Kushwaha family is not an isolated incident. According to a report by Safai Karamchari Andolan, an organization

fighting for the rights of sanitation workers, there have been over 1,800 deaths related to manual scavenging in the past decade alone. In four years, between 2017-2021, 330 people lost their lives due to “hazardous cleaning of sewer and septic tanks” in India, as per the data presented in Lok Sabha in August 2022.

“Each death represents a life cut short, dreams left unfulfilled, and families left devastated,” Dinesh Kanojia, an office-bearer of Safai Karamchari Andolan said and added: “We clean society’s waste, but society refuses to acknowledge us as humans.”

Despite the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and the Rehabilitation Act of 2013, which outlawed the employ-

UTTAM GUPTA

# Rs 2k note exchange: Demonetisation 2.0

Rs 2000 note exchange will not have any impact on black money. It will only help hoarders by exchanging Rs 2000 notes without disclosing their identity

In its decision to withdraw Rs 2000 currency notes from circulation announced on May 19, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has stated that they will continue to be legal tender. The notification issued in this regard states:- “...in pursuance of the “Clean Note Policy” of the RBI it has been decided to withdraw the Rs 2000 denomination banknotes from circulation. The banknotes in Rs 2000 denomination will continue to be legal tender.”

From the above, prima facie one gets a sense that it is not a demonetization exercise as it happened over six years ago when, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on November 8, 2016, that Rs 500 and Rs 1000 denomination currency notes won’t be legal tender with immediate effect.

**If not demonetization then, what is?**

Is it merely a “Clean Note Policy” - as the RBI puts it? The central banks’ argument runs something like this: high denomination notes such as Rs 2000 is normally avoided for cash transactions. Yet, these had to be brought in following the note ban of 2016 to address the logistics of swapping the mammoth old Rs 500/1000 notes for new currency within a short time frame and thus minimize economic disruption. Nearly 90 per cent of the Rs 2000 notes valued at Rs 673,000 crore at their peak as on March 31, 2018, were issued from November 8, 2016, to March 31, 2017.

The intent was to phase them out after the RBI had pumped in a sufficient stock of lower denomination Rs 500 (albeit new) notes to meet the transactional requirements of the economy.

Already, the stock of Rs 2000 notes has declined from Rs 673,000 crore representing 37.3 per cent of notes in circulation on March 31, 2018, to Rs 362,000 crore constituting only 10.8 per cent of notes in circulation on March 31, 2023. Further, these being at the end of their estimated

THE CIRCULAR ALSO ALLOWS A PERSON TO DEPOSIT RS 2000 NOTES INTO HIS BANK ACCOUNT WITHOUT ANY LIMIT. FOR DEPOSITS ABOVE A SPECIFIED LIMIT, THE BANK IS REQUIRED TO REPORT TO THE INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT

*(The writer is a policy analyst)*

lifespan of 4 - 5 years and the stock of Rs 500 denominations adequate to meet the currency requirement of the public, it was logical to completely phase out the Rs 2000 note.

The RBI circular says that beginning May 23, 2023, the public may deposit Rs 2,000 banknotes into their bank accounts and or exchange them with banknotes of other denominations up to a limit of ten notes of Rs 20,000 value ‘at a time’ in banks until September 30, 2023. The facility for the exchange will also be provided at the 19 Regional Offices (ROs) of RBI having Issue Departments.

First, holders of Rs 2000 notes get 131 days to get rid of them which is two-and-a-half times the time given to the holders of Rs 500/1000 notes in 2016 i.e. 52 days to exchange them with the new currency. Second, Rs 2000 notes are only 10.8 per cent of the currency in circulation value-wise (as of March 31, 2023) against old Rs 500/1000 notes being a whopping 86 per cent of the corresponding figure in 2016, this time the load on the system is much less.

**Can we simply treat this as a routine exercise?**

At a fundamental level, the ‘withdrawal’ of the Rs 2000 banknotes - an exercise that the RBI hopes will get consummated on September 30, 2023 - doesn’t gel with its reiteration that these notes will remain legal tender even after September 30. Imagine a scenario whereby all of the Rs 2000 notes come back to the banks by this deadline then, any talk of whether it will remain legal tender is irrelevant. Look at it from another angle.

If, the intention is to maintain the legal status of the Rs 2000 note even after September 30, 2023, implying that it will continue to be accepted for settlement of payments, then why would holders come forward for exchange or deposit in the bank account? To understand the real intent behind the RBI move, we need to know to what use Rs 2000 notes worth Rs 362,000 crore (as on March 31, 2023) are being put. Do these support legitimate economic activity or people are simply using them to ‘hoard their unaccounted income? It can’t be the former; had it been the case then, given the RBI issuing predominantly Rs 500 notes after March 31, 2017, Rs 2000 notes would have disappeared by now.

The bulk of these notes are likely held as black money. Daily reports of enforcement agencies raids yielding a mountain of cash from the premises of dubious bureaucrats, politicians, businesspersons and so on confirm this. Unfortunately, the measures outlined in the RBI circular and subsequent clarifications given by the governor and public sector banks (PSBs) such as the State Bank of India (SBI) fail to address this menace.

The RBI allows a person to exchange Rs 2,000 banknotes with other denominations up to a limit of ten notes of Rs 20,000 value ‘at a time’ in banks. While exchanging he is not required to share his identity. This means he can visit a branch any number of times in a day and increase the value of exchange. By doing say ten trips, he can get rid of Rs 2 lakhs worth of black money in a day. If this is repeated for 131 days, he can dis-

pose of Rs 262 lakh.

Under such an arrangement which doesn’t insist on the identity at the time of exchange, a person holding say Rs 100 crore in Rs 2000 notes as ‘unaccounted cash’ can get this exchanged with smaller denominations of Rs 500/100 notes by hiring a number persons to visit branches of any number of banks and repeat for over 4 months. With anonymity preserved, he could go for a less tedious process. He could simply conspire with the bank manager - under a quid pro quo - to have those Rs 100 crore exchanged. All that the latter needs to do is to show in records multiple entries of Rs 20,000 each.

The circular also allows a person to deposit Rs 2000 notes into his bank account without any limit. For deposits above a specified limit (Rs 10 lakh in a savings account), the bank is required to report to the income tax department. But, the hoarder of black cash won’t take this route when the other option (read: exchange) where he can remain anonymous, is available.

To conclude, far from combating black money, the RBI operation will only help hoarders keep it in a safer zone by exchanging Rs 2000 notes with smaller denomination Rs 500 notes without having to disclose their identity. The RBI/government should go for a course correction. First, it should say upfront that ‘from October 1, 2023, Rs 2000 note won’t be legal tender. Second, for every exchange, the bank should insist on a person’s identity either PAN or Aadhaar. Third, for depositing money in the account, the banks should strictly enforce KYC norms.



MONEY MATTERS

## Welspun Corp Q4 net profit falls 8.90% to Rs 240 crore

Welspun Corp Ltd (WCL) posted an 8.90 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 240.08 crore for the January-March quarter, hit by higher expenses. It had clocked a net profit of Rs 263.56 crore during the January-March quarter of the preceding financial year (FY) 2021-22, the company said in a regulatory filing. The company's total income rose to Rs 4,132.38 crore, from Rs 2,413.48 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its expenses rose to Rs 3,835.55 crore from Rs 2,033.16 crore in the January-March period of FY22. In a separate statement, B. K. Goenka, Chairman, Welspun Group said, "We have seen flawless execution and delivery for our customers resulting in strong cash flows and a substantial reduction in net debt. The acquisition of the plastic products business of Sintex has given us a head start in our foray into the B2C segment. "This will result in significant value creation for all our stakeholders in addition to providing growth to the existing business portfolio."



## Retail inflation for industrial workers eases to 5.09% in April

Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 5.09 per cent in April from 5.79 per cent in March this year mainly due to lower prices of certain food items. "Year-on-year inflation for the month stood at 5.09 per cent compared to 5.79 per cent for the previous month and 6.33 per cent during the corresponding month a year before," a labour ministry statement said. Similarly, it stated that the food inflation stood at 4.16 per cent against 5.02 per cent of the previous month and 7.05 per cent during the corresponding month a year ago. The All-India CPI-IW (consumer price index for industrial workers) for April, 2023 increased by 0.9 points and stood at 134.2 points. It was 133.3 points in March 2023. The maximum upward pressure in the current index came from Food & Beverages group contributing 0.39 percentage points to the total change.



## Rs 2,000 note withdrawal to add up to Rs 1.5 lakh cr in deposits

The move to withdraw Rs 2,000 denomination notes will yield deposits of up to Rs 1.5 lakh crore for the banking system, Axis Bank Chief Economist Saugata Bhattacharya said on Wednesday. "Notes of Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh crore will come back into the system as deposits," Bhattacharya told reporters, adding that this should take the overall deposit growth to over 11 per cent in FY24. As per RBI data, the total value of Rs 2,000 notes in the system is Rs 3.62 lakh crore. Holders of the notes can either deposit the notes at banks, or get them exchanged over bank counters. It can be noted that the banking system has been passing through what some call as a 'war for deposits' at present, with a wide gap between the credit and deposit growth numbers. Bhattacharya said he expects the credit growth to slow down to 13 per cent in FY24 from 16 per cent, even as the deposit growth number will rise to 11-12 per cent from the single-digit figure in FY23.



# Rs 1 lakh cr to increase grain storage capacity in coop sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a Rs 1 lakh crore programme to create the world's largest grain storage capacity in the cooperative sector to reduce crop damages and prevent distress sales by farmers, besides strengthening the country's food security.

The government is planning to create 700 lakh tonne of grain storage capacity in the cooperative sector over the next five years and said the move will also help in creating job opportunities in rural India.

Briefing media, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said the Cabinet has approved the "world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector".

On investment, he said the programme will start "with an expenditure of around Rs 1 lakh crore".

As per the plan, a godown of 2,000 tonne capacity will be established in each block.



**Briefing media, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said the Cabinet has approved the "world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector"**

This will help in strengthening the cooperative sector, as Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) can diversify into the storage of food grains. There are 1 lakh PACS in the country, out of which around 63,000 are functional.

Thakur said the country's foodgrains production is around 3,100 lakh tonne, while the storage capacity is only 47 per cent of the total output.

In developed economies, he said, the storage capacities are higher than output.

Asked about the source of

funding, Thakur said the funds available in ministries of agriculture, food processing and food and consumer affairs would be utilised.

At present, the total grain storage capacity in the country is about 1,450 lakh tonne, he said, adding that 700 lakh tonne storage capacity will now be established in the cooperative sector. This will take the total capacity to 2,150 lakh tonne.

On benefits, the minister said the creation of decentralised storage capacity at the

local level would reduce food grain wastage and strengthen the food security of the country.

This would hugely reduce the cost incurred in the transportation of food grains to procurement centres and again transporting the stocks back from warehouses to ration shops, he said.

According to an official statement, the Cabinet approved the Constitution and Empowerment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) for the facilitation of the 'world's largest grain storage plan in Cooperative Sector' by the convergence of various schemes of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

To ensure time-bound and uniform implementation of the plan, the Ministry of Cooperation will implement a pilot project in at least 10 selected districts of different states/ UTs in the country.

## Centre's fiscal deficit narrows to 6.4% of GDP in FY23

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's fiscal deficit narrowed to 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 2022-23 from 6.71 per cent in FY22, as anticipated by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget in February this year.

In the Union Budget, the government aimed to further bring down the fiscal deficit - a key indicator of borrowing -- during the current financial year 2023-24 to 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for 2022-23, the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) said the fiscal deficit in absolute terms was Rs 17,33,131 crore (provisional), marginally down from the amount projected in the Revised Estimates (RE) in the Budget.

CGA said the government received Rs 24.56 lakh crore (101 per cent of corresponding RE 2022-23 of total receipts) during 2022-23.

It comprised Rs 20.97 lakh crore tax revenue (Net to Centre), Rs 2.86 lakh crore of



non-tax revenue and Rs 72,187 crore of non-debt capital receipts.

Non-debt capital receipts consist of the recovery of loans and miscellaneous capital receipts.

About Rs 9.48 lakh crore has been transferred to state governments as devolution of taxes by the central government, which is Rs 50,015 crore higher than the previous year (2021-22).

The CGA data further revealed that the Centre's total expenditure was Rs 41.89 crore (100 per cent of corresponding RE 2022-23), out of which Rs 34.52 lakh crore was on the revenue account and Rs 7.36

lakh crore on the capital account.

Out of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 9.28 lakh crore was on account of interest payments and Rs 5.31 lakh crore towards major subsidies.

As per CGA, the revenue deficit for the fiscal ending March 2023 was 3.9 per cent of GDP while the effective revenue deficit worked out to be 2.8 per cent of GDP.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head - Research and Outreach, Icr, said the government was able to restrict its FY2023 fiscal deficit at Rs 17.3 lakh crore, a shade below the FY2023 RE, with higher than estimated revenue receipts and a small undershooting in revenue expenditure, offsetting the disinvestment miss and a healthier than expected capex.

"In FY2023, the government's net tax revenues reported a healthy growth of 15.2 per cent, amidst a 17.8 per cent contraction in non-tax revenues, 7.8 per cent increase in revenue expenditure, and a robust 24.2 per cent expansion in capex," she said.

## Civil Aviation Ministry comes out with draft aircraft bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The civil aviation ministry has come out with a draft bill for putting in place a simplified approach for regulations pertaining to the aviation sector.

The Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023, has been prepared after reviewing the existing Aircraft Act, 1934.

As per the preamble of the Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023, it aims to have an Act to make better provisions for regulation and control of the design, manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of aircraft and for connected matters.

The bill has been issued by the ministry for public consultations for a period of 30 days, according to a communication dated May 30.

"The existing Aircraft Act, 1934 has been reviewed and accordingly a bill providing for regulating provisions in a simplified manner, identifying existing redundancies and to provide for provisions to meet the current needs for regulation of civil aviation in a simplified language..." the ministry said.



## Sensex, Nifty trip over profits in banking, energy shares

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty cut short their four-day gaining streak and closed lower by half a per cent on Wednesday due to profit-taking in banking, energy and metal stocks amid weak trends in global markets.

Snapping its four-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 346.89 points or 0.55 per cent to settle at 62,622.24. During the day, it tumbled 568.11 points or 0.90 per cent to 62,401.02.

The NSE Nifty declined 99.45 points or 0.53 per cent to end at 18,534.40.

In the four-day rally to Tuesday, Sensex advanced by 1,195 points or 2 per cent while Nifty rose by 348 points or 2.26 per cent.

"Markets witnessed profit-taking and shed over half a per cent, tracking mixed cues. After the initial downtick, the Nifty index traded with a negative bias for most of the session however a marginal rebound in the final hours trimmed some losses," said Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

# CtrIS Datacenters enter Odisha with greenfield project

PNS ■ HYDERABAD/ BHUBANESWAR

CtrIS Datacenters Ltd, the world's fastest-growing Rated-4 Datacenter company, held its ground-breaking ceremony on Tuesday for its greenfield Edge data center in Odisha.

Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha, laid the foundation stone for the facility in a virtual ceremony held on Tuesday. The new data center CtrIS Bhubaneswar 1 will be located in the State's capital.

Sridhar Pinnapureddy, Chairman, CtrIS Datacenters Ltd, said, "Odisha is a fast-

growing region in India, making it a strategic destination for CtrIS' expansion. We are excited to bring our expertise to the State. Built by Infocity in Chandrasekharapur, the data center will be easily accessible to both the city centre and its airport. The Infocity site is an innovation hub and home to a broad community of emerging technologies. CtrIS Bhubaneswar 1 will be embedded into a larger ecosystem, enabling the growth of data and infrastructure-savvy businesses around the facility."

"We are thankful to the Odisha Government for extending all support for our

project. Large IT infrastructure initiatives such as Info Park, Info Valley, Infocity and IT investment regions are under development, giving a big fillip to the IT/ITES sector," Sridhar stated.

CtrIS Bhubaneswar 1 is planned to be a 5 MW facility designed to serve hyperscale, government and enterprise customers and will provide a range of hosting and cloud services.

Phase-wise, the project would eventually scale as a hyperscale data center campus spread across 10 acres. The facilities will have all the sustainability features that CtrIS is known for.

CtrIS plans to invest over Rs 150 crore and create 110 jobs in Bhubaneswar in 10 years. The company's foray and expansion into the State will boost the digital infrastructure ecosystem in the region.

Odisha is a key region for CtrIS as the State has a strong presence in core industries like chemicals & petrochemicals, construction, electronics manufacturing, food processing, metal, mining & quarrying, seaports and textiles. The State has also developed IT-specific SEZs to aid growth in the sector.

CtrIS is on an expansion spree to set up a series of Edge data centers in India, across

tier-2 and tier-3 cities. The company currently operates facilities in Lucknow and Patna. The plan is to set up over 20 Edge data centers in the coming years.

The adoption of technology coupled with the launch of 5G is creating demand for capacity in more locations. This needs a reliable low-latency link (ensuring real-time access to data or applications) with high bandwidth to handle massive data flows, and storage closer to the devices at the 'Edge' of the network. By computing closer to where data is generated, companies are able to improve their sustainability.

# Kerala govt raises ceiling on purchase of products from startups to Rs 3 crore

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has considerably increased the ceiling on purchase of products and services from startups registered with KSUM from Rs 1 crore to Rs 3 crore in its effort to boost the state's startup ecosystem.

The raising of the public procurement ceiling on the purchases by government departments, public sector undertakings (PSUs), boards, corporations, and local self-government (LSG) institutions from ventures registered under the Kerala Startup Mission



(KSUM), was announced by it in a statement on Wednesday.

KSUM is the nodal agency of the Kerala government for entrepreneurship development and incubation activities in the

state.

The increase in the monetary ceiling in public procurement will enable more government departments to leverage innovative technology solu-

tions from startups, it said.

As per the government order (GO) issued in this regard, the benefits enjoyed by IT-related startups have been extended to non-IT ventures as well, thereby enabling PSUs, boards, corporations, and LSGs to purchase products and services from non-IT startups registered under KSUM.

Kerala has 49 parent departments along with more than 1,000 sub-organisations, and, as per the GO, all government organisations can purchase products and services from startups registered under KSUM, the statement said.

# NFRA slaps Rs 1.10 cr fine; bans 2 auditors, 1 firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has imposed a ban as well as penalties totalling Rs 1.10 crore on three entities, including two auditors, for alleged professional misconduct in connection with the audit of Giri Vidhyuth (India) Ltd for 2019-20.

Giri Vidhyuth (India) Ltd (GVIL) is a subsidiary of Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd (CDEL). The case pertains to diversion of funds worth Rs 3,535 crore from seven subsidiary companies of CDEL to Mysore

Amalgamated Coffee Estate Ltd (MACEL), an entity owned and controlled by the promoters of CDEL.

After markets watchdog Sebi shared its investigation report in April 2022, the audit regulator

started probing the professional misconduct of the auditors of GVIL.

Separately, NFRA imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore on Sundaresha & Associates and slapped a two-year ban on the audit firm.

**Q/o THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL: ANDOLE-JOGIPET, DISTRICT: SANGAREDDY**  
Email: mcandolejogipet@gmail.com  
**e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**  
TN No. E1/MCAJ/Engg/2023-24 Date: 31.05.2023  
Tenders are invited on sealed Tender Notice "Various Developmental Works in Andole-Jogipet Municipality under". Package 1 and II Estimated cost: Rs: 112.50 Lakhs, No of Works: 08, Commencement Date for Downloading Tender Document: 30-05-2023, Last date and time of submission of Tender: 30-05-2023 upto 10.30 AM. Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bid: 30-05-2023 at 10.30 AM, Date & Time of opening Financial Bid: 30-05-2023 at 3.00 PM. Sd/- Commissioner, R.O.No: 2556-PP/CLADVT/12023-24, Dt. 31.05.2023 Andole-Jogipet Municipality

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
**e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**  
NT No. No.12/GHMC/MPT/2023-24 Date: 31.05.2023  
Name of the Work: Civil Works. Estimated Amount/ ECV: Rs. 130.00 Lakhs, Start date & time: 02.06.2023 / 01.00 PM, Last date & time for receipts of Bids: 08.06.2023 / 11.15 AM, Name & Address Officer: Sri P. Satya Narayana, Executive Engineer, GHMC, Moosapet Circle-23, Cell: 9989930362. For further details can be seen at e-procurement@www.tender.sprocurement.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, R.O.No: 2554-PP/CLADVT/12023-24, Dt. 31.05.2023 Moosapet Division-23, GHMC.

**HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor Swamijayanthi Commercial Complex, Ameerpet, Hyderabad.  
**Public Notification U/s. 15 (3) of HMDA Act. 2008**  
(Government Memo. No. 7616/PHG.I(1)/2022 dt: 12.04.2023)  
In exercise of powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of Section 15 of HMDA Act 2008 (Act No.8 of 2008), it is proposed to make the following draft variation to the land use envisaged in the notified Master Plan MP-2021 approved vide G.O. No.33/MA/UD, dt:24.01.2013. The site is Sit No. 229E1 & 229E2 of Nalaguru Village, Sangli Road, Medak & District is an extent of 10253.34 Sq.mts., which is presently earmarked as Peri-Urban Use zone as per the notified Master plan MP-2021 approved vide G.O. No.33/MA/UD, dt:24.01.2013, is now proposed to be designated as Residential Use zone. The details of the above are available in: Web site: http://gmhda.telangana.gov.in/ and http://hmda.gov.in/ Objections/suggestions will be considered from any person or body to the said proposals. They can submit objections/suggestions in writing either to the M.C. HMDA or to the Special Chief Secretary, MA & UD Dept., Telangana Secretariat, Hyderabad within Fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this Notice. Sd/- For Metropolitan Commissioner, R.O. No.: 243-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/12/2023-24 HMDA

# Sebi to mandate addl disclosure for high-risk FPIs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To bring greater transparency in the Indian capital markets, Sebi on Wednesday came out with a proposal mandating enhanced disclosures from high-risk Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) that have concentrated holdings in a single company or a group firm.

These proposals are aimed at preventing possible circumvention of minimum public shareholding (MPS) requirements and potential misuse of the FPI route to guard against

the inherent risks of opportunistic takeover of Indian companies, Sebi said in its consultation paper.

The proposal has its genesis in the Adani stocks issue where Sebi could not identify the beneficial owners of some foreign portfolio investments in Adani stocks since the existing regulations are lax in identifying the true owners of many investments.

V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said, under the proposal, the regulator said



that high-risk FPIs with concentrated single group equity exposures or significant equity holdings will be mandated to

provide additional granular disclosure. They would be required to identify all entities with any ownership, econom-

ic interest and control rights.

"Such FPIs shall be required to provide granular data of all entities with any ownership, economic interest, or control rights on a full look through basis, up to the level of all natural persons and/or public retail funds or large public listed entities," it said.

Sebi noted that some FPIs have been observed to concentrate a substantial portion of their equity portfolio in a single investee company/company group.

"Such concentrated invest-

ments raise the concern and possibility that promoters of such corporate groups, or other investors acting in concert, could be using the FPI route for circumventing regulatory requirements such as that of maintaining Minimum Public Shareholding. If this were the case, the apparent free float in a listed company may not be its true free float, increasing the risk of price manipulation in such scrips," Sebi said.

Also, the regulator has suggested categorising FPIs based on risk.



## Helping acolytes attain liberation

This week for our weekly edition of Community Wise, *The Pioneer* connects with spiritual leader and founder of AiR-Atman in Ravi, founder of AiR Institute of Realisation and AiR Centre of Enlightenment, explaining to us about the foundation.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Are you looking for a spiritual leader who can guide you on your journey to self-discovery and enlightenment? Look no further than AiR — Atman in Ravi, the founder of the AiR Institute of Realisation and AiR Centre of Enlightenment.

This week for our special weekly column, with years of experience in the spiritual and personal development field, we get to know that the founder has helped individuals from all walks of life achieve inner peace, clarity, and purpose. This institute seemed very solitary, so, as a TEDx speaker and sought-after presenter too, he speaks to us and tells us, “The institute has been doing humanitarian work for the last thirty years, realising that serving humanity is like a prayer. Evolving from service to suffering humanity, it now tries to help people realise the truth. I am on a mission to show people the way to eternal happiness through enlightenment by helping them move from the kindergarten of religion to the university of spirituality, to touch, trigger, and transform this world.”

It is understood clearly that through his teachings and practises, he helps individuals realise the ultimate purpose of their lives. He continued, “We expect our organisation to be one that will become a beacon of light to help people overcome the darkness of ignorance. To help people go on a quest and realise the truth! To help people on the path of self-real-

isation, spiritual awakening, and realisation. To help people achieve a state of peace, bliss, and joy. Therefore, we expect our organisation to slowly transform this world from being a material one to a spiritual one.”

AiR — Atman in Ravi's unique approach emphasises the importance of self-awareness, meditation, and mindfulness to achieve inner peace and happiness. Besides, “Our strategy is very simple: overcome ignorance and realise the truth; ask, investigate, and realise; don't believe the myth you have grown up with; evolve in spirituality; not just serve and do good karma but transcend karma. This strategy is based on the principles of the truth!” His teachings are grounded in spirituality and are not associated with any specific religion or belief system, making them accessible to individuals from all backgrounds. Anybody can realise God. It is not those who work in the faith community or those who are professionals in the secular field. If you really want to experience God, you must realise that God cannot be seen, touched, or felt. God has to be realised. God is in you, God is in me, God is in the butterfly, God is in the bee, and God is in the tree. God is in every molecule. Everything is a manifestation of God. Consequently, it needs enlightenment, not religion or any other dogma, ritual, or superstition.”

It was his spiritual mentor who guided him to go on a quest to realise the true purpose of existence. Who is he? What is the purpose of his life? Is life just meant to seek pleasures

and to live and die without any purpose? What happens after death? Will he be reborn? Several questions like these took him on a quest to evolve from the peak of achievement through fulfillment to enlightenment, which is the ultimate peak, to realise that we are not this body, mind, and ego; we are the divine soul. So this is what inspired him to realise the truth!

Moreover, “After the light of enlightenment has shown itself on me, not just life has been transformed, but there has also been a transformation from misery to bliss. From running through this rat race to living a life of divine grace It is not just a transformation; it is a metamorphosis, living as the soul—the spark of unique life—not as the body, mind, and ego that we appear to be.”

There is no question of contributing to the promotion of realisation. This institute is helping people on the path, helping people to open their real eyes, to overcome ignorance, and to question religion and myth. The founder does it through writing books—over 65 books are authored; composing life songs, or Jeevan sangeet; and over 1400 bhajans are written and sung. He also conducts Zoom talks every day, where live answers are given to the seekers. He also answers people on the internet. So he is reaching out in every possible way to help people transform their lives!

Case in point: “People approach him every day on Zoom. People write e-mails, and they contact each other through WhatsApp. People have asked how to deal with life's issues in stressful situations. How to overcome fear, worry, stress, anxiety, and danger How to be happy How to face death How to understand the complicated subject of rebirth People have asked questions, and my institute has helped people step by step to overcome these things. These are not pieces of training in the physical world that are called ‘motivation’, these are spiritual ‘inspirations’ that go deep and touch the soul.”



## Disha is all ‘minimalistic’ when choosing her jewellery

AMARTYA SMARAN

Actress Disha Patani shares a rather special connection with the city of Hyderabad. She made her acting debut with Puri Jagannadh's *Loafer* (2015). A year after that, the resounding success of *M. S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* catapulted her to instant stardom. At the time, people affectionately called her ‘National Crush’. Today, she enjoys a great fol-

lowing for her ability to get into the skin of different characters. Especially those parts that require complex action sequences.

Well, once again, Disha was here in Hyderabad, where she'd paid a visit to the Taj Falaknuma Palace, celebrating the rich legacy of Shiv Narayan Jewellers Pvt. Ltd., which achieved the remarkable feat of bagging eight Guinness World Records.

The *Radhe* actress describes herself as someone who's minimalistic when it comes to her jewellery choices. She doesn't really prefer wearing heavy designs. However, to be fair, the designs created by the makers are on the heavier side. Although heavy, the craftsmanship and elegance of each piece are astounding. It looks like the

opulence of the set pieces swept Disha off her feet and allowed her to set her minimalist ideology aside for a while. *The Pioneer* questioned her about how she decided to sign up for or represent a brand. Particularly when it doesn't align with her ideology. Celebrities are usually extremely careful when it comes to representing brands of any kind. *The Project K* star walked into the Darbar Hall of the Falaknuma Palace in a superb all-black one-piece and sported a stunning, shiny diamond necklace.

“I usually choose brands that I resonate with. If I didn't resonate with something, I would not do it. And I feel that at this point in time, I can choose, and I just feel like I have changed as a person, and I like to do things that I really want to do,” said Disha.

The *Bharat* actress signed up for two big-budget films: *Kanguva* and *Project K*. The former is a period action drama, and the latter is a mix of sci-fi and mythological drama. It's a no-brainer that these two films will have room for heavy set pieces and, most certainly, some jewellery.

The stunning actress was almost about to spill the beans regarding her projects but remained tight-lipped, saying, “I may get into trouble if I reveal anything about it... I don't know (haha)!”

Talking about one design that she doesn't really like, she said, “I have very small ears. So, anytime they give me very heavy-weighted jewellery, My ears can't take it. Any piece of design that is extremely (X2) heavy, I avoid for my ear.”

On the contrary, she played an important part in Jackie Chan's *Kung Fu Yoga*, where she sports a jewellery-heavy look. Asked about it, she wrapped up by saying, “That's a movie, and that's my job. I can't complain about that. I'm working with Jackie Chan! And the last thing I should be thinking about is my jewellery (haha). So, it didn't really matter.”

Actress Disha Patani, who was here in Hyderabad recently, speaks to *The Pioneer* about how she keeps her choices minimalistic and simple when it comes to her choice of jewellery.



## Relax, revive, and restore with massage therapy for your overall well-being

Massage therapy has been practised for centuries and is known for its ability to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and alleviate pain. Whether you suffer from chronic pain or anxiety or simply need to unwind after a long day, regular massage therapy can provide numerous benefits for your physical and mental well-being.

Anoop Singh, Director of Operations at Red Orchid Spa, shares five benefits of incorporating massage therapy into your self-care routine:

### Reduces stress and anxiety

Stress and anxiety can significantly impact your overall health and well-being. Regular massage therapy can help ease the physical and mental symptoms of stress, including muscle tension, headaches, and difficulty sleeping. In addition, different types of massage, such as Swedish, deep tissue, or aromatherapy, can target specific areas of the body and promote relaxation.

### Improves circulation and flexibility

Massage therapy can improve blood circulation and lymphatic flow, which can help remove toxins from the body and improve overall health. Regular massages can also help increase flexibility and range of motion, making it easier to perform daily activities and reducing the risk of injury.

### Relieves pain and muscle tension.

Massage therapy is commonly used to treat chronic pain and muscle tension. Deep tissue massage, trigger point therapy, and myofascial release are all techniques used to release stress and lighten pain in specific areas of the body. Regular massage therapy can also help prevent chronic pain and muscle tension.

### Boosts immune system function

Massage therapy has been shown to boost immune system function, which can help reduce the risk of illness and disease. These therapy ses-

sions can also reduce the production of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress that can weaken the immune system.

### Improves mental health and well-being

It can significantly impact mental health and well-being, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, improve mood and energy levels, and promote feelings of relaxation and well-being. Different types of massage, such as aromatherapy or hot stone massage, can also provide additional mental health benefits.

Incorporating massage therapy into your self-care routine can benefit your physical and mental well-being. When choosing a massage therapist, research their credentials and experience to ensure you receive safe and effective treatment. You can also consider trying different types of massage to find what works best for your individual needs. Making massage therapy a regular part of your self-care routine can improve your overall health and happiness.







# Bellamkonda Ganesh considers himself as a ‘successful actor’

PNS | HYDERABAD

Actor Bellamkonda Ganesh, who made a successful debut with the thriller film *Nenu Student Sir*. Directed by debutant Rakesh Uppalapati, the film is produced by ‘Nandi’ Satish Verma under the banner SV2 Entertainment. Avantika Dassani is playing the female lead.

Speaking to the media here in Hyderabad, the actor shared, “I always feel like a student. There are many situations in real life. Real incidents have been shown in a very unique way in this movie, and it will create a lot of curiosity till the end. You can’t guess who the real villain is until the climax. We can guarantee that one hundred percent.”

The film has a story written by Krishna Chaitanya, whereas the screenplay and direction are by Rakesh.

“When Krishna Chaitanya narrated the story, I got extremely connected to the emotion and character arc in it. My character in *Swathimuthyam* is innocent from the beginning to the end. There are different shades in *Nenu Student Sir*. I really liked the character arc of how he got out of the trouble that he faced at the end and a lot of pain and tension in the middle.”

Many big heroes have played the role of a student in their second film, and Ganesh feels this film will add more content to his career graph.

Producer Satish Verma gained enough with Nandi, and Ganesh feels that a film coming from a hit film company naturally means that the distributor and exhibitors also have a belief. “Satish Verma worked with a lot of passion for this movie. He used to come to the set first and leave last. Whatever the movie needs, it has been provided without compromise. High build values are visible,” he added.

“When *Swathimuthyam* was released, it was said to be a bad release date because it was coming together with Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna’s films. However, it got an amazing response on OTT. Wherever you go, you are praised for making a very good film. I consider myself successful as an actor in this regard. Now we have full confidence in *Nenu Student Sir*. I am coming with a good release date,” he said about the average performance of his maiden film at the box office and what he expects from his upcoming film’s release.

Speaking about Samudrakani’s character in this film, he shared, “Samudrakhani garu is a big advantage to this movie. His screen presence is captivating. And he’s got a very good character with enough meat. His acting gave the character more weightage.”

On the work front, Ganesh is next doing a crime comedy, which is completely different from his previous films.



## Rockstar DSP’s fans go berserk on Malaysia’s *Oo Solriya* tour

Rockstar DSP’s much awaited *Oo Solriya* tour just happened over the weekend and here’s everything you’ve missed out on. Fans have been eagerly looking forward to inside images and moments from the Malaysia tour. Fans who attended the tour cannot stop raving about the most entertaining night.

Fans in Malaysia have not just swayed and tapped their feet to Rockstar DSP’s beats in Malaysia but hooted, jumped and also sung along. Rockstar DSP’s Malaysia tour has been the most memorable, happening and eventful night and weekend for an audience of different age groups. The images from the electric night are proof. Rockstar DSP knows how to entertain his audience and the craze for his music reflects on how music is always about connecting and enjoying to the fullest.

These images are giving strong energies and one can easily say the audience have enjoyed every moment of this tour. The ones who couldn’t attend have also shared how they would be looking forward to his next tour and more.

Sharing a heartfelt gratitude DSP says, “The Malaysia *Oo Solriya* tour was high on energy, performance and songs. The audience was so excited and it was reflected in their hoot-



ing and more. Music is always a connection of the heart, words just help to understand better and this response from a global audience is proof. This has been one of the best weekends and I will surely do more of it. I’m grateful for all the constantly pouring in love from across the world.

On the professional front, DSP also has *Pushpa 2*, *Suriya 42*, and more in the pipeline.

## Indian languages highlighted at the British Parliament House



The United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was marked at the British Parliament’s House of Lords recently, during which 18 languages of India were presented and highlighted.

The founder of Sanskruti Centre, Dr. Ragasudha Vinjamuri, in addition to presenting her own poem in Telugu, spoke on the Tai Khamti language of Arunachal Pradesh. She highlighted how Tai Khamti language is on the verge of decline and how NGOs like Tai Khamti Heritage and Literature Society are working hard on language preservation. Also, on the occasion, an age-old rhyme, ‘Koh-ai-Koh’, translated into English by Chow Kalingna Mannoi, was included in the booklet Ramaneyam – the

## Dhanush’s *Hathavidi* highlights Naveen’s sad life in a funny style

A nushka Shetty’s next movie is *Miss Shetty Mr Polishetty*. Written and directed by Mahesh Babu P, the movie has Naveen Polishetty as the male lead. As announced earlier, the makers have released the second single from the movie.

Titled *Hathavidi*, the song is a tragicomedy about the sad life of Siddhu Polishetty, played by Naveen Polishetty, and the heart-break he is suffering. The song is composed by Radhan, with lyrics penned by Ramajogayya Sastry. It is crooned by the well-known actor Dhanush. The lyrics are captivating and the composition is beautiful.

The film also stars Murali Sharma, Jayasudha, Tulasi, and others in significant roles. Produced by UV Creations, the movie is a pan-South project and will be released this summer in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.



# Operation Ravaan promises a mystery filled action thriller

Rakshit Atluri, who won critical acclaim with *Palasa 1978*, is coming up with a unique film, *Operation Raavan*. Bankrolled by Dhyan Atluri under the Sudhas Media banner, this new-age action-suspense thriller has Rakshit Atluri and Sangeethana Vipin in the lead roles.

The film has completed the shooting and is currently undergoing post-production work and is all set to hit the screens soon. Ahead of the film’s release, the ‘First Thrill’ from the movie was launched on Wednesday, and the directors Maruthi and Kalyan Krishna attended this event as chief guests. With this first thrill glimpse, it is understood that the film is a mystery action thriller that revolves around psycho killings. Holding the caption ‘Your Thoughts are your Enemies’, the film teaser raised curiosity.

Speaking at this event, director Maruthi said, “It is rare for a father to direct his son and that rare incident happened to Raavan. Prasad is a good friend of mine. He has a lot of passion. He used to make films carefully. Palasa and London Babu are examples of that. One fine day, he said that he has written the story and he is directing it as well. I was surprised. Later, after a few days, he showed me the teaser of the film, and it was very promising.”

Speaking at this event, director Kalyan Krishna said, “I have heard the name of Rakshit from most of the



different roles. If Telugu films like this come out for me, I will adjust my dates and will give high priority to those films. Rakshit is a very hard-working and sincere person. His eyes speak a lot. All the best to everyone.”

Actor Rakshit thanked the dignitaries who had graced the event and said, “The first success of our film happened when Radhika Garu agreed to do this movie. My father, Venkata Satya Vara Prasad, who is my life, has directed this film. He established Sweet Magic in 1995. We used to have nothing at those times. But now he has given jobs to thousands of people through Sweet Magic. There would be no one in Andhra Pradesh who does not know about the sweet magic. Now, he has taken the megaphone with *Operation Raavan*. I hope this movie will get recognition across the nation. He gave his best as a director and he used to be on the sets early in the morning before everyone else. He has handled the film very well, and that is the reason for our confidence. During a Palasa event, I requested the audience to watch the film, and if anyone doesn’t like it, they can grab my collar. Now again, I could say the same with the same confidence. heartfelt thanks to everyone who worked on this film. Also, I could never forget the support of my brother and my mother in the journey of this film. It is irreplaceable.”

directors who are planning to do some innovative films. I think that is his success. Anyone can do regular stories. I wish all his upcoming films *Operation Raavan*, *Narakasura* and *Sasivadana* to be big hits.”

Actress Radhika said that it was during the event that she’d got to know that the director and the hero are father and son. She further continued, “When I heard this story, I asked about the hero in the film and the director said Rakshit is going to play the lead actor role. However, as I don’t know who Rakshit is, he asked me to watch Palasa. I saw Palasa. I liked the movie very much, and I saw it again. In this film, the director and his team have never compromised on getting a great output. A lot of effort has been put in, and I can say their hard work will not fail. All the artists in this film have done their part very well. They are all seasoned artists. The director’s job is just to bring out their talent, and he has done it perfectly. I always wanted to do

## Kamal Haasan to play a negative role in *Project K*



Director Nag Ashwin’s *Project K* featuring pan India star Prabhas, Bollywood Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, and Deepika Padukone is a highly anticipated film. This is a never before science fiction drama being made in Indian cinema and the makers are mounting on a huge budget.

Every now and then the team of *Project K* teases the fans with an update but it’s hard to understand given the context. Perhaps for the first time

a rumour about the film is making rounds on social media and it excited the fans. The rumour is Universal hero Kamal Haasan has signed to be part of *Project K*.

If the rumours are to be believed, Kamal Haasan is playing a negative role and he has allotted 20 days for the film’s shooting. The rumours had also claimed that Kamal is also getting paid a bomb and it is said that Rs 150 crore.

However, according to a few reports, *Project K* has wrapped up nearly seventy percent of the shoot and Kamal coming on board for this project doesn’t make any sense. Moreover Rs 150 crore remuneration isn’t believable.

There is a chance that Kamal might have been approached for a voice over or a cameo role. Yet these are just rumours and the team of *Project K* has to clarify or acknowledge them. But if it is true, *Project K* becomes mightier with the addition of the actor.

## Bus carrying *Pushpa 2* artistes meets with accident in Telangana

Two persons were injured when a bus carrying film artistes who were returning to Hyderabad from neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh after shooting of *Pushpa 2*, met with an accident in Telangana’s Nalgonda district on Wednesday.

The bus carrying the film artistes hit a stationary RTC bus near Narketpally on Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway.

Two artistes sustained minor injuries in the accident. The artistes were returning to Hyderabad from Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh after completing a shooting schedule of *Pushpa 2* starring Allu Arjun.

The RTC bus driver had stopped the vehicle by roadside after developing some technical problem. The driver of the bus carrying the artistes failed to notice the RTC bus and rammed into it.

The makers of the movie had last month released the first look poster of *Pushpa: The Rule*, the much-awaited sequel of *Pushpa: The Rise*.

The makers had released the poster and a special video on the eve of Allu Arjun’s birthday.

Directed by Sukumar, the movie is likely to release in summer of 2024.



## Venkatesh concedes criticism, promises improvement in *Rana Naidu* season 2

Victory Venkatesh debuted in the digital space with the Netflix-backed web series *Rana Naidu*. Although the show garnered a high viewership on Netflix, Venkatesh and his nephew Rana Daggubati faced trolling and criticism. Venkatesh has been busy shooting for his next project and has recently been unavailable to the media.

Venkatesh Daggubati has finally responded to the reception of his series *Rana Naidu* during a press meet for the film *Ahimsa*. When asked about the reaction from fans, Venkatesh stated that Netflix is happy



with the response and they had attempted something new with the series.

Venkatesh acknowledged that it is not always possible to please every section of the audience. Regarding the second season, Venkatesh mentioned that since *Rana Naidu* is original content, they will consider making alter-

ations and try to reach a wider audience. He expressed that they would discuss *Rana Naidu* in the future but kept his initial response short and simple.

Expressing his satisfaction with the response to the show, Venkatesh stated that he always tries something new and will explore the possibility of making changes for the second season of *Rana Naidu*.

Venkatesh is set to resume shooting for his film *Saindhav* in June, with a scheduled release date in December 2023.

Directed by Sailesh, *Saindhav* is an action thriller.

## Mahesh Babu’s film with Trivikram titled *Guntur Kaaram*

A mass and powerful title, *Guntur Kaaram*, is locked for superstar Mahesh Babu’s 28th film under the direction of Trivikram Srinivas.

On superstar Krishna’s birth anniversary, the makers released a small glimpse to announce the title and also the tagline- Highly Inflammable.

*Guntur Kaaram* is a powerful title and the tagline offers mass euphoria to the super fans. S Thaman’s high-octane music with oora mass background score creates a double impact.

As the title suggests, the story of the movie is set against a Guntur backdrop, and *Guntur Kaaram* seems to be high on action and mass, laced with family elements.

Mahesh Babu transformed himself into a slick and stylish get-up to play an action-packed character in the movie.

Trivikram Srinivas, who brings the best out of his actors, will be presenting Mahesh Babu in a never-seen-before avatar.

S Radhakrishna of Haarika & Hassine Creations is prestigiously making the movie on a massive budget, with Pooja Hegde and Sreeleela playing the heroines.

The movie *Guntur Kaaram* is set to make Sankranthi festivities more entertaining, as the movie is arriving for the festival.



# ICC seeks PCB assurances on team to India for ODI World Cup

PTI ■ KARACHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman and CEO are in Lahore to seek guarantees from the PCB that it will not push for implementing a hybrid model for its matches in the ODI World Cup in India later this year.

Insiders confirmed to PTI that ICC chairman Greg Barclay and CEO Geoff Allardice have specifically come to Lahore to get some assurances from the Pakistan Cricket Board on the national team's participation in the World Cup in October-November.

The development comes after PCB chief Najam Sethi made it clear that the team will not travel for the World Cup in India if the Rohit Sharma led side doesn't visit Pakistan for the preceding Asia Cup.

"The ICC and World Cup hosts, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are concerned with the hybrid



model being pushed by Najam Sethi who heads the cricket management committee of the PCB.

"Although the hybrid model has been suggested by Sethi for the Asia Cup which precedes the ICC event, the concern remains

that once accepted for the regional event the PCB might also then ask the ICC to implement it for the World Cup when it comes to Pakistan playing in India," he explained.

Sethi has already indicated that if the Pakistan government

doesn't give clearance or has security concerns about sending the team to India, PCB could ask the ICC to hold Pakistan's matches at a neutral venue.

"Naturally neither the ICC nor the BCCI want such a situation since Pakistan's unequiv-

ocal participation in matches in India would guarantee the success of Indo-Pakistan matches and also the tournament itself."

Another source said this was the primary reason why BCCI secretary Jay Shah was still reluctant to accept the hybrid model for the Asia Cup and support having three or four matches of the tournament in Pakistan and the remaining games in UAE or Sri Lanka.

Pakistan are the hosts of the Asia Cup and Sethi has said repeatedly that if the tournament is moved to one neutral country from Pakistan, it will not take part in the competition.

He has also hinted that if Pakistan didn't get to host some Asia Cup matches it could have an adverse bearing on the World Cup as well.

"The ICC officials are trying to work as a bridge between the PCB and BCCI and resolve the outstanding issues pertaining to the Asia Cup and World Cup."

## Indian bowlers focus on building workload ahead of WTC final

PTI ■ PORTSMOUTH

The Indian cricket team is focussing on building workload for the bowlers, who had an extensive run in the IPL, ahead of the World Test Championship final against Australia starting on June 7 at The Oval.

In the bowling department, while the likes of Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Jaydev Unadkat and Umesh Yadav were part of the first batch to travel to England, pace spearhead Mohammed Shami's departure was delayed as the IPL final in Ahmedabad last Sunday was moved to the reserve day after incessant rain.

The middle-order mainstay Virat Kohli was also among the players who left in the first batch along with the Rahul Dravid-led coaching staff. Kohli joined the camp on Monday along with Cheteshwar Pujara, who linked up with the squad in England as he was busy playing County Championship for Sussex.

The Indian team is expected to have a few practice sessions at the Arundel Castle Cricket Club in Sussex ahead of the big final.

"The preparation has been good so far. The initial bit was to ease into the practice session but the last two sessions have been pretty happy — I think we pushed them a little bit. Just adding a little bit of workload for the bowlers, just kind of preparing them for the Test match," said India's bowling coach Paras Mhambrey in a video released by the BCCI.

"(We are) happy with the conditions, I think it is a lovely ground, (it is) kind of what you can



expect. The weather is holding up, it has been sunny, a little windy, a little chill but something that we have to get used to (when) playing in England," he said.

India's fielding coach T Dilip said the focus will be on close-in catching since the running part of the fitness drill was covered in the IPL.

"The players have been coming from an IPL so a key thing for us to take care of was the workload, how much they have run, how much they have taken care.

"What we understood and got out of that is things (like) ground fielding have been covered in the IPL, so the focus here was more on the volume of catching, especially when you are talking about close-in catching, the slip catching and the flat catches. These are the catches that we tend to increase the volume (of)," he said.

Mhambrey said while the bowlers will get some rest in days leading up to the WTC final, the group is determined to extract the maximum benefits from the training sessions.



## Dhoni will take medical advice for knee injury and decide: CSK CEO Viswanathan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni will be seeking expert opinion from sports orthopedics in Mumbai on the state of his dodgy left knee before taking a call on his treatment, CEO Kasi Viswanathan said on Wednesday.

Dhoni had played the entire IPL season with a heavily strapped left knee and although he looked absolutely okay while keeping, more often than not batted as late as No.8 and didn't look swift while running between the wickets.

"Yes, it is true that Dhoni will be taking medical advice for his left knee injury and accordingly decide. If surgery is advised, it can only be ascertained after reports come out, it will be completely his call," Viswanathan told PTI.

Is there a possibility that Dhoni will decide against playing next season and thus free up a purse of Rs 15 crore for the mini auction, the CEO replied: "Frankly, we are not even thinking on those lines as we haven't reached that stage.

"It will be completely Dhoni's call. But I can tell you in CSK, we haven't entertained those thoughts," Viswanathan said.

Asked if CSK supremo N Srinivasan addressed the players after the fifth IPL Trophy and if celebrations were in the offing. "He is very happy but there were no celebrations. The players dispersed for their respective destinations from Ahmedabad only. Also if you have seen CSK, we are never big on celebrations," the veteran official said.

Asked if the fifth IPL title feels the sweetest, considering the spate of injuries to its top players, Viswanathan said: "It's all about team spirit and every player knowing his role which is very well defined in our set up. "Even a player of Ben Stokes' stature despite his nature was brilliant around the group and the youngsters looked upto to him. This has been possible because of our captain."

What has been CSK's hallmark over the years which enabled them to reach final in 11 of the 14 editions that they have been a part of? "I have been associated with CSK from season 1 and we have never deviated from our process. The key has been to keep things simple and explain every player what is expected of them. In our franchise, the skipper keeps everything uncomplicated," Viswanathan said.

CSK were barred from the league for two editions.

## Hazlewood praises Kohli's work ethics

PTI ■ LONDON

Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood has spoken highly of Royal Challengers Bangalore teammates Virat Kohli and Mohammed Siraj ahead of the World Test Championship final against India at The Oval starting June 7.

Hazlewood, who has been battling with multiple injuries over the last six months, had to cut short his IPL stint with a side issue. However, he feels he is not far from bowling full tilt as Australia gear up for the big final.

Talking about Kohli, whose wicket he will be targeting at The Oval, Hazlewood said the Indian superstar's work ethic makes him the player that he is.

"I think it's probably how hard he works (that stands out). His fitness first of all - and then his skill word and batting and fielding in particular.

"He is always out there (training) first and leaves last ... and the intensity he trains at all the time is at such a high level it drags everyone else along for the ride. That can lead on to the other players and improve them as well," Hazlewood told the ICC.

On RCB's leading wicket taker Siraj, who is expected to play a big part in the WTC final, Hazlewood said: "I was a bit late getting there (to RCB this year),



but before then he was on fire.

"He is up there at the top of the wickets every time, and the economy rate was probably the same as bowling at Chinnaswamy (RCB's home ground) is impossible sometimes and he was going at six or six-and-a-half an over. His control was great and he is bowling well."

**'CLOSE TO BOWLING FULL PACE:** The Australian cricket team has been training in Formby in England ahead of the WTC final. Hazlewood trained with the team on Monday and said he is feeling good going into

the big game.

"My fitness is pretty good and it is just a matter of ticking off every session from here until that date (June 7) basically. "We will probably have anywhere from three to four more sessions - bat versus ball and then a couple of longer days in the nets as well or centre wicket down in London — so it is just ticking off those last few boxes and pulling up well from every session," he said.

"It was pretty close (to full pace today). I came down for a little bowl yesterday just to

loosen up and to get a bit more out of today's session, so it is feeling good. It is always good to get the first one out of the way and when we get to London we will steam in," he added.

Hazlewood could feature in only three games in the IPL before his injury flared up.

"In T20 you are bowling a lot of various different balls every over. A wide yorker, to a bouncer, to a slower ball and it probably got jammed up a little bit and a bit of scar tissue from previous injuries flared up.

"It calmed down pretty quickly, I had a week off but I didn't quite get back to going 100 percent at IPL. But the last few bowls have been good and I have been building up nicely," he said.

Having played as many as 15 Tests against India, Hazlewood is looking forward to the challenge of playing the Asian giants at a neutral venue. "It is a strange stat that as I think I have just played a lot of cricket against them. What is going to be interesting is playing them here in England.

"It is going to be interesting for both teams how they go about it and how different it is to playing them in Australia or in India as typically you only play them there," he said.

"That is the exciting thing about it and everyone is looking forward to next week," he added.

## Stokes plans to play as allrounder in Ashes

AP ■ LONDON

England captain Ben Stokes Eased concerns about his ability to bowl in the upcoming Ashes series because of long-standing knee issues and said Wednesday he is planning to play every test this summer.

"Unless I can't walk, I'll be on the field," Stokes said with a smile the day before England begins its one-off test against Ireland, which serves as a warmup for the five-match Ashes series against Australia.

After having knee issues during the tour of New Zealand in February, Stokes played only twice for Chennai Super Kings in the recently-finished Indian Premier League, sending down just one over for 18 runs.

However, the 31-year-old Stokes said his knee is much better than it was in New Zealand and he will take his place in the England team as an allrounder against Ireland at Lord's and then Australia.

"What I have done is I have got myself in a position where I'm not able to look back and regret or say I've not given myself the best opportunity to play a full role with the ball this summer," Stokes said.

"I've worked incredibly hard with the medical team in Chennai, liaising with the ECB



guys. I have got myself into a place where I feel like back at 2019, 2020 space in terms of my own body and fitness and everything like that."

Pushed about the exact nature of his knee problem, Stokes said: "We know what it is and it's about managing it."

"It's managing it with workload," he added, "and working it with the med team just to get through it."

England has already named its team for the Ireland test, with seamer Josh Tongue making his debut while fast bowlers James Anderson and Ollie Robinson are rested. Ireland has lost all six of its matches since gaining test status in 2017. That includes a defeat against England at Lord's in 2019.

Captain Andrew Balbirnie has said beating England would be "the biggest moment in Irish cricket history."



## Thai Open: Kiran stuns Shi Yuqi

Lakshya, Satwik-Chirag too win, Sindhu makes early exit

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's Kiran George scripted a stunning straight-game win over world number 9 Shi Yuqi of China but double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu made an opening round exit from the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here on Wednesday.

Ashmita Chaliha and Saina Nehwal also made winning starts to their campaign in women's singles, while Lakshya Sen and world number 4 pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also progressed to the pre-quarterfinals.

On a day when Kidambi Srikanth and B Sai Praneeth also failed to cross the opening hurdle, 2022 Odisha Open winner Kiran, a product of the Prakash Padukone academy, notched up a 21-18 22-20 win over third seed Shi Yu Qi, who is a 2018 world championships silver medalist. Kiran will take on China's Weng Hong Yang next.

His academy mate Lakshya also dug deep to eke out a hard-fought 21-23 21-15 21-15 win over Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei. He is likely to square off against All England champion Li Shi Feng of China.

Commonwealth Games champion and top seeds Satwik and Chirag too had to work hard to outwit the Danish combination of Rasmus Kjaer and Frederik Sogaard 21-13 18-21 17-17 in a thrilling match.

A former world champion, Sindhu, however, faltered in the opening round, going down fighting 8-21 21-18 18-21 to Canada's Michelle Li in 62-minute match. In other matches, Ashmita, who came through the qualifiers, beat compatriot Malvika Bansod 17-21 14-21, while London Olympics bronze medalist Saina defeated Canada's Wen Yu Zhang 21-13 21-7.

## Bharat over Kishan, Umesh over Shardul for WTC XI: Sarandeep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India selector Sarandeep Singh says picking KS Bharat over Ishan Kishan as the wicketkeeper for the World Test Championship final against Australia is a no brainer and he would also choose Umesh Yadav over Shardul Thakur in the playing eleven.

In the absence of the injured Rishabh Pant, Kishan, who is yet to play Test cricket, can provide the x-factor but Sarandeep feels Bharat walks into the eleven as the frontline wicketkeeper.

"KS Bharat for sure. He is a proper Test match wicketkeeper and we saw that against Australia at home, he kept superbly. He has been around for a while and he should get the

opportunity," Sarandeep told PTI on Wednesday. The WTC final will be played at the Oval in London from June 7. The former India spinner said Kishan's time will come.

"Ishan is an opener. I am not saying he is not capable of playing Tests. He is one for the future but he opens in limited overs cricket. Things will be different at number six. "Yes he goes hard from ball one, which can be counter productive in England, but Bharat can also bat well and play shots also," he reasoned.

**'Umesh's extra pace and old ball skills will come handy':** Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj, who were breathing fire in the recently-concluded IPL, will share the workload in the pace depart-



ment and the Indian team will need to choose between Umesh Yadav and Shardul Thakur as the third fast bowling option.

"I am picking Umesh ahead of Shardul because he has that extra pace and he can reverse the old ball, he can be very helpful on that Oval track," said Sarandeep.

"All of India's batters are in good form going into the one off game and that bodes well for the team," he said.

## Pujara's inputs invaluable for Indian batters: Gavaskar

PTI ■ PORTSMOUTH

Former captain Sunil Gavaskar on Wednesday reckoned Cheteshwar Pujara could provide valuable insights to his Indian teammates ahead of the World Test Championship final against Australia, having played extensively in the English County Championship.

With Pujara's knowledge and captaincy experience (at Sussex), his inputs could prove invaluable, especially against Australian batter Steve Smith, who is also a part of his county side.

The WTC final is scheduled to be held at the Oval in London from June 7-11.

"The fact that he is been around will mean that he will have also seen how the pitch has been behaving at The Oval.

"He might not have played at The Oval, he might be in Sussex not too far away from London but he will have kept an eye on what is happening and his inputs will be invaluable as far as the bat-

ting unit is concerned or even as far as the captaincy is concerned," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"He will have the captains here as far as the Oval pitch is concerned and don't forget he has also been captaining the team, so he definitely will have worked out quite a few strategies seeing that Steve Smith, the Australian is his teammate at the moment."

Gavaskar also said the Indian batters, coming off the IPL, will have to adjust their bat speed ahead of the WTC final, and advised them to play as late as possible.

"I think they are going to look at their bat speed. Coming from T20 where the bat speed is very fast to Test cricket where the bat speeds got to be a lot more control, that is something they'll need to do," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

He also emphasized the need for batters to play as late as possible in English conditions, allowing for swing and avoiding the mistake of reaching out for the



ball.

"They'll need to play in England as late as possible to allow for the swing to do it's bit, not to reach out for the ball which often a lot of people make the mistake having played on good pitches.

"Wherever you play on good pitches, you tend to play through the line, not necessarily half volleys, but in England those deliveries can move just that little bit. So, I think those are the things that as a batter you need to watch out for."

He asked the bowlers to bowl fuller length deliveries to allow the Dukes ball to swing.

"As a bowling unit also you'll need to bowl a much fuller length for your new ball, for the bowlers to be able to get the movement in the air as well as after pitching."

Gavaskar highlighted the challenges India would face playing in English conditions.

"I think the English conditions are challenging because firstly we are used to play with the sun on our backs. When you are playing in England, often you are playing in conditions where there is no sun, it's a little overcast, the weather is a little bit cooler, so you sometimes wear a jumper.

"That's something that you know, the Indian player, West Indian players and Sri Lankan players are not really used to so that can be just a little bit of a dampener, little sort of light but you just feel little bit encumbered by that.