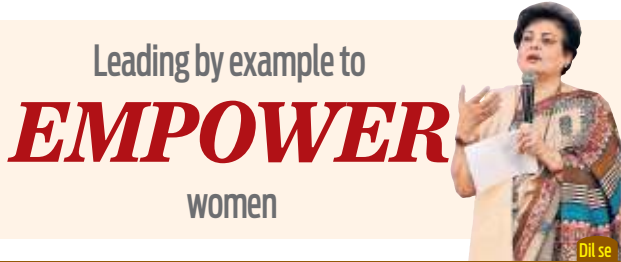




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**DON'T MISS...****Vja railway station wears...**

The usually bustling Vijayawada Railway Station wore a deserted look as a result of the rescheduling of trains following a horrific three-train collision in Odisha's Balasore district on Friday evening. The impact of the accident prompted the South Central Railway (SCR) to announce the cancellation of 23 trains, diversion of 26 trains, rescheduling of one train, and the short termination of two trains...

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AP may reel under heat wave...

Several parts of Andhra Pradesh became a cauldron on Saturday with intense heat wave conditions. Day temperatures recorded above 37 degree Celsius at many places. Hot winds started blowing from morning itself and continued till midnight. Main thoroughfares wore a deserted look as people preferred to stay indoors. Meanwhile, a MET report on Saturday said that heat wave conditions are likely to...

-PAGE: 4

SC stays Allahabad HC order to...

The Supreme Court Saturday stayed an unusual order of the Allahabad High Court asking the head of the department of astrology of Lucknow University to decide whether a woman, an alleged rape victim, is 'manglik' or not. The apex court, which held a special sitting on Saturday, took suo motu cognisance of the matter and observed it doesn't understand why the 'astrology report is called for' while hearing a bail application. The high court...

-PAGE: 5

Intelligence associated with...

People with higher intelligence were found to take more time to solve difficult problems than those with lower intelligence, in a new study that wanted to understand how the brain's decision-making processes work. Those with lower intelligence, or those with reduced synchrony between brain areas, were found to 'jump to conclusions' when making decisions, rather than waiting until their other brain regions could complete the processing steps needed to solve the problem. Researchers in the study from Berlin Institute of Health at Charite (BIH) and Charite - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany, performed brain simulations of 650 participants' 'personalised brain models'...

-DIL SE

OBTUSE ANGLE

No one would be spared

PM assures strong action in Odisha train crash

PNS ■ BALASORE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said strong action would be taken against anyone found guilty in the train crash in Odisha that killed 288 people.

Speaking to reporters after visiting the accident site and meeting the injured persons at a hospital in Balasore district, Modi said he was unable to find words to express his pain. "The government has taken the incident very seriously. No one would be spared and strong action would be taken against those found guilty in this mishap," he said.

"Instructions have been given to ensure proper and speedy investigation of the tragedy," he added.

The prime minister said that it was not possible to bring back those killed in the incident, but the government stands solidly behind their families. "No stone will be left

turned to provide all possible medical help to those injured," he said.

Noting that this train accident will be a lesson for the country, he said the government will further stress on the safety of the passengers.

He lauded the efforts of the Odisha government in the rescue and relief operations, and commended the locals who turned up in large numbers for blood donation, and to help those injured.

After arriving here in an Air Force helicopter, Modi visited the accident site at Bahanaga and took stock of relief and restoration operations.

He was accompanied by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, an MP from the state.

2



Indian American Banga takes over as World Bank President

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Indian American Ajay Banga on Friday took over as the President of the World Bank, making him the first person of colour to head either of the two global financial institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

On May 3, the Executive Directors of the World Bank selected Banga, 63, as the 14th President of the World Bank for a five-year term.

In February, President Joe Biden announced that the US would nominate Banga to lead the World Bank.

"Join us in welcoming Ajay Banga as the new President of the World Bank Group. We are committed to creating a world free from poverty on a livable planet," the World Bank said in a tweet with a picture of Banga entering the bank headquarters here on Friday.

"I wish Ajay Banga all the best as he takes up his new role as President of the World Bank today. I look forward to continuing the deep partnership between our institutions to do good and help those most in need," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said in a tweet.

2

'CM closely monitoring situation'

Bosta clarifies no confirmed deaths of passengers from AP as yet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana, Jogi Ramesh, and Karumuri Nageswar Rao held a review meeting with officials in Visakhapatnam on Saturday to discuss the State government's response to the Odisha train accident.

In a press briefing held in the port city, Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana informed the media that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been closely monitoring the situation. The Chief Minister has issued instructions to ministers and officers regarding the necessary steps to be taken.

Minister Botsa stated that a team comprising three IAS and three



Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana assured that the State government is prepared to handle any situation. Arrangements have been made to admit patients to Apollo Hospital in Bhubaneswar, if required

IPS officers, led by Industries Minister Amarnath, has been dispatched to Odisha. The team is responsible for gathering information on passengers aboard the ill-fated Coromandel and Yesvantpur

express trains. The authorities have collected data from the stations where these trains made stops in Andhra Pradesh.

2

10 train crash survivors arrive in city

Emotional reunion as kin welcome their loved ones at the Vja rly station

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Railway station was filled with emotions as 10 survivors of the tragic (Coromandel Express) accident arrived late on Saturday evening. With the assistance of a special train, they individually reached Vijayawada safely around 9 pm, where they were warmly received by their relatives



and loved ones.

The survivors, identified as Sushant Kumar Das (48), Mahul Das (12), Mandira Das (45), Raghu Babu (28), Bindu Sri (25), Rambabu (31), Manasa (28), Biswas Laxmi (29), Abu Kasim Laskar (58), and Hrudayanand (34), recounted their harrowing experiences upon their arrival.

2

What went wrong?

Odisha train crash: Preliminary probe suggests Coromandel Express entered loop line instead of main line, hits goods train

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the Coromandel Express train involved in the rail tragedy in Odisha on Friday entered the loop line and crashed into a goods train parked there instead of the main line just ahead of the Bahanagar Bazar station, a source said.

The coaches of Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express capsized after crashing into the coaches of Coromandel Express that had scattered on the adjacent track.

While Coromandel Express was at a speed of 128 kmph, Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express was running at a speed of 116 kmph. The report has been submitted to the Railway Board, sources said.

The loop lines of the Indian Railways are constructed in a station area -- in this case, the Bahanagar Bazar station -- to accommodate more trains to ease out the operations. The loop lines are generally 750 metres in length to accommodate full-length goods train with multiple engines.

The two trains were carrying around 2,000 passengers. At least 261 people have been killed in the accident and nearly 1,000 injured.

2



Toll climbs to 288, high-level probe ordered

PNS ■ BALASORE/BHUBANESWAR

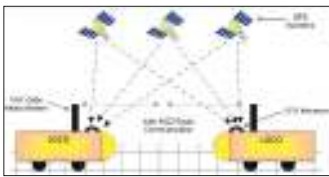
Large cranes and bulldozers tried on Saturday to lift the last remaining coach that rescuers have not reached yet among the strewn and mangled wreckage of three trains that rammed into each other in rapid sequence in Odisha's Balasore district, officials said.

The accident on Friday night killed at least 288 people and injured nearly 1,000 in one of the worst railway tragedies of the country. The Indian Railways has ordered a high-level probe to ascertain the cause of the accident. Gas cutters were used

to extricate the bodies from under the derailed coaches.

From a vantage point high above the ground, the accident site looked like as if a powerful whirlwind had thrown the coaches on top of each other. Closer to the ground, bloodied and disfigured bodies laid enmeshed with each other, creating a grotesque sight. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting to review the situation and was headed for the accident site and also the Cuttack hospital where many injured are being treated, officials said. Home Minister Amit Shah and senior government officials attended the meeting.

-PAGE:2



Anti-train collision system wasn't available on route

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The railways has initiated a high-level probe into the train crash in Odisha, which will be headed by the commissioner of railway safety, South Eastern Circle, officials said on Saturday.

The commissioner of railway safety works under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and investigates all such accidents.

"A M Chowdhary, CRS, SE Circle, will inquire into the accident," a spokesperson of the Indian Railways said.

The national transporter has also said anti-train collision system "Kavach" was not available on the route. At least 238 people have been killed and more than 900 injured in the crash on Friday involving the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express, the Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express and a goods train.

While it is not clear what caused the crash, sources indicated a possible signalling failure.

2

Spl team from AP assisting rescue ops

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to the devastating train accident in Odisha involving three trains, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has taken immediate action by despatching a high-level team to aid in the coordination of relief and rescue efforts. The committee, led by IT Minister G Amarnath, was appointed on Saturday following a meeting with Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and officials from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

With the primary objective of facilitating effective relief operations, Chief Minister Jagan underlined the need to establish enquiry and grievance cells in District Collector offices to promptly address grievances. The committee comprises IAS officers including Arun Kumar, Civil Supplies Commissioner, Anand, Joint Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, and Naveen, Joint Commissioner of Srikakulam, who will join IT Minister G Amarnath at the accident site in Odisha.

-PAGE:2

Helpline numbers are now active at VISAKHAPATNAM (0891 - 2746330 & 0891 - 2744619), VIZIANAGARAM (08922 - 221202 & 08922 - 221206), and SRIKAKULAM (08942 - 286213 and 08942 - 286245).

Shah, Nadda to visit AP next week

Separate tours of BJP top leaders may give some clarity on alliance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Speculations abound as two prominent leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are scheduled to visit Andhra Pradesh next week, leading to anticipation regarding the party's political strategy for the upcoming State Assembly elections.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be arriving in Visakhapatnam on June 8, while BJP national president J P Nadda will be visiting Tirupati on June 10. During his visit, Shah will participate in various programmes, including addressing a public meeting in Visakhapatnam. Meanwhile, Nadda will engage in party activities in Tirupati. Although the primary purpose



of their visits is to promote the achievements of the Narendra Modi government over the past nine years as part of the Mahajan Sampark Abhiyan, party leaders anticipate that these visits will provide some insight into the BJP's future electoral alliances in the state.

Govt bans 14 fixed dose combination drugs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has banned 14 fixed dose combination drugs including Nimesulide and Paracetamol dispersible tablets and Chlopheniramine Maleate and Codeine syrup citing there is "no therapeutic justification" for these medicines and that they may involve "risk" to people.

The Union Health Ministry issued a notification on Friday in this regard. The banned drugs included those used for treating common infections, cough and fever -- combinations such as Nimesulide + Paracetamol dispersible tablets, Chlopheniramine Maleate + Codeine Syrup, Pholcodine + Promethazine, Amoxicillin +

Cites they may involve risk to people



Bromhexine and Bromhexine + Dextromethorphan + Ammonium Chloride + Menthol, Paracetamol +

Bromhexine+ Phenylephrine + Chlopheniramine + Guaiphenesin and Salbutamol + Bromhexine. The

move comes following recommendations by an expert committee.

The expert committee said that there is "no therapeutic justification for this FDC (fixed dose combination) and the FDC may involve risk to human beings. Hence, in the larger public interest, it is necessary to prohibit the manufacture, sale or distribution of this FDC under section 26 A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. In view of the above, any kind of regulation or restriction to allow for any use in patients is not justifiable."

"And whereas, on the basis of the recommendations of the Expert Committee and the Drugs Technical

Advisory Board, the Central Government is satisfied that it is necessary and expedient in public interest to regulate by way of prohibition the manufacture for sale, sale and distribution for human use of the said drug in the country," the notification stated. FDC drugs are those which contain a combination of two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in a fixed ratio.

In 2016, the government had announced the ban on the manufacture, sale and distribution of 344 drug combinations after an expert panel, set up at the behest of the Supreme Court had stated they were being sold to patients without scientific data and the order was challenged by the manufacturers in court.

Special train arranged for survivors of tragedy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A special train has been pressed into service to transport the survivors of the devastating train accident involving the Shalimar-Madras Coromandel Express (Train No 12841). Around 250 passengers who managed to escape the horrifying incident are expected to reach Vijayawada at approximately 9:30 pm on Saturday.

In response to the tragic event, a Special Train (No P/13671), known as the Bhubaneswar-Dr MGR Chennai Central Express, has departed from Bhadrak towards Chennai. This train consists of 22 coaches and has accommodated approximately 250 stranded passengers from the accident site in Odisha. The train is scheduled to arrive at Chennai Central tomorrow (June 4, 2023). However, before reaching its final destination,

the train is expected to reach Vijayawada at 9:45 PM today.

To support the affected families, Southern Railway has arranged another special train, Train No 02840, following the same timings and route as the 12840 Chennai-Howrah Mail. Departing from Chennai Central at 7:20 PM today (Saturday), this train will provide transportation for the families of those involved in the accident.

According to official reports, the ill-fated Coromandel Express had 178 passengers bound for Andhra Pradesh. The train, which began its journey from Shalimar in West Bengal and was en route to Chennai, met with the tragic accident on Friday night in Odisha at Bahanaga Bazar.

Among the passengers, 110 were destined for Visakhapatnam, 26 for Rajamahendravaram, one for Tadepalligudem, two for Eluru,

and 39 for Vijayawada. The Waltair Division of the East Coast Railway zone shared a table revealing that out of the 178 passengers, 114 were traveling in three-tier air-conditioned coaches (3AC), 38 in sleeper class, 17 in two-tier AC coaches, and nine in tier-one AC coaches (1AC). The number of passengers in the general category coach remains unknown.

Shivendra Mohan, the Divisional Railway Manager of Vijayawada Division, expressed deep condolences to the grieving families and wished a swift recovery to the injured passengers. Mohan assured that relief operations were underway and officials from the Vijayawada Division were closely monitoring the situation from the command center at the Divisional Office. Additionally, Sri Rambabu Vavilapalli, Sr.DCM/BZA, was appointed as the Nodal Officer responsible

for gathering and disseminating information about the passengers from BZA Division traveling on the affected trains and providing necessary assistance during the planned relief operations. Ticket checking staff have been deployed at major stations to offer support to stranded passengers, and help desks have been established immediately.

For any assistance or information, helpline numbers have been set up by the Vijayawada Division as follows: Vijayawada Railway Station - 0866 2576924, Rajahmundry Railway Station - 0883 2420541, Nellore Railway Station - 0861 2342028, Samalkot Railway Station - 7780741268, Ongole Railway Station - 7815909489, Bapatla - 08643-222178, Tenali - 0 8 6 4 4 - 2 2 7 6 0 0 , Tadepalligudem - 08818-226162, Gudur - 0862450795, and Eluru - 08812-232267.

Avinash to appear before CBI every Saturday till month-end

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ruling YSRCP MP from Kadapa YS Avinash Reddy finally appeared before the CBI officials on Saturday after evading the investigation agency multiple times in the last few weeks. The CBI investigation started at 10:30 am on Saturday and started questioning Avinash. The investigation went on for about 7 hours and several incidents that preceded the Viveka murder came to discussion. The CBI primarily focused on the telephonic conversations Avinash Reddy had on the night before Viveka's murder case.

Avinash's statement was recorded by the CBI as they dig deep into the incidents that happened before the murder. Avinash then left the CBI office in Hyderabad and went to his house. As per the court order, MP Avinash Reddy will have to attend the CBI investigation every Saturday till 30 June without fail.

Naidu to attend G20 meet in Delhi today

○ The TDP chief is likely to meet Modi and Shah

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N Chandrababu Naidu is set to arrive in Delhi on Saturday evening. His visit coincides with the G20 meeting to be held in the national capital on Sunday morning, which will be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prominent leaders from various states, including Naidu, are expected to attend the event.

Amidst speculations in political circles, it is rumoured that Naidu might seize the opportunity to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit. This potential meeting holds significant political implications, given Naidu's active efforts to form an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the upcoming 2024 general elec-



Notably, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan has also been engaging in lobbying with the BJP for an alliance with the TDP. Kalyan emphasises that such an alliance would yield mutual benefits and contribute to the defeat of the ruling YSR Congress.

Furthermore, reports suggest that Pawan Kalyan is even willing to sever his ties with the BJP to join forces with the TDP, further under-

scoring the strategic manoeuvres taking place within the state's political landscape.

The outcome of Naidu's meetings with PM Modi and Amit Shah, if they do take place, could potentially shape the political trajectory of Andhra Pradesh in the coming years. As alliances form and realignments occur, political dynamics are likely to undergo a significant shift in the run-up to the crucial 2024 general elections.

Indian American Banga takes...

Continued from Page 1

Banga has become the first-ever Indian-American to head the World Bank. He replaces David Malpass, who announced his decision to step down in February.

Banga most recently served as Vice Chairman at General Atlantic. Previously, he was President and CEO of Mastercard, a global organization with nearly 24,000 employees.

Under his leadership, MasterCard launched the Center for Inclusive Growth, which advances equitable and sustainable economic growth and financial inclusion around the world. He was the Honorary Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce, serving as Chairman from 2020-2022.

He became an advisor to General Atlantic's climate-

focused fund, BeyondNetZero, at its inception in 2021. Banga served as Co-Chair of the Partnership for Central America, a coalition of private organizations that works to advance economic opportunity across underserved populations in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. He was previously on the Boards of the American Red Cross, Kraft Foods, and Dow Inc.

Banga is a co-founder of The Cyber Readiness Institute and was Vice Chair of the Economic Club of New York. He was awarded the Foreign Policy Association Medal in 2012, the Padma Shri Award by the President of India in 2016, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor and the Business Council for International Understanding's Global Leadership Award in 2019, and the Distinguished Friends of Singapore Public Service Star in 2021.

9th Foundation Day of Homi Bhabha cancer hosp celebrated

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre (HBCH & RC), Visakhapatnam, a unit of Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai (A Grant In Aid Institute of the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India) celebrated its 9th Hospital Foundation Day here on Saturday. As part of the Hospital Foundation Day programme various activities like sports competition, cultural events, Symposium for Radiation Therapy Technicians on how to navigate the side effects during radiation therapy have been organised.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director of HBCH & RC, Dr

Umesh Mahanshetty praised the noble initiative of ICICI Foundation for setting up of Paediatric and Haematological Oncology Block' with Rs 400 crores from CSR Fund at HBCH & RC, Visakhapatnam, which is widely known for its world-class medical and healthcare services for cancer patients.

Towards this end, Tata Memorial Centre signed MoU with ICICI Bank for providing an array of advanced equipment and therapies, which are required to treat paediatric and haematological cancer. The facilities will include intense chemotherapy, bone marrow transplantation, radiation therapy and newer immunotherapies like CAR-T cell treatment



at "highly subsidized" costs for the much-needed patients. neighbouring states.

In the near future, HBCH & RC is coming up with a Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy unit that will be the first of its

kind on the East Coast of India in the government civilian sector. The hyperbaric therapy is useful for wound healing, decreasing the side effects of radiation therapy, added Dr Mahanshetty.

Muslims urge govt to set up medical college on wakf land

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Minorities, SB Amzath Basha and Advisor to Government (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy have reiterated that the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government is working for the development of Muslim minorities in education, medical and other fields. The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) organised a meeting of Muslim minority leaders under the name 'Har Dil Mein YSR Hum Sab Jagan Ke Saath' at Shah Zahar Mushafir Khana in Panja Center of Vijayawada West Constituency on Saturday.

Dr Mehboob Sheikh, zonal in-charge of NTR, Krishna, Guntur districts of YSRC medical wing said that if the government establishes a Muslim



minority medical college on the vacant Waqf Board land in Guntur, it will benefit the poor Muslim children and will bring a great change in the minority community as well. He said that since the late great leader Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy gave four percent reservation to the

Muslim minorities, many poor Muslim students are becoming doctors and engineers and recalled that out of every hundred doctors in the state there are four minorities, that honour and credit goes to the great leader Dr. YSR. Similarly, he urged the government to work

for the development of the backward Muslim minorities by constructing the Dr. YSR Institute of Medical Science College on the vacant Waqf Board lands in Guntur.

Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that CM Jagan gave top priority to Muslims and was working dedicatedly for their development in all aspects. He assured the community that he would take their wish for establishing a medical college in vacant Waqf land to the notice of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Deputy CM Amzath Basha, mentioning about the Jagan's welfare schemes to Minorities, asked minority leaders to take steps for the development of masses and further dedicatedly work for the development of Muslim minorities with the help of government schemes and development programmes.

No one would be spared....

Continued from Page 1

The prime minister was briefed on the situation by Vaishnav and officers of the disaster management teams that worked overnight to rescue people.

He also interacted with state Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Pramila Mallik and officers of the local police. From the accident site, he spoke to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, directing them to ensure all needed help to the injured and their families.

Modi said that special care must be taken to ensure that the bereaved families do not face any inconvenience and that those affected keep getting assistance. He also enquired about the progress of the restoration work at the site, which is a part of the Howrah-Chennai Main Line that connects east India to the south.

"Took stock of the situation at the site of the tragedy in Odisha. Words can't capture my deep sorrow. We stand committed to providing all possible assistance to those affected. I laud all those working round the clock, on the ground and helping out in relief work," he later

tweeted. The prime minister also went to the Balasore district hospital, where he interacted with the injured persons.

Among the persons he spoke to, one was from Jharkhand, one from West Bengal and three from Odisha. He enquired about their condition and if they were facing any issues with the treatment. He assured them that all necessary steps were being taken to mitigate their plight.

The prime minister also interacted with doctors and health personnel there.

Before visiting Odisha, he had chaired a high-level meeting in New Delhi on the train accident, which happened on Friday evening.

"PM Narendra Modi chaired a meeting to take stock of the situation in the wake of the train mishap in Odisha. Aspects relating to rescue, relief and medical attention to those affected were discussed in the review meeting," his office tweeted.

Three trains -- Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express, Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express and a goods train -- were involved in the accident, one of the worst railway tragedies in the country.

What went...

Continued from Page 1

An eyewitness to the incident, Anubhav Das, also told PTI that local authorities and railway officials had initially indicated that the train he was travelling on -- Coromandel Express -- had rammed into the goods train.

However, none of these accounts was officially confirmed by the railways. While a thorough probe is underway, none of the authorities has so far talked about any possibility of a sabotage.

The national transporter has initiated a high-level probe into the train crash in Odisha's Balasore, which will be headed by the commissioner of railway safety, South Eastern Circle, officials said. The commissioner of railway safety works under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and investigates all such accidents. "A M Chowdhary, CRS, SE Circle, will inquire into the accident," a spokesperson of the Indian Railways said. The national transporter has also said anti-train collision system "Kavach" was not available on the route. The crash involved Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express, Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express and a goods train.

‘CM closely monitoring situation’

Continued from Page 1

It has been determined that 482 people from Andhra Pradesh were on board the Coromandel Express. Among them, 309 were scheduled to alight at Visakhapatnam, 31 at Rajahmundry, five at Eluru, and 137 at Vijayawada. The authorities are currently attempting to trace them by contacting their phone numbers. As per the Education Minister, 267 commuters have been confirmed as safe, with 20 individuals sustaining minor injuries. It was discovered that 82 people had cancelled their journeys, while 113 individuals either did not answer their phones or had switched them off. Efforts are

being made to obtain information regarding these 113 individuals.

Additionally, 89 people from the state had reserved tickets for Howrah on the Yesvantpur Express. Among them, 33 were from Visakhapatnam, three from Rajahmundry, one from Eluru, 41 from Vijayawada, eight from Bapatla, and three from Nellore. Out of these, 49 have been reported as safe. Ten people did not board the train, while 28 did not respond to phone calls or had their phones switched off.

Minister Botla said that they are actively collecting details of the incident and have alerted hospitals from Ichchapuram to Ongole. He

assured that necessary treatment would be provided to all the injured, regardless of their identity. Two injured passengers who arrived in Visakhapatnam were immediately admitted to Seven Hills Hospital. One of them suffered head injuries, while the other sustained injuries to the spine. Botla further informed that the Andhra Pradesh government has dispatched a total of 50 ambulances, including 25 '108' emergency service ambulances and 25 private ambulances, to Odisha.

Additionally, a helicopter has been prepared for emergency operations.

Regarding fatalities, Minister Botla clarified that

there have been no confirmed deaths of passengers from Andhra Pradesh. However, he stressed that it is premature to draw any conclusions as relief efforts are still underway. He assured that the government is prepared to handle any situation, with the Chief Minister consistently reviewing the situation.

Arrangements have been made to admit patients to Apollo Hospital in Bhubaneswar, if required, and discussions have already taken place with the hospital management.

The Minister appealed to the family members of passengers aboard the ill-fated trains to provide their details to the respective District Collectors.

Special team from AP...

Continued from Page 1

Furthermore, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed officials to make necessary arrangements in hospitals across Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam districts to provide medical treatment to the injured, while ensuring the availability of ambulances for immediate response. Expressing deep sorrow over the tragic incident in Balasore, Odisha, which claimed the lives of at least 233 individuals and left over 900 injured, the CM also urged officials to verify if any passengers from Andhra Pradesh were among the deceased or injured.

Authorities at the accident site reported ongoing rescue efforts, with rescuers employing welding gas torches and electric cutters to extract survivors and bodies from the tangled wreckage of the three trains. The incident, which occurred on Friday evening, resulted in a horrifying chain of derailments in Odisha's Balasore district.

Meanwhile, the Waltair Division of the East Coast Railways zone has established three helplines to offer assistance and support.

Toll climbs to 261, high-level...

Continued from Page 1

The rescue operation is continuing with one coach posing a huge challenge, according to the latest official update that put the casualties at 261 and the number of injured at around 1,000.

"Only one bogie is left, which is severely damaged. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) and the Fire Service are still working to cut the bogie and recover the living or the dead," Odisha Chief Secretary P K Jena told reporters.

Around 200 ambulances, 50 buses and 45 mobile health units, besides 1,200 personnel, are working at the accident site, with officials saying the tragedy was compounded due to multiple tracks passing through an embanked area. Army columns, including engineering and medical personnel, have been rushed to the accident site from its installations at Barrackpore and Panagarh in West Bengal. Two Mi-17 helicopters were deployed to evacuate the injured passengers, a defence official said on Saturday.

SCR CANCELS 23 TRAINS, DIVERTS 26, RESCHEDULES 1

Vijayawada rly station wears a deserted look

C PRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

The usually bustling Vijayawada Railway Station wore a deserted look as a result of the rescheduling of trains following a horrific three-train collision in Odisha's Balasore district on Friday evening. The impact of the accident prompted the South Central Railway (SCR) to announce the cancellation of 23 trains, diversion of 26 trains, rescheduling of one train, and the short termination of two trains until further notice.

In response to the railway's announcement, many passengers have sought alternative means of transportation to reach their destinations. Numerous travellers have been forced to cancel their reservation tickets.

Typically, during the summer season when schools, colleges, and educational institutions are closed, a significant number of people plan long-



distance travels with their families or embark on pilgrimages. However, upon learning of the tragic train accident, individuals have been compelled to reschedule their plans by cancelling or postponing their trips.

Fortunately, the impact on short-distance train travellers has been minimal, as the accident occurred over 900 km away from Vijayawada.

Sources indicate that long-distance passengers have chosen to delay their travel plans, anticipating that the restoration of train services would take time. Securing reservations during the peak summer season was also perceived as a challenging task.

PRESSURE ON CITY BUS STATION

The busy Pandit Nehru Bus Station (PNBS) in Vijayawada witnessed a surge in passenger numbers on Saturday. Apart from the usual weekend rush, the rescheduling of train services following the accident contributed to the increased footfall as passengers sought alternative modes of transportation to reach their destinations. Normally, the PNB station experiences a higher influx of passengers on weekends, as many employees who reside away from their families visit their homes during this time and return on Mondays. Additionally, due to the ongoing summer holidays, the rush of passengers at bus stations has increased significantly. With the cancellation and diversion of trains, people have been left with no choice but to opt for RTC bus travel, private transport, or cabs. According to RTC officials, additional bus services to

important destinations will be provided during weekends to accommodate the higher number of travelers during this period. Vijayawada Assistant Traffic Manager B Shyam Prasad stated that they operate additional services during weekends, holidays, and festivals. However, due to the accident near Bhubaneswar in the state of Odisha, resulting in train cancellations and diversions, footfall has increased since Friday night. As a response, the RTC has decided to introduce special long-distance bus services to Hyderabad, Vizag, Rajahmundry, and Tirupati. G Rakesh Kumar, a software engineer, shared his experience of having his reserved train ticket to Visakhapatnam cancelled. Consequently, he had to opt for travel by APSRTC (Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation).

Pawan Kalyan expresses shock on train accident

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has said that the train accident which took place near

Balasore in Odisha state on Friday night caused a deep shock.

In a statement here on Saturday, he said, "It is unfortunate that 278 passengers were killed in the incident. I extend my deep sympathies to the bereaved family members. Information is being received that there may be a chance that many passengers are from the Telugu states in the Coromandel Express and Bangalore-Howrah fast trains, which met with the accident."

Pawan Kaluyan requested the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to make necessary arrangements to assist the affected passengers and their families. "Against the backdrop of this train accident, the Central government must take steps to improve the safety precautions to prevent train mishaps," Pawan Kalyan said.

YSRCP IT Army takes shape

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The ruling YSRCP's IT Wing on Saturday came up with a unique concept by setting up an exclusive IT Army for the party service. YSRCP IT Wing president Suneel Kumar Reddy Posimreddy, unveiled this new concept Mission IT Army at a mammoth gathering which was held in Hyderabad on Saturday on the sidelines of the IT wing's 'Meet and Greet Summit'.

More than 2,000 professionals from the IT sector and party sympathisers attended the meet. Suneel Kumar Reddy explained to the cadre about the future activities and interacted with them to draw their valuable opinions for future course of activities of the organisation.

Reddy said, "We are connecting IT professionals across the nation, and the IT wing will act as a bridge between the party and IT professionals."

He urged the YSRCP IT wing fraternity to visit rural areas and explain the achievements of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said that the YSRCP IT wing is one of the strongest units at present.

Speaking to media representatives, he said that, in fact, the entire world is now enthusiastically looking towards Andhra



Pradesh as the Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is giving highest priority in developing the Sstate exclusively in IT and Investment sector, Now AP got recognition across the globe as investors friendly state, AP stood number one in ease of doing business in India is giving a new hope for the investors as well as IT Players. Many IT firms and Players are coming forward and looking forward to invest in and establish their campuses in Andhra Pradesh.

Vizag will soon become the major IT hub in Andhra Pradesh and will definitely compete with any other IT-developed city in India. Tirupati and Anantapur districts will also develop into

major IT destinations. Already, Vizag is now a happening city under CM Jagan regime, Suneel Kumar Reddy elaborated.

Adani Data Centre will become a boon for Vizag development; it alone will provide 50,000 jobs. The AP government's constructive dedicated IT policy will provide another 50,000 IT jobs within another span of three years.

He urged the public to be vigilant. The TDP and its leaders are trying to cheat the public by copying the YSRCP and other parties manifestos. The TDP has no right to ask for votes as the Chandrababu regime miserably failed to fulfil his promises, Reddy lambasted.

Victims can contact toll-free number: MLA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Vishnu has informed that if there are any victims of the Coromandel train accident, from the erstwhile Krishna district, they can can contact toll free number.

In a press release here on Saturday, he informed that they can contact the toll free number 9848144399 to know the information of passengers of Krishna and NTR districts.

Malladi Vishnu said that they can call this number at any time. On the other hand, the State government has already set up control room centres for emergency services and alerted the district hospitals, said Malladi Vishnu.

Most tragic incident: Rammohan Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MP Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has described the rail accident in Odisha as a highly tragic incident. Speaking on the incident on Saturday, he said that the deaths of 300 passengers and the injury to 1,000 others are a matter of great concern in the history of the country. The loss of lives is not just a tragedy for the people of the nation but also for people from other countries who lost their lives. "I deeply mourn the loss of lives and express my condolences to their families. I urge them to find the strength and courage to overcome this hardship. Praying for the swift recovery of the injured."

He said Andhra Pradesh residents are also among those affected by this incident. Railway authorities have announced that there are 178 people from Andhra Pradesh

on the train, according to reports.

Former MLA Kalamata Venkataaramanan has been sent to assist in relief efforts. Those who have the opportunity to contribute to relief efforts should do so with a sense of humanity.

Ramamohan Naidu hailed the youth who stepped forward to donate blood for the injured. The Railway Ministry, and the railway authorities have a responsibility to ensure that such incidents do not occur again by implementing modernisation measures. Every Indian is questioning how such a major accident happened. There should be a thorough investigation into this incident, and strict actions should be taken against those responsible.

If there are people from Srikakulam district involved in the incident, they should be informed of the details.



Rare procedure successfully performed at Guntur GGH

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Doctors of Gastroenterology at Government General Hospital (GGH) Guntur performed a rare non-invasive surgical treatment on a patient without any incisions and stitches through endoscopy for a fluid cyst around the pancreas due to inflammation of the pancreas and splenic artery pseudoaneurysm.

Dr Kavitha, HoD of Gastroenterology Department and Dr Nagur Basha, Assistant Professor in the GGH Guntur on Saturday said that Saيدا Srinivasa Rao (35) from Annavaram of Krishna district was suffering from severe stomach pain due to huge alcohol consumption. He came to GGH Guntur on May 17. General Medicine doctors in the GGH casualty conducted various tests. The doctors found a fluid cyst around the pancreas due to inflammation of the pancreas and splenic artery pseudoaneurysm during diagnosis and



transferred the patient to the gastroenterology department.

Dr Kavitha and Dr Nagur Basha stated that the doctors thoroughly examined the patient and opted to treat the patient by endoscopy without a single cut on the stomach. They further stated that on May 24, the doctors successfully performed the rare treatment to the patient they explained that this was the first surgery in the state done in the government hospitals. They further explained that the

patient's health condition is stable and he will be discharged in two to three days.

The duo doctors mentioned that in this treatment, Assistant Professor Dr Siva Ramakrishna, PG doctors Anil Kumar, narcotics doctors Dr Neeraja, Polaiah and Vishnu Mahesh participated. GGH Superintendent Dr Prabhavathi congratulated the doctors who performed the rare surgery and sought to render more services to the needy patients in the future.

Guwahati civic body lauds VMC's activities

Corporators from Vijayawada on 'Vigyan Yatra' of North Eastern states

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The development of Vijayawada city and the lush greenery was appreciated by Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The Corporators of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) visited Guwahati Municipal Corporation and interacted with the Mayor and other officials regarding the administration and development activities.

During the meeting, the representatives of Guwahati Corporation congratulated the people of Vijayawada on the infrastructure, development and maintenance of underground drainage in the city.

The VMC Corporators were on the Vigyan Yatra of the North Eastern States and on the second day of the tour they visited Guwahati. YSR Congress Party and Telugu Desam Corporators' team, led by YSRC floor leader Venkata Satyanarayana, interacted with Guwahati Mayor Mrigen Sarania , Deputy Mayor Smitha Roy, Commissioner Megh Nidhi Dahal, Deputy Speaker Ratna Singh, and other officials participated in the meeting.

The Guwahati Mayor made a PowerPoint presentation on the expansion of Guwahati Corporation and explained that the city of Guwahati, which has



60 wards, is divided into six zones and infrastructure facilities are being provided to the people. He stated that underground drainage is available only in some areas and most of them have storm

water drainage systems.

The VMC officials presented all the development welfare schemes undertaken and carried out in the Vijayawada City Corporation through a

PowerPoint presentation and explained them in detail.

Guwahati Deputy Mayor Smitha Roy, after viewing the presentation, showered praises over the development of Vijayawada city, the reforms undertaken for environmental protection and the enhancement of greenery. She said that they will follow the path of VMC for the all-round development of Guwahati.

The 29 YSR Congress Party, eight Telugu Desam and three co-opted members along with Dr. Ravi Chand, Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Assistant Engineer K. Yesupadam participated.

Dr NTR Centenary Award to city-based doctor VGR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr Venu Gopala Reddy (VGR), noted diabetologist from Moghalrajpuram, Vijayawada said that he is delighted to receive the Dr NTR centenary award from noted movie artist Dr Brahmanandam at at Tummalapalli Kshetrayya Kala Kshetram in the city.

Addressing the media here on Saturday, he shared his experience of receiving the prestigious award for his services on the prevention of diabetes as a doctor and organising hundreds of awareness programmes as a social activist on the same.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, "The award enhanced the responsibility on me as a physician. I organised hundreds of awareness programmes on the prevention of diabetes in educational institutions among nearly 10 lakh students for the past two decades. Besides, I organised several medical camps for diabetic



patients and distributed medicines free of cost," he said "I distributed my books on prevention of diabetes to about eight lakh people so far and initiated distribution of saplings in and around the city. So far, we have distributed 40,000 saplings to the patients," he added.

62 red sanders logs seized

PNS ■ KADAPA

The police conducted raids at three places, seized 62 red sanders and arrested five persons at Siddavatam, Rajampet and Thamballapalle areas. The police said that police teams under the supervision of DSPs Muralidhar and Chenchu Babu conducted combing in the forest area.

A police team led by Railway Koduru sub-control RI Krupanand and forest beat officer Mounika conducted combing in Siddavatam and Muthukur forest areas. The police team spotted some red sander smugglers carrying red sander logs. On noticing the police, the smugglers left the red sander logs and fled the area. However the police team nabbed five of them and seized



26 red sander logs weighing 753 KGs, one motorcycle.

The police team led by RI K Suresh Kumar Reddy and RSI Vinok Kumar conducted combing at Pullampet and Tummalala Blue sections in the forest. The team spotted some red sander smugglers carrying red sander logs. After noticing the police, they managed to

escape into the forest leaving the logs there. The police team seized 8 red sander logs.

In another combing operation led by RSI P Naresh, the police noticed a house at the outskirts of Rameswaram village under Nagalakuntla post. On suspicion, the police team went to the house. After noticing the police, Ramaiah fled the scene. The police conducted a search in the house, found four 28 red sander logs and seized them.

The police teams during their combing operation seized a total number of 62 red sander logs worth Rs 60 lakh. The Tirupati task force police registered cases in the three incidents. DIG Senthil Kumar announced rewards to the police team members for seizing 62 red sanders logs.

Krishnadevaraya's first Telugu inscription craves for attention

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Krishnadevaraya's first Telugu inscription is craving for immediate care, says Dr E Sivanagi Reddy, archaeologist & CEO, Pleach India Foundation. Based on the information provided by local history enthusiasts that the said inscription originally located in the premises of Ranganatha Temple, Pulivendula as recorded in South Indian Inscriptions volume 16, was not traceable, Dr Reddy visited the temple and couldn't locate it.

On enquiry from the temple priest, he could locate it lying under a tree in Brahmanapalli



road. He sensitised the local community on the historical significance of the information that it is dated to 24th October 1509 CE and records gift of a village Kundaluru for the

maintenance of Ranganatha temple by certain Basvaraju when Krishnadevaraya was ruling.

The inscription is engraved on a local shale stone with the

symbols of sun and moon whose 19 lines are visible and the rest buried. He says there is another inscription on its backside but illegible. Sivanagi Reddy made an appeal to the authorities of the temple and District Administration to safeguard it by shifting it to the Ranganatha Temple and protect it for posterity and suggested to erect it in a pedestal with historical note for the benefit of the public and also research scholars.

Former MD AP Urban Green & Beautification Corporation and CEO Syam Sundar Reddy, and officials of AP Silparamams participated in the programme.

Leopard spotted at Gol Bangla watch tower

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



A leopard was spotted at the Gol Bangla watch tower in KCR Eco Urban Park, Appanapalli, Mahabubnagar, at 4:27 pm on Saturday. The solar trail camera provided a glimpse into the natural habitat of the region. MP Santosh Kumar, who is also the founder of the Green India Challenge, shared the images of the leopard on Twitter and said, "The Haritha Haram programme, a brainchild initiative of CM KCR Sir, is producing incredible results!"

AP may reel under heat wave for next 48 hours

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Several parts of Andhra Pradesh became a cauldron on Saturday with intense heat wave conditions. Day temperatures recorded above 37 degree Celsius at many places. Hot winds started blowing from morning itself and continued till midnight.

Main thoroughfares at many places wore a deserted look as people preferred to stay indoors. Meanwhile, a MET report on Saturday said that heat wave conditions are likely to prevail at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradeshand South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours.

The report said thunderstorms with lightning are likely at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh



and Rayalaseema up to June 7. Gusty winds with speed of 30-40 kmph are likely at isolated places in Rayalaseema on next Monday and Tuesday.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely to occur at one or two places or

at few places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema up to next Wednesday.

Maximum temperatures are likely to be above normal by 2 to 4 degree celsius at one or two

The weather report said thunderstorms with lightning are likely at isolated places in North Coastal AP, South Coastal AP and R'seema up to June 7.

places in Rayalaseema today and tomorrow.

The highest maximum temperature of 43.4 degree celsius was recorded at Jangamaheswarapuram in the plains of the state on Friday, the report added.

Four killed as car rams stationary lorry

PNS ■ KADAPA

Four people were killed and as many others were injured when the Toofan vehicle in which they were travelling rrammed a stationary lorry on the outskirts of Peleru on the Chittoor-Kadapa highway in Annamayya district on Saturday.

Police said that eight people belonging to Nandyal town were going to Tiruvannamaly Arunachaleswar temple In Tamil Nadu in the vehicle which rrammed a stationary lorry killing Vimala, Shivamma, Lakshmidevi and Pratap Reddy.

All the four people died instantaneously. The injured persons Nagamani, Ramesh, Naga Tulasamma and Dhanussu were injured in the mishap. The deceased and the injured were going to Tiruvannamali in Tamil Nadu on pilgrimage. The bodies were shifted to the GGH in Peleru.

‘Spiralling prices making life of common man miserable’

PNS ■ GUNTUR

CPM leader Ch Babu Rao has alleged that the spiralling prices of essential commodities are making the life of common men miserable and called upon people to oppose the anti-people policies of the BJP led Central government.

Addressing a CPM activists' training programme here on Saturday, he said that inflation is growing and public sector units are being privatised which are detrimental to the nation. The essential commodities are skyrocketing making the life of common men miserable, he lamented.

After the BJP-led government formed at the Centre, the corporate entities have started plundering the resources. “The labour laws have been amended by the Centre and it is also acting in favour of the corporate companies. The Centred tried to hand over the farm



sector to the Corporate companies by bringing agriculture laws. In a bid to gain political mileage, the BJP is inciting communal hatred among people, he slammed. Rao called upon people to oppose the BJP led Central government's anti-people policies.

MLC KS Lakshman Rao said that the living standards of people are dwindling due to the liberal economic policies being implemented by the state and Central governments. He feared that the wrong policies might lead to inflation in

the country. The spiralling prices of essential commodities making the life of common men miserable, he deplored. He also vehemently opposed privatizing the public sector units and underlined the need of launching a movement opposing them.

CPM district secretary Pasham Rama Rao lashed out that the YSRCP, TDP and Janasena parties are supporting the Central government's policies without demanding the SCS and allocation of funds for backward regions.

Arrangements for CM’s Polavaram visit reviewed

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has reviewed the arrangements being made for Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's Polavaram project visit. The Chief Minister will visit the Polavaram project on June 6.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that the Chief Minister would visit the Polavaram project on June 6th at 10.15 am and review the progress with the officials.

He said that the Chief Minister would arrive at the Polavaram project site in a helicopter. He would visit the lower cofferdam, upper cofferdam, spillway, earth cum rock

fill dam and other construction areas of the project and check the progress of the work.

Later, in the conference hall at the project site, the engineers and officials of the irrigation department would explain the progress of the project construction work and the implementation of relief and rehabilitation programmes to the Chief Minister.

The Collector directed the police officers to make fool-proof security arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit and to take measures without any disruption to the traffic. The Collector directed the Polavaram Project Administrator and Project Chief Engineer to prepare detailed reports on the

progress of project construction work and the implementation of R&R package.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh directed the Transco officials to ensure that there is no interruption in power supply during the Chief Minister's visit and ordered the officials of the roads and buildings department to set up a helipad. The Collector directed the officials of the concerned departments to work in coordination for the Chief Minister's visit.

Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni, Polavaram project Administration Pravin Aditya, Assistant Collector Apoorva Bharat, ZP CEO K Ravi Kumar and other officials were present.



Home Minister Taneti expresses shock at train catastrophe

PNS ■ ELURU

Home Minister Taneti Vanita expressed shock at the ghastly train accident at Balasore in Odisha state.

In a statement here on Saturday, the Home Minister said that the train accident is unfortunate and shocking. She said that she directed the officials concerned to provide all needed help to the injured. She said that she ordered the officials concerned to provide the best medical treatment to the injured.

She said that rescue teams were deployed to the accident site from Andhra Pradesh to extend services. The details of AP passengers who travelled in the ill-fated trains are yet to be collected, she said.

Special desks were set up in the district Collector office with phone number 1070, 112, 18004250101. She said that if the details of missing passengers were to be 8333905022 the details would be shared with the police and other officials concerned to trace the missing passengers.



Take steps to check maternal mortality rate, officials told

PNS ■ NELLORE

District Collector M Harinarayanan has directed the health officials to take steps to contain the maternal mortality rate in the district.

The Collector held a meeting with the health officials here on Saturday and reviewed various issues. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the district medical officers to pay special attention to the health status of children and to

provide better medical services on time.

The Collector also reviewed the maternal mortality rate. He directed the medical staff at the field level to take steps to ensure that the children above one year of age are provided with the necessary medical services without neglecting their health.

The Collector directed the officials to take steps to detect respiratory diseases and seasonal diseases in children and move them to the nearest YSR

health clinics and social health centres by ANMs and medical staff at the field level to provide timely medical services and send them to higher level hospitals depending on the situation.

It is advised to take all measures in advance to prevent maternal and child deaths. District Medical Officer Venkata Prasad, DCHS Ramesh Nath, Immunization Officer Selina Kumari and others participated in this meeting.

‘KCR rejuvenated farm sector’

PNS ■ WANAPARTHI

Minister for Agriculture S Niranjana Reddy has said that Telangana soils are suitable for wide-ranging crops. Participating as the chief guest at 'Rytu Sambaralu' held at Nagavaram Rytu Vedika on Saturday, he said that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao revolutionised the State's agriculture by spending Rs 4 lakh crore in nine years. Completion of irrigation projects, and undertaking repairs to tanks under the Mission Kakatiya programme helped the turnaround of the farm sector. As a result, the farmers migrated to other places in search of greener pastures and started returning to the state.

Rs10 lakh ex gratia handed over to ASHA worker’s family

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Collector I. Shiva Shankar, along with State ST Commission member Shankar Naik, on Saturday handed over Rs 10 lakh ex gratia to the family members of ASHA worker Ramavat Neelavathi (46), who was raped and murdered on September 18, 2022 at Anupu Chenchu colony in Macharla mandal.

The Collector announced the allocation

of one acre of farmland and a 3-ents house site to the family. He also handed over an appointment letter to the deceased ASHA worker's daughter. The Collector handed over Rs 1 lakh to the family members of Ramavat Saida (17) who was killed when lightning struck him at Nagarjuna Sagar. As many as 43 sheep also perished in the lightning incident. The Collector took petitions from the villagers on the occasion.



KCR seeks blessings of seers for Naya Bharat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Jagadguru Panchacharya Swamijis said that Telangana State is a role model for the country in all fields including agriculture and that the state is flourishing with people engaged in different professions including farmers living happily under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao.

The Chief Minister invited the Jagadgurus of Kashi, Ujjain and Srisailla Peethas of Veerashaiva Panchapeeth for Decennial Telangana State Formation Day celebrations.

Chandrasekhara Sivacharya Mahaswami (Kashi), Siddalinga Sivacharya Mahaswami (Ujjaini) and Chennasiddha Rama Panditaradhya Sivacharya Mahaswami (Srisaillam) reached Pragati Bhavan on Saturday morning.

Along with them, Sivacharya Mahaswamis of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana also attended. KCR and wife



Shobhamma attended the meeting held on the occasion.

The Jagadgurus recited many verses and appreciated the development and welfare programmes of the Telangana Government.

“The service rendered by the TS government to farmers in the last 10 years is indeed great. Providing irrigation to the farmer is commendable. KCR's government is a guiding force in strengthening agriculture

and safeguarding the farming community,” the seers said.

Jagadguru said that KCR's determination to support the welfare state of farmers with the slogan of “Ab ki baar kisan sarkar” is significant. They assured cooperation for the construction of a ‘Naya Bharat’ (New India) aimed at the development of India by KCR.

The Jagadgurus appreciated KCR for according the utmost respect to Sanathana

Sampradayaam (ancient traditions) and for patronizing Sadhus (saints).

It was Janakamaharaj who invited thousands of sadhus and honoured them at one go. Today, KCR made it possible in Telangana. They praised KCR as “Kaliyuga Janakudu” when it comes to taking care of saints.

Speaking on the occasion, KCR said that it is the good fortune of the people of Telangana that the Jagadgurus themselves

came to bless the people of Telangana during the decennial state Formation Day celebrations.

Natural resources like water and electricity are available abundantly in the country. However, after 75 years of independence, India's agricultural sector suffered a lot due to the negligence of Central rulers. Farmers are struggling due to lack of irrigation and electricity. It is imperative to bring a farmer oriented government in the country. Your full cooperation and blessings are required to build Naya Bharat,” KCR said.

Vedic scholars blessed the KCR couple with mantras and presented fruits. KCR felicitated Panchacharya Swamijis in traditional manner.

MP BB Patil's couple, Rajya Sabha Member Joginapally Santosh Kumar, Maharashtra BRS leaders Sankaranna Dondge, Manik Kadam, Himanshu Tiwari and others were also present.

CANCER SURVIVORS' DAY TODAY

Early detection of cancer paves way for complete cure: Expert

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Cancer cases are on the rise in Vijayawada and adjoining coastal districts in Andhra Pradesh, said Dr G Krishna Reddy, Consultant, Medical Oncologist and Bone Marrow Transplant Physician, Manipal Hospital, Vijayawada. He said that it is important to address the growing cancer menace at the early stage. There should be coordinated efforts with an emphasis on prevention, timely diagnosis and effective treatment.

On account of National Cancer Survivors Day on June 4, the doctor said that a lot of factors contribute to successful cancer treatment like the right specialist, early diagnosis, good care, and a positive mind-set to navigate through the challenges faced by cancer patients. He said that tobacco-related malignancies account for approximately 45% of all cancers in Indian states, where tobacco consumption prevalence ranges from 35 to 45%. With the assistance and sup-

port of the state government and other organizations Manipal Hospital has consistently highlighted the harmful consequences of tobacco on students and the broader community, he added.

“My congratulations to all those who fought the disease successfully. You have to be strong in this fight as there can be only one winner in this fight either you win or Cancer. So, we have no option but to win against this dreaded disease,” he said.

‘I NEVER HAD CANCER’

Chiranjeevi clarifies concerns about cancer diagnosis

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Renowned Telugu Actor Chiranjeevi, took to social media to address the recent rumours regarding his health. Fans had been worried after reports circulated suggesting that Chiranjeevi was battling cancer. However, the actor himself set the record straight, stating that he was not diagnosed with cancer but had detected non-cancerous polyps through regular tests.

In a public interaction on Saturday, Chiranjeevi candidly shared his experience, saying, “I never revealed it so far, but I am not hesitating to reveal it now. I was diagnosed with polyps back then. But luckily, I could get it treated in the early stages itself.” He emphasised that the timely



diagnosis allowed him to overcome the condition successfully. “I wasn't afraid of revealing my story. If identified in the early stages, then cancer is not a fatal disease. It can be treated with great effectiveness,” he added.

While the news of Chiranjeevi's health scare came as a shock, his disclosure brings relief to his fans

and well-wishers. It appears that the confusion arose due to misinterpretation of his words during a speech at the inauguration of a cancer centre. Subsequently, several media organisations reported that he had cancer and had survived the treatment. Chiranjeevi clarified on Twitter, stating, “I only said, ‘If I hadn't done the test first, it would have turned out to be cancer’. That's why everyone should take precautions and undergo medical tests/screening.”

Expressing his concern over the misleading reports, he addressed the news sources, saying, “Don't write nonsense without understanding the subject. Because of this, many people are scared and hurt.”

ODISHA TRAIN TRAGEDY

World leaders extend support to India, condole loss of lives

PNS ■ LONDON/MOSCOW

World leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, expressed their condolences to the families and the Government of India on Saturday over one of the country's worst train accidents that killed at least 261 people.

The accident, involving three trains, is one of the worst in the country and took place in Odisha's Balasore district on Friday night. The accident also injured more than 900 people.

Russian President Putin expressed his condolences in a telegram to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Please accept our deep condolences over the tragic aftermath of the train collision in Odisha. We share the grief of those who lost their relatives and close ones in this catastrophe and we hope for a speedy recovery to everyone injured," says the telegram, published

on the Kremlin's website.

UK Prime Minister Sunak extended his heartfelt support and admiration to the survivors and those working tirelessly in the rescue operations.

"My thoughts and prayers are with @narendramodi and

with all affected by the tragic events in Odisha. My deepest condolences to the family and friends of those killed, and my heartfelt support and admiration to the survivors and those working tirelessly to respond," Sunak tweeted.

Japan's Prime Minister Kishida sent a condolence message to Prime Minister Modi following the train accident. "I am deeply saddened by the news of the loss of many precious lives and the injuries in the train accident in the State of Odisha. On behalf of the Government of Japan and its people, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to those who lost their lives and their bereaved families.



‘Loud thud... everything went in all directions’

Train accident survivors recount tales of horror

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Returning home to their families after several months of working in south India, passengers aboard the 12864 Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express suddenly heard a loud thud, following which they fell off their berths and lights went off.

They were just five hours away from their destination in Howrah when the train they were travelling got involved in a triple train accident at Bahanaga Bazar station in Odisha's Balasore district.

The train, which was running a little over three hours late from its schedule, was moving towards its next stop Balasore, some 20 km away, when the accident took place around 7 pm on Friday.

Mizan Ul Haq, a resident of Bardhaman, was in one of the coaches at the rear of the train.

"The train was running at a high speed. Around 7 pm, a loud sound was heard and everything started moving in



all directions and I fell down on the floor from the upper berth as the lights went off inside the compartment," Haq, who was returning home from work in Karnataka on a holiday, said.

He said that somehow, he managed to come out of the damaged coach and then to safety.

"It was ghastly, many people with grave injuries were lying around beside mangled coaches," Haq, who was lucky to have escaped with minor injuries, told PTI at Howrah station, where medical aid, food and other assistance were provided

by the railway authorities to the surviving passengers.

The unaffected 17 coaches of the 12864 Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express reached Howrah at 1 pm on Saturday with 635 passengers, of whom 40 to 50 people were administered medical treatment on arrival, North Howrah Deputy Commissioner of Police Anupam Singh said.

Engine drivers, guards of 2 trains injured in Odisha accident

The engine drivers and guards of two trains were injured in the Odisha triple train accident and are being treated in different hospitals, a railway official said on Saturday. The engine driver and the guard of the goods trains, however, escaped unhurt, the official added. Coromandel Express's loco pilot and his assistant as well as the guard and

Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express's guard were on the injured list. "The loco pilot, assistant loco pilot and the guard of Coromandel Express and the guard of the Bengaluru-Howrah Express are being treated in different hospitals," senior divisional commercial manager of South Eastern Railway's Kharagpur division, Rajesh Kumar, said.



Odisha train crash one of deadliest in Indian Railways' history

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The train crash in Odisha on Friday, involving the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express, the Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express and a goods train in which at least 288 people have been killed and 803 injured, is one of the deadliest such accidents since independence, data shows. Here is a look at other such deadliest train crashes:

* June 6, 1981: India recorded its worst train accident that occurred in Bihar. A train fell into the Bagmati river while crossing a bridge, killing more than 750 people.

* August 20, 1995: Purushottam Express collided with the stationary Kalindi Express near Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh. The official death toll was around 305.

* August 2, 1999: The Gaisal train disaster occurred when Brahmaputra Mail crashed into the stationary Avadh Assam Express at Gaisal station in North Frontier Railway's Katihar division,

killing more than 285 people and injuring over 300. Many of the victims were Army, BSF or CRPF personnel.

* November 26, 1998: Jammu Tawi-Sealdah Express collided with three derailed coaches of Frontier Golden Temple Mail in Punjab's Khanna, killing 212 people.

* November 20, 2016: The Pukhrayan train derailment occurred when 14 coaches of Indore-Rajendra Nagar Express derailed at Pukhrayan, approximately 60 km from Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, killing 152 people and injuring 260.

* May 28, 2010: Jnaneswari Express derailment -- the Mumbai-bound train derailed near Jhargram in West Bengal and was then hit by an oncoming goods train, killing 148 passengers.

* September 9, 2002: The Rafiganj train wreck occurred when Howrah Rajdhani Express derailed over a bridge on the Dhawe river in Bihar's Rafiganj, killing more than 140 people. Terrorist sabotage was blamed for the incident.

Was under 'pressure' not to deliver judgement

Former Allahabad HC judge on Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case

PNS ■ MEERUT (UP)

Justice (retired) Sudhir Agarwal, who was part of an Allahabad High Court bench which delivered a key judgment in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit in 2010, said he was under "pressure" not to give the ruling and added that had they not done so, there would not have been any verdict in the matter for the next 200 years.

Justice Agarwal retired from the high court on April 23, 2020.

Talking to reporters after an event in Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, he said, "After delivering the judgment..., I felt blessed.... There was pressure on me to postpone the judgment in the case. There was



pressure from within home and also from outside."

"Family members and relatives used to suggest to somehow pass time and not deliver the judgment," he added.

"Had the judgment not been delivered on September 30, 2010 in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, there would not have been any judgement in this

matter for the next 200 years," he said.

On September 30, 2010, the Allahabad High Court pronounced its judgement with majority decision of 2:1 and held that the 2.77 acres land located in Ayodhya would be divided equally among three parties -- Sunni Waqf Board, Nirmohi Akhara and 'Ram Lalla' or infant Ram represented by the Hindu Mahasabha.

The bench comprised Justices S U Khan, Sudhir Agarwal and D V Sharma.

In a landmark judgment in November 2019, the Supreme Court said a temple would be built at the disputed land in Ayodhya and ordered the government to give Muslim parties an alternative five-acre plot.

Himachal docs end strike after Sukhu says allowance will continue

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Doctors here on Saturday agreed to end their strike after they were assured by Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu that they would keep getting the Non-Practising allowance.

A number of medical and veterinary associations had announced a strike after a decision to abolish NPA of doctors recruited by the state government.

During a meeting Saturday, Sukhu said that the government had not abolished NPA for medical officers already in the job, a statement issued here said. He also accepted the demands of delegating drawing and disbursing officer powers to principals of medical Colleges, giving representation to the doctors in Himachal Pradesh Medical Corporation, and time-bound promotion of doctors.

India matching up to infra capabilities of China on LAC: DG BRO

PNS ■ PAHALGAM

India is matching up its infrastructure to China's projects at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and there is no need for concern, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) chief Lieutenant General Rajiv Chaudhry said on Saturday.

Chaudhry was here to review works on the routes of the Amarnath Yatra. The annual pilgrimage to the cave shrine, located at a height of 3,880 metres in the south Kashmir Himalayas, will begin on July 1 and end on August 31.

"We are competing much better than what you think China is making. So, there is no need of any concern or overly concern that we are somewhere behind. We are matching up to the capabilities of infrastructure development on the borders," Lt Gen Chaudhry said here.

He said the government has already announced 662 "Vibrant Village" packages for

areas near the border.

"Union Home Minister Amit Shah himself went to Kibithoo village in Arunachal Pradesh which is the eastern most post and what we call the first village of Arunachal Pradesh.

Of the total, 441 villages are in Arunachal Pradesh itself. So, on the northern borders, the government is paying a lot of attention and development is taking place in a very accelerated manner," the BRO's director general said.

Lt Gen Chaudhry said in the last two years, 205 projects have been completed on the LAC. These were dedicated to the nation by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and this year, "we are attempting to complete 176 projects worth Rs 6,200 crore", he said.

"The Centre has increased our budget this year by about 100 per cent. The government has a lot of faith in us, and we build roads for five ministries.

MALFUNCTIONING OF MIKE

Rajasthan CM throws it at Barmer district collector

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot threw a microphone at the Barmer district collector, apparently enraged after the public address system malfunctioned during a public event. A purported video of the incident surfaced on social media.

The incident happened at the Barmer Circuit House on Friday night when the chief minister was interacting with a group of women to collect feedback on various government schemes meant for them.

As the chief minister tried addressing the group, the

mike malfunctioned and, apparently angry, he threw it at the Barmer district collector. The collector then picked up the mike.

The chief minister again lost his composure when he saw some people standing behind the group of women, and asked them to go away.

"Where is SP (superintendent of police)? Both SP and collector seem to be similar," he said.

Gehlot was on a two-day tour of Barmer. During the event, the women told the chief minister about various benefits of the schemes and thanked him for increasing the honorarium of anganwadi workers.



‘SPITTING’ ROW

Sanjay Raut and NCP leader Ajit Pawar lock horns

PNS ■ NASHIK

A war of words erupted on Saturday between Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut and Nationalist Congress Party's Ajit Pawar with both leaders attacking each other indirectly amid a 'spitting' row.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction, NCP, and Congress are constituents of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) preparing to contest the 2024 elections in alliance.

The trigger was Raut spitting on the ground in front of cameras during a press conference on Friday when reporters sought his reaction to Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde's jibe targeting Uddhav Thackeray. Under flak, Raut on Saturday claimed spitting was accidental and not intentional as he was having a problem with his teeth.

Earlier in the day, Ajit Pawar said such a "spitting" act is not Maharashtra's culture and one should be careful while speaking.

Hitting back, Raut said, "Spitting is better than urinating", apparently alluding to Ajit Pawar's controversial remarks he had made in 2013 when he was deputy chief minister of Maharashtra.

"Show me where I spit. It's their thinking, their mindset. They think that people spit on them and it's true. I told you yesterday that I had some problem with my teeth and it resulted in the act. My tongue came under my teeth when the name of the person who cheated Maharashtra, Shiv Sena, and Balasaheb Thackeray was mentioned and I spit. I didn't spit when the name of any politician was taken but I did

so when the names of traitors were taken," Raut said in Trimbakeshwar.

He claimed when (late Hindutva ideologue) V D Savarkar was produced in a court regarding a case, "he had spit on seeing the person (traitor) who had spilled beans about him".

Spitting on traitors is the Hindu culture. It is Hindutva, not a crime, he added.

"Spitting is better than urinating. Those who suffer know the pain. We are suffering and despite that, we are standing on the ground. I am still with my party. I do not think of aligning with parties like Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to avoid problems," he added.

Ajit Pawar had stirred up a row in 2013 with his comments ridiculing the acute water scarcity in the state.

No info shared on any Indian foster willing to care of Ariha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reports defending the action of a German agency that had taken away an Indian baby girl from her parents in 2021 are inaccurate and appear to be an attempt to obfuscate the issue, government sources said on Saturday.

Ariha Shah was placed in the custody of Germany's Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt) on September 23, 2021 after the baby, who was seven months old then, suffered an accidental injury. She has been in foster care since then.

The sources also said that at "no timely stage" did the German agency share information about any Indian foster family willing to care for the child.

The main issue remains that an Indian child is not being allowed to return to India, they said.

Mahakal Lok corridor idols damaged: Probe begins

A technical team of the Madhya Pradesh Lokayukta on

Saturday started its probe into the collapse of six of seven 'saptarishi' idols of the 'Mahakal Lok' corridor on the premises of the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain following gusty winds on May 28, an official said.

The Lokayukta had taken suo motu cognisance two days ago of the incident and started a probe under a technical team led by MS Johri, the official said. Incidentally, the opposition Congress and other parties have alleged corruption in the construction of the Mahakal Lok corridor, the first phase of which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October last year. The entire cost of the corridor is Rs 856 crore, including Rs 351 crore for the first phase. An India Meteorological Department official, on condition of anonymity, said it did not have wind speed measuring devices in Ujjain but the speed was clocked at 30 kilometre per hour at Indore airport, which is at a distance of 30 kilometres from the site, on May 28.



23 foreign nationals arrested in UP for staying illegally

Twenty-three foreign

nationals, including eight women from Nigeria, were arrested from Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district for allegedly staying illegally in India, police said on Saturday. The arrests were made on Friday night, they said. Station House Officer, Surajpur, Inspector Awadhesh Pratap Singh said, "Last night, the police received information that some foreign nationals are living illegally in a society in the police station limits. Following this, a police team along with officials of the Regional Notification Department raided the society." During the raid, 23 foreign nationals, including eight women from Nigeria, were arrested. While visas of most of them had expired, some of them could not even produce passports and visas, he said. A case has been registered in connection with the matter, he added. Singh said the Gautam Buddha Nagar police started a special drive for the verification of foreign nationals after 13 foreigners were arrested recently for selling drugs in India and abroad.



‘Only transfer of policyholder assets, liabilities of Sahara Life’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SBI Life, a subsidiary of country's biggest lender State Bank of India (SBI), has said it is not a merger between the two companies but only a transfer of the policyholder related assets and liabilities of Sahara Life Insurance.

On Friday regulator Irdai directed SBI Life Insurance to takeover the policy liabilities of around two lakh policies along with assets of stressed Sahara India Life Insurance Co Ltd (SILIC).

The decision was taken at the meeting of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) in view of deteriorating financial health of the SILIC.

Following the Irdai order, SBI Life assured two lakh policyholders of "high levels" of

service and commitment as is accorded to our customers.

"We have started and we are expeditiously working on the process of integrating all these policyholders in our systems. While the full integration may take some time, we request these policyholders to reach out to us on our helpline number 1800 267 9090 or email us at saharalife@sibilife.co.in," it said.

SBI Life will shortly reach out to these policyholders and intimate them about various touch points and manner of servicing for a smooth transition, it said.

Sahara Life Insurance was also not allowed to underwrite new business. Thereafter, further directions were issued to the insurer to meet the regulatory requirements.



Work on BRICS expansion still in progress: EAM

PNS ■ JOHANNESBURG

Expansion of the BRICS bloc is still a work in progress and members of the five-nation grouping are approaching the idea with a positive intent and an open mind, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

Speaking after a meeting of the foreign ministers of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations in Cape Town, Jaishankar said the leaders of the countries had asked them last year to formulate the guiding principles, standards, criteria and the procedures for such admissions.

"This is still a work in progress. We are approaching this with positive intent with an open mind," he said.

There are many aspects to it. One part of it is to consolidate how the existing BRICS members are working with each other. The second part of it is how the BRICS engages non-BRICS countries, he said.

"And the third part is how we look at possible BRICS expansion - what will be the appropriate format for that is also something we need to work on," Jaishankar said.



"Bottom line is we are still working on it; the Sherpas (representing the BRICS members) have been tasked with it and we will have to see what they come up with," he added.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said he concurred with Jaishankar's view. "BRICS is a brand and an asset, so we have to take care of it because it means and represents a lot," Vieira said.

He said BRICS represented 40 per cent of the world's population which makes it an important asset.

"We are working and maybe (it is) because of this big success that it has attracted the attention of many other countries

tries in the 15 years (since BRIC's inception)," Vieira added.

China's Vice Minister Ma Zhaoxu said the model of BRICS+ which China proposed when it was the chair of the bloc in 2022 was developing "very fast".

"That was very well recognised by BRICS countries as well as the international community and actually provided one platform for the solidarity and cooperation between the developing countries and the emerging market economies," Ma said.

He said China was "very happy" to see this model developing with more and more

countries expressing their willingness to join the BRICS family.

"For China, we welcome the intention of those countries to join the BRICS, and we expect more countries to join our BRICS family," he said.

The BRICS countries are inclusive, and pursue the road of opening up and win-win cooperation, Ma said.

South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor, who hosted the meeting, said the meeting had concluded that there was not yet a "useful document" on the matter which they could submit to their principals.

"Once we have a document that offers clear guidance, we will then take that to the BRICS Summit (of heads of state in Pretoria) in August," Pandor said.

The BRICS+ meeting that will be part of the summit would be quite large, as the various African countries and chairs of various regional community bodies in different regions of the world would also be invited to attend, Pandor added.

MONEY MATTERS

Share of flex space in corporates' real estate portfolio rises to 10-12%



Indian corporates are fast embracing flexible workspace which now accounts for 10-12 per cent of their real estate portfolio compared to 5-8 per cent pre-COVID pandemic, according to Colliers. Real estate consultant Colliers has recently released a report 'Global Occupier Outlook 2023' that revealed that many corporates in Asia Pacific are deferring decisions on taking office space on lease as they are grappling with the complexities of the hybrid work model. "The lack of clarity and macroeconomic uncertainty are posing challenges for businesses in projecting their space requirements," it added. According to Colliers' experts, companies are facing the dilemma of striking a balance between providing employees with desired flexibility and realigning their portfolios for the next evolution of the workplace. However, Colliers said that Indian office space occupiers have been quick to adopt flex spaces, attracted by the flexibility, agility, and cost-effectiveness. "Flex spaces are becoming an integral part of occupiers' portfolio, with its share in occupiers' total portfolio rising to 10-12 per cent in 2023, from 5-8 per cent before the pandemic in 2019, as per interactions with industry experts," the consultant said. Going forward, Colliers said that flex spaces will continue to see strong growth. Flexible workspace continue to support occupiers in realigning their portfolios and space considerations to suit a hybrid working style. Peush Jain, Managing Director, Office Services, India, said, "Flex spaces have emerged as a core strategy for occupiers to adopt a decentralised workspace model, serving as a promising alternative to the traditional paradigm." As compared to shorter lease tenures of 1-2 years pre-pandemic, occupiers are now going for longer commitments of 3-5 years with flex space operators as they look to integrate flex space as a long-term solution. During 2022, leasing of office space by flex space operators touched record 7 million square feet across top 6 cities. Across the APAC region, Colliers said that occupiers are keen on realigning their office portfolios to meet business needs while providing the flexibility employees desire. The right real estate portfolio is key to keeping culture intact, attracting and retaining best talent, and controlling operational costs, it added. WeWork India, Smartworks, Simpliwork Offices, Awfis, Skootr, The Executive Centre, Urban Vault, IndiQube, 915Springboard, 315Work Avenue, Akasa Coworking, The Office Pass, Avanta India, and BHIVE Workspace are major players that provide co-working/managed office space.

Vidarbha Urban Credit Society president arrested for duping' investors

PNS ■ NAGPUR

The Economic Offences Wing of Nagpur police has arrested the president of a credit society here for allegedly duping investors to the tune of Rs 1.19 crore.

The president of the Vidarbha Urban Credit Society Limited was arrested and other office-bearers have been named as co-accused in the First Information Report, an official said on Saturday.

The FIR was registered on the basis of a complaint filed by Anita Nagdeote (35), the police



official said.

Nadeote, who worked as a clerk at the society's office, told police that she was promised commission if she acted as an agent and collected deposits.

As many as 39 persons invested more than Rs 1.19 crore with the society between July 2015 and January 2019 through agents like her. Nagdeote herself invested some money in the society's

schemes, she told police.

But the accused eventually closed the office, thus cheating the investors, the complaint said. They paid no commission to the agents either.

A case under Indian Penal Code sections 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating) besides relevant sections of the Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors (in Financial Establishments) Act was registered at Yashodhara Nagar police station and further investigation was underway, the official said.

LIC eases claim process norms for Odisha train accident victims

PNS ■ MUMBAI

National insurer LIC on Saturday announced many relaxations for the claim settlement process for the victims of the Balasore train tragedy.

The accident involving two passenger trains and a stationary goods train has led to the loss of life of at least 288 people so far and left over 1,100 injured.

In a late evening statement, LIC chairman Siddhartha Mohanty announced a slew of relaxations to the claim settlement process for the kin of the victims.

"We are deeply saddened by

the tragic train accident in Balasore, Odisha on Friday. LIC is committed to supporting those affected and will expedite claim settlements to provide financial relief", Mohanty was quoted as saying in the statement.

The Corporation also announced many concessions to mitigate the hardships of the claimants of LIC policies and also of the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana. It said in lieu of registered death certificates, a list of casualties published by the Railways, police or any state or Central authorities will be accepted as proof of death.

Sri Lanka President urges party unity to handle economic crisis

PNS ■ COLOMBO

President Ranil Wickremesinghe has called for joint action by all parties for Sri Lanka to emerge from the unprecedented economic crisis.

Wickremesinghe, who made the remarks while addressing a legal conference held at the Central Resort of Nuwara Eliya on Friday, said that none of the political parties in Parliament currently possess a 50 per cent voter base.

The economic challenges faced by the country ten months ago as an "unprecedented situation in history," Wickremesinghe, also the debt-ridden island nation's finance minister said.

"It has been 10-11 months since our country faced a state of failure. However, we have managed to establish law and order, political stability, and economic stability in our nation. Yet, we are aware that this stability is only temporary, and we still have a long road ahead to overcome the challenges we face," the president stressed.

"Therefore the need is for

unity among the parties, not solely for the purpose of elections, but to steer the country towards recovery from the ongoing economic crisis," he said.

Wickremesinghe stressed that while the re-establishment of law and order and political and economic stability is crucial, it does not imply that Sri Lanka has wholly overcome the crisis.

Sri Lanka was hit by an unprecedented financial crisis in 2022, the worst since its independence from Britain in 1948, due to a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves, sparking a major political and humanitarian crisis in the island nation.

The debt-ridden country was marred with protests leading to the ouster of the powerful Rajapaksa family from politics. Wickremesinghe took charge as the country's president following the resignation of Gotabaya Rajapaksa on July 9 last year.

Wickremesinghe has spearheaded the economic recovery since then obtaining an IMF bailout while implementing strict reforms.



Facebook took action on 41% individual grievances, Instagram on 54%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Social media giant Meta's Facebook took action against 41 per cent of complaints it received from users and Instagram against over 54 per cent of grievances raised by users in April 2023, according to the company's latest India Monthly Report.

As per the category-wise information disclosed by Meta, Facebook "actioned on" less than one-fourth grievances of users where they claimed that the content is showing them in partial nudity or in a sexual

act. In the case of Instagram, the platform actioned on less than one-third of users' reports it received for violation of its policy on "content showing me in nudity/partial nudity or in a sexual act".

Meta transparency report shows the other categories of report, on which Facebook action rate was less than a quarter of percentage, included grievances raised by users for "bullying or harassment" (over 17 per cent), "inappropriate or abusive content" (around 18 per cent) and fake profiles



(over 23 per cent).

Facebook received a total 8,470 grievances from users and provided tools for users to

resolve their issues in 2,225 cases.

"Of the other 6,245 reports where specialized review was needed, we reviewed content as per our policies, and we took action on 1,244 reports in total," Meta said in the report for Facebook.

The category-wise details of action taken on 1,244 additional reports was not disclosed by Facebook.

Facebook on its own acted on over 27.7 million content which it found were violating its community guidelines across 13 policies.

Pak would not default on any sovereign commitments: Fin Min

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

Debt-ridden Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Saturday said that his country would not default on any sovereign commitments and overcome the current economic problems through long-term reforms.

Speaking to a delegation of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), which called on him here ahead of the finalisation of budget 2023-24, Dar also said that there is not a single day's delay in Pakistan's sovereign commitments.

"Pakistan would not default and overcome the current economic

problems through long-term reforms. The government's top priority was to ensure that there is not a single day's delay in Pakistan's sovereign commitments," said the minister.

Dar warned people against speaking ill of the nation's economy. "Some people like to give dates that Pakistan will default on so and so date. They should be ashamed. They should be well-wishers and be loyal to their soil," he said.

Dar said that Pakistan was a sovereign country with assets worth trillions of dollars while its external debts were USD 100 billion, adding that only one asset relating to gas infrastructure was about 50 per



cent of the total debt.

The minister assured that the country would come out of the current challenges and would also create a sovereign wealth fund.

"God-willing, we will be coming up with new ideas in the weeks to come. We will bring an agricultural revolution in Pakistan, [and] a sovereign wealth fund will be created," he said.

He said the government would present the budget and would continue after that for the long-term betterment of Pakistan.

Recently, global lender International Monetary Fund delayed the signing of a staff-level agreement to pave the way for USD

1.1 billion in financing for the cash-strapped nation.

It is believed that Pakistan would default if the IMF refused to provide funds but Dar has been pushing back such dire predictions and with some success till now.

In his interaction with the KCCI officials, the minister said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) faced similar circumstances when it came to power in 2014 and within a year turned around the economy.

"One year was difficult but then everything was normal once things had settled down," he said and added Pakistan had become the "best economy in South Asia".

Call to develop digital platform for customers' consent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In order to curb the menace of pesky calls and sms, telecom regulator Trai has directed service providers to develop a unified digital platform in two months to seek, maintain and revoke customers' consent for promotional calls and messages.

In the first phase, only subscribers will be able to initiate the process to register their consent for receiving promotional calls and sms, and later, business entities will be able to

reach out to customers to seek their consent to receive promotional messages, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) said in a statement on Saturday.

"Trai has now issued a direction to all the access providers to develop and deploy the Digital Consent Acquisition (DCA) facility for creating a unified platform and process to register customers' consent digitally across all service providers and principal entities," Trai said.

At present, there is no uni-



fied system to show consent of customers for getting promotional messages.

"Considering the volume of work involved, Trai has allocat-

ed two months time to develop such facilities by all Access Providers and thereafter implement it in a phased manner. This direction has been issued

by Trai under its Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulations, 2018," Trai said.

Under the prevalent system, consent is obtained and maintained by the various principal entities such as banks, other financial institutions, insurance companies, trading companies, business entities, real estate companies etc.

The absence of a unified digital platform makes it impossible for the telecom operators to check veracity of consents.

"The DCA process shall have

facility to seek, maintain and revoke the consent of customers, as per the processes envisaged under TCCCP Regulation 2018. The consent data collected will be shared on the Digital Ledger Platform (DLT) for scrubbing by all access providers," Trai said.

Access providers, which include telecom players like Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea, have been further directed to use a common short code starting with 127 for sending consent seeking messages.

MoCA asks airlines to check any abnormal airfare surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) on Saturday asked airlines to monitor and take necessary action in case of any abnormal surge in airfares to and from Bhubaneswar, in view of the train accident in the state.

Besides, the ministry said that any cancellation and rescheduling on flights due to the incident may be done without penal charges.

The ministry has sent out an

advisory to the airlines in this regard.

"In view of the unfortunate accident in Odisha, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has advised all airlines to monitor any abnormal surge in airfares to and from Bhubaneswar and other airports of the State and take necessary action regarding the same," it said in a statement. At least 288 people have died in one of the worst accidents involving three trains that happened at Balasore in Odisha on Friday night.

THAT SWELLING IN YOUR LIMBS COULD BE SERIOUS

Lymphedema, a chronic and debilitating condition, is becoming a major health issue in India where it primarily stems from two major causes: A parasitic infection known as filariasis and cancer-related surgeries. Another reasons can be genetic and poor lifestyle. A team of doctors from AIIMS Delhi's Dept of Surgical Disciplines led by DR SUNIL CHUMBER shares with ARCHANA JYOTI, the panorama of the disease and bats for its integration into the healthcare system for better management, given spike in the cancer cases in India.



DR PIYUSH RANJAN



DR PRASSANA

What is Lymphedema and is it a problem in India?



Lymphedema is collection of the fluid in the tissue that is usually carried back by the lymphatics. It can cause severe swelling, discomfort, and a heightened risk of infections, significantly impacting the quality of life for those affected. In India, lymphedema primarily stems from two major causes: filariasis and cancer-related surgeries. Filariasis, a parasitic infection transmitted through mosquito bites, affects an estimated 120 million people in the country. It damages the lymphatic system and is a leading cause of lymphedema in India.

Surgery as an option

While conservative treatments like compression therapy and physical therapy play a crucial role in managing the symptoms, surgical interventions have emerged as a ray of hope for those with severe cases of lymphedema in recent years. Surgical options for lymphedema primarily focus on restoring lymphatic flow and reducing swelling. One such procedure is lymphaticovenous anastomosis (LVA), which involves creating connections between lymphatic vessels and nearby veins. This allows the rerouting of lymphatic fluid and reduces swelling. LVA has shown promising results in improving symptoms and quality of life for patients. Another surgical technique, known as vascularized lymph node transfer (VLNT), involves transfer-

ring healthy lymph nodes from one part of the body to the affected area. These transplanted lymph nodes restore the lymphatic function, aiding in fluid drainage and reducing swelling. Procedures like silastic tube insertion in the edematous tissue are being tried and may offer some relief. Debulking surgeries may be considered in grossly enlarged lymphedema cases however they can have high morbidity post procedure. While surgical interventions offer potential benefits, it is essential to note that they are not suitable for all cases of lymphedema.

Patients considering surgical interventions should consult with experienced lymphedema specialists who can assess their suitability and provide comprehensive guidance.



DR SUNIL CHUMBER



DR AJAY MOHAN

Understanding the triggers



To better understand lymphedema, it's important to explore its underlying causes. Various factors can contribute to the development of this condition, and recognizing these causes is crucial for its prevention and management.

Primary lymphedema is

genetic. It happens when there are faults in the genes responsible for the development of the lymphatic system, meaning that it cannot drain fluid as it should. The main risk factor for primary lymphedema is having close family members with the condition.

Tips to keep lymphedema at bay

There is no guaranteed way to prevent lymphedema, there are steps you can take to minimize the risk and manage the condition effectively. By adopting a few healthy habits, you can help support your lymphatic system and reduce the likelihood of developing lymphedema.

- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Maintaining a healthy weight is crucial for minimizing the strain on your lymphatic system. Excess weight can impede lymph flow, increasing the risk of developing lymphedema. Follow a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Consult a healthcare professional for personalized guidance.

- **Exercise Regularly:** Engaging in regular physical activity helps promote lymphatic flow and overall circulation. Incorporate exercises that involve rhythmic movements, such as walking, swimming, or cycling. Start gradually and listen to your body, avoiding activities that strain or excessively stress the affected area.

- **Protect Against Infections:** Infections can exacerbate lymphedema symptoms, so it's essential to take precautions. Practice good hygiene, keep the skin clean and moisturized, and avoid cuts, burns, or insect bites. Use sunscreen to protect against sunburns and avoid prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures.

Secondary lymphedema occurs when damage or disruption to the lymphatic system is caused by external factors. Common causes include surgery, radiation therapy, cancer, infection, trauma, or other medical conditions. These factors can impair the flow of lymph fluid, leading to the development of lymphedema. Certain infections, such as filariasis, a parasitic infection transmitted through mosquito bites, can cause lymphedema. These infections can damage the lymphatic system, hindering its ability to properly drain fluid from the affected area. Obesity and a sedentary lifestyle can increase the risk of developing lymphedema. Excess weight puts additional pressure on the lymphatic system, making it harder for it to function properly.

Symptoms: Recognizing the symptoms of lymphedema is important for early detection and effective management of the condition. One of the primary symptoms of lymphedema is swelling in a specific body part, such as an arm or leg. The swelling may be persistent and can range from

mild to severe. It may also cause a feeling of heaviness or tightness in the affected area. Lymphedema can cause stiffness and limited movement in the affected limb or body part. You may find it challenging to perform certain activities or experience difficulty bending or straightening the affected joint. The skin over the swollen area may appear tight, thickened, or hardened. It may feel warmer to the touch and become more prone to infections. This discomfort may worsen with prolonged periods of standing or physical activity. Due to the compromised lymphatic system, individuals with lymphedema are at a higher risk of developing infections in the affected area. These infections may include cellulitis, which can cause redness, warmth, swelling, and pain.

Treatment: It often involves a combination of therapies, including compression garments, exercise, skincare, and manual lymphatic drainage. Remember, seeking medical advice and support is essential for effective management and minimizing the impact of lymphedema on your daily life.

Elastic stockings in treatment and prevention of lymphedema

The stockings work by exerting the greatest degree of compression at the ankle, with the level of compression gradually decreasing up the garment. The pressure gradient ensures that blood flows upward toward the heart instead of refluxing downward to the foot or laterally into the superficial veins. The application of adequate graduated compression reduces the diameter of major veins, which increases the velocity and volume of blood flow and improve lymphatic drainage.

Types of compression stockings:

- **Graduated or medical compression stockings:** They are designed for ambulatory patients and are manufactured under strict medical and technical specifications, including consistency and durability, to provide a specific level of ankle pressure and graduation of compression
- **Antiembolism stockings:** Used to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis and designed for bedridden patients



DR BRAHMA KUMAR RATH

and do not meet the technical specifications for use by ambulatory patients, have different levels of compression.

Nonmedical support hosiery

The compression is less uniform and not graduated. They can often be bought over the counter without a prescription

Accurate measurement of the limb diameter that conforms to the stocking manufacturer's guidelines should be performed by a trained health care professional. The stockings are contraindicated in the following cases i.e. Suspected or proven peripheral arterial disease, Severe peripheral neuropathy, Allergy to stocking material, Limb gangrene, oozing dermatitis and severe cellulitis, Extreme deformity of limb preventing correct fit.

External compression and massage



DR VIKRAM SAINI



DR NELSON

The restriction of lymphatic flow results in lymphedema. The condition can be improved with massage therapy. This ailment benefits from massage therapy that directs excess lymphatic fluid from the swollen area to functioning regions of the body where it can be effectively managed by the circulatory system. External compression plays a vital role in this condition. For mild swelling, a simple compression dressing can help whereas the use of multi-layered compression dressing is advised for moderate to severe swelling. The entire area is covered by the compression dressing, which is neither too tight nor too loose.

Every 4 to 6 months, the dressing needs to be changed as it gets loosen with time. Patients are usually advised to wear the compression garments during the day and remove it off at night, unless indicated.

One can wear as early as possible in the morning and continue while doing any form of work or mild exercises. Patients are advised to apply coconut oil on skin and to take care of limbs for any external injury. Skin care is recommended to prevent skin infections. Recent advances like automatic pneumatic compression devices can serve as viable self-management options for severe lymphedema patients.

VAST EXPERIENCE OF MASS VACCINATION

India has had vast experience of running mass vaccination campaigns in the past. Apart from the eradication of smallpox and polio through mass vaccination drives under its UIP, India has administered 390 million vaccines annually to pregnant women and children. India also had a trained workforce of 2.5 million health workers and 50,000 cold chain technicians (CCTs) to handle its UIP. An extensive countrywide cold-chain network was available for routine immunization as well. However, could India's success in routine immunization guarantee the same victory in its massive Covid-19 vaccination drive?

A MISSION FRAUGHT WITH FORMIDABLE CHALLENGES

India's COVID-19 vaccination campaign was unique in terms of its scale of operations, delivery timelines, infrastructural requirements and the large number of people needing immunization. While talking to me, Chesta Yadav, the

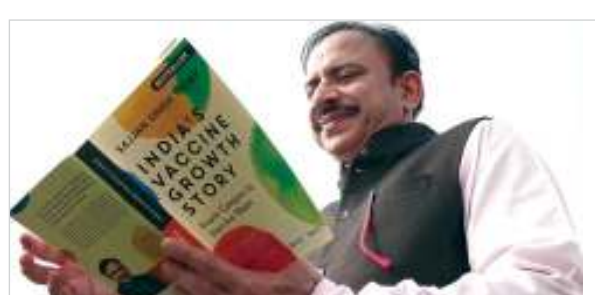
A tale of India's Vaccine Growth

Dr Sajjan Singh Yadav, Additional Secretary, Department of Expenditure in the Union Finance Ministry in his book 'India's Vaccine Growth Story - From Cowpox to Vaccine Maitri' traces India's ancient history of inoculation and vaccination--which happened much before British physician and scientist Edward Jenner developed the first jab against smallpox ---to current status of being frontrunner in vaccine production and supply for the world. Excerpts from the book:

District Magistrate of Delhi's North-West district, admitted that 'the scale of Covid vaccination was huge in contrast to the target population for routine immunization'. While the UIP was confined mostly to government health facilities, the scale of Covid-19 vaccinations required vaccination centres to operate in other public and private spaces as well, she told me. In addition, the campaign necessitated large-scale adult immunization, hitherto not usual in India. Another daunting challenge was the rapid pace of vaccination to cover 1.4 billion people within the span of months needed to see the back of the pandemic. Apart from availability of vaccines, rapid expansion of

cold chain and other logistics, mobilization of human resources and their training were critical. Transporting vaccines at the right temperature was a gigantic task. 'This was especially daunting in the remote and hilly areas of the country,' said Dr Devansh Yadav, Deputy Commissioner, Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh during interactions. The hilly district, with a dense forest cover, a tiger reserve, and numerous rivers and streams, is spread over 4,500 square kilometres.

Prioritization of target groups, dealing with vaccine hesitancy and eagerness, preventing misinformation, building community ownership and generating a demand for vac-



DR SAJJAN SINGH YADAV

cines are other challenges that needed to be tackled. Dr A Muthamma, Health Secretary of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, rated the apprehensions of citizens regarding the safety and efficacy of the vaccine' as the most formidable challenge. 'Uploading data about

healthcare workers on the CoWIN portal in the initial phase was a huge challenge in a large part of Arunachal Pradesh due to the lack of a stable internet connection,' Dr P Parthiban, Health Secretary of the State told me. This was reiterated by Akhil Arora, Principle Secretary,

Health, Government of Rajasthan. 'People in rural areas have limited accessibility and understanding of the portal,' he confided.

SO HOW DID INDIA OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES? Effective Coordination And Fast-Tracking Decisions

According to India's Health Secretary, Rajesh Bhushan, 'excellent cooperation and coordination with all stakeholders, including various ministries of the union government, state governments, development partners, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, was a critical factor'. To make the drive a success, the Government of India adopted a whole-governmen-

tand whole-society approach for the vaccination drive, he told me. A robust governance mechanism was designed for effective coordination and swift decision-making.

At the national level, the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC) provided regulatory guidance on vaccine trials, planning of vaccine administration, inter-sectoral coordination, financing, procurement and distribution, prioritization of population groups, supply chain infrastructure, vaccine safety surveillance, community engagement and awareness generation.

In the states, a state-level steering committee headed by the Chief Secretary was assigned

the policy guidance, coordination and oversight functions. A state-level task force was made responsible for planning and mapping vaccination sessions, strengthening cold chain infrastructure, identifying manpower, training and managing biomedical waste, developing a media plan to allay fears and misinformation, attracting people to vaccination centres and monitoring their progress. A District Task Force functions under the District Magistrate in every district. Similar task forces were also set up at the block and municipal levels. 'Island-level Monitoring Committees were constituted under the chairmanship of the Deputy Collector', Amit Satija, Health Secretary of Lakshadweep, informed. Lakshadweep is a federally administered territory of India comprising 36 small islands, many of which are uninhabited.

(The book has been published in English by Penguin Random House. Now it is all set to be published in 20 Indian Languages to help spread the story of India's global vaccine supremacy across the country.)

"I love having every right to be as outspoken as I am, as any man would be"
— Chrissy Teigen



Sheetal, born without hands, is being feted as the world’s first para female archer who shoots using her feet. She has been labelled as a perfect role model for youngsters as she displayed raw courage and faced all her challenges in life with a determined resolve to succeed, writes MOHIT KANDHARI

At first sight it is very difficult to spot Sheetal Devi in a gathering of fellow players assembled at an archery range for regular practice sessions. A girl with less than five feet, Sheetal may come across as a small town girl, but in reality, she is not an ordinary athlete.

Hailing from a remote village of Lohi Dhar in Mughal Maidan area of Kishtwar district in Jammu & Kashmir, this 16-year-old girl has come a long way and is already making waves in the sporting world. At present she is being looked upon as India's next big medal hope in the upcoming para-archery world championships and 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

Born without hands (phocomelia), a condition where both her hands were underdeveloped, Sheetal is being feted as the world's first para female archer who shoots using her feet. Before winning her place of honour in the world of sports, Sheetal had left everyone spell bound with her ace performances and firm resolve to succeed.

Last week, when I visited the Archery range located in the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine board sports complex in Katra, several players greeted me with a big cheer.

While I acknowledged their greetings one by one, I shook hands with one of the seniors and paralympian Rakesh Kumar. Before meeting others, I asked him whether Sheetal was also around. It was then she also greeted me from an adjacent bench in a feeble voice.

After registering her presence, I too heaved a sigh of relief as I had travelled all the way from Jammu to meet her. I congratulated her for winning three medals --- one Gold, Silver and Bronze in the Para Archery World Ranking Tournament held in the Czech Republic between May 13 and May 21. She acknowledged with her sparkling eyes and mesmerising smile.

The Indian team secured nine medals out of which five medals were contributed by the archers from the Shrine board training academy.

Rakesh, a paralympian, and Sheetal won gold in Compound open mixed team and Compound men open doubles. Besides, Sheetal and Jyoti clinched silver in compound women open and bronze in compound women doubles. The Shrine archers contributed five medals for India in the total tally by which the country secured 2nd position in the event.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, who is also the Chairman of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, congratulated both the sports persons for their performances. He tweeted that “the entire nation is proud of their achievement and their feat will inspire millions of our youth.”

Chief Executive Officer of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board Anshul Garg said the archers being trained at the Shrine Board's Sports Complex will also

win medals in the forthcoming events of the archery at the international levels, thereby bringing laurels to the country, the UT of Jammu & Kashmir and the Shrine Board.

TRAINING HARD FOR 2024 PARA-OLYMPICS BERTH

A day after returning from the Czech Republic, Sheetal was back in the training academy without taking a single day break. Speaking to The Sunday Pioneer, Sheetal said, “I feel very happy after winning three medals in a recent event. I am upbeat and very optimistic. My josh is very high. My coaching and hardwork is showing positive results and now I am determined to secure my berth in the 2024 Paralympics and win a medal for my country.”

Referring to her training schedule, Sheetal said, “Each day we come to the academy and practice for about four hours between 8 and 12 pm before breaking for a two hour lunch break.”

During the training session Sheetal is assisted by her fellow players as and when required. The players also crack jokes and play mischief with each other. The second session starts at 2pm and the players call it a day after attending an hour long physical training session between 5pm and 6 pm.”

Her coach Kuldeep Vedwan told The Sunday Pioneer we have already started training for the next big event lined up in the month of July and September 2023.

Sheetal, along with other players, are focusing her energies on World Archery Para Championship scheduled in Pilsen, Czech Republic in the month of July and Para Asian Games in China between September 23 and October 8 to reserve their berth for the 2024 Paralympics scheduled to take place in Paris.

Talking about Sheetal's journey, Kuldeep Vedwan told The Sunday Pioneer, “11 months ago Sheetal first arrived here at the Archery range. She was introduced to me by one of the volunteers working for a famous NGO. Before inducting her in the academy I interacted with her and tried my best to motivate her over a ZOOM meeting. Initially, I spent two long months carefully trying to understand her needs and how I could make her play archery and hit a bull's eye. Before starting her training schedule, I again counselled her. Since then, she has not looked back,” Vedwan said, feeling elated over her recent performance.

Vedwan said it's amazing that in such a short span of time she has really proved her mettle. By winning three medals in the recently concluded Para Archery World Ranking Tournament she has already secured her place in the upcoming Para Archery world championship scheduled to be organised in Pilsen, Czech Republic and para Asian Games. I am hopeful Sheetal will secure her berth in the Paralympics and win a medal in the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.



logistics to explore the possibility of providing her with a prosthetic arm.

Sheetal's parents accompanied her to Bangalore where she was first treated and later provided with the prosthetic arm. At present she is not using the same while undergoing training. After she won three medals she received lots of good wishes and blessings from netizens who rallied behind her and wished her luck for all her future championships.

She was labeled as a perfect role model for youngsters as she displayed raw courage and faced all her challenges in life with a determined resolve to succeed.

SHEETAL'S JOURNEY

A native of Lohi Dhar village of Mughal Maidan area in Kishtwar, Sheetal's initial phase of life was full of struggle. She was born without hands and it is with great difficulty that her parents, Man Singh, a farmer by profession and mother Shakti Devi, a home maker looked after her basic needs.

Tucked in the hills she received no other medical help in her formative years. As she grew up, she started using her feet to feed herself. As Sheetal was keen on pursuing her normal school studies so she gradually started using her feet for writing as well. She has passed her class 10th examination and is studying in class XI.

No one in the family discouraged her. Remembering her school days, Sheetal said, “I used to attend regular classes with other children in my village. I was never discouraged by any one. My teachers and my friends helped me a lot and supported me. I used to play with them like a normal child.”

Life took a sudden turn when she was spotted by a senior army officer at a local fair in Kishtwar district. The local army authorities approached her family and volunteered to support her. At that time Sheetal was nurturing her childhood dream of becoming a school teacher.

Fulfilling her desire Sheetal has been adopted by the Indian Army for her education since September 2019. Later with the help of reputed NGOs, the Indian Army had facilitated her travel and arranged other

A BIG MOTIVATION

Practicing in the company of other players Sheetal feels motivated. To attend her regular practice sessions Sheetal reaches archery academy, wearing sleepers. During her day long training she prefers staying barefoot in the archery range in order to hit a bull's eye.

On an average she is spending 6-7 hours under the guidance of her coach Kuldeep Vedwan at the archery range.

Before focusing on her target, she gently picks an arrow and adjusts it on the bow string. Using her feet, she adjusts the arrow against her shoulder and then triggers the shot with jaw and back muscles before hitting a bullseye.

“During training we interact with each other and discuss our performances. Fellow players in the academy are very helpful. They walk with me in the archery range and pull out the arrows after checking my score”.

“Our coach sir also evaluates our performance and wherever we need his guidance he chips in and does course correction”.

In Katra, Sheetal is staying with her mother and younger sister Shivani. Her mother Shakti sometimes visits the academy and spends time with her. Sheetal says, “When she was home her sister Shivani used to look after her basic needs. She is my dear friend.”

Commenting on the quality of training facilities Sheetal said we have been provided with excellent training facilities by

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board authorities to ensure better performance in the field.

Apart from routine training sessions we attend physical training modules, perform yoga and meditation to maintain our calm and enhance our abilities to focus on our goals.

A former Olympian from Katra Rakesh Kumar, who participated in the Tokyo Olympics, said Sheetal is a very promising athlete and is training hard in the academy to realise her goal of winning a gold medal in the world championships and paralympics.

Rakesh Kumar is the senior most player in the academy. He is also working hard and setting high benchmarks for younger players to achieve their goals.

Rakesh told The Sunday Pioneer, “I started my journey six years ago after coming in contact with the coach Kuldeep Vedwan in 2017. He said, I met with a deadly accident in 2009. I was in a very bad condition but then I decided to keep myself busy and opened a mobile recharge shop in Katra. In 2017 I met my coach Kuldeep Vedwan.”

“When I met Rakesh, I motivated him and asked him to try archery at the academy.” He made a sincere effort and went on to become a para-Olympian.

Kuldeep Vedwan also highlighted the role of Sports Authority of India, and the Archery Association of India for their support, and stressed the importance of psychologists and dietitians in sports.

Para Archer Rakesh said, “Archery is a mind-game. When we are participating in a championship we are bound to feel pressure. Our training gives us an edge. So, just like the coach is essential for us, psychologists are equally important.”

Highlighting another important aspect Rakesh said para-athletes face difficulties while moving from one place to another. “They spend maximum time in a wheelchair, we may not eat much, but digestion becomes a problem and so a good dietitian is very important.”

At present over two dozen budding archers from Tamil Nadu, Haryana, New Delhi and from different districts of Jammu & Kashmir are receiving training at the academy.

Manisha Bhadana, from Faridabad in Haryana has recently joined the training academy and is witnessing improvement in her game. She told The Sunday Pioneer that the atmosphere at the academy is very very competitive. “I feel motivated while receiving training in the presence of International players such as Para-Olympian Rakesh Kumar and young archer Sheetal.”

Pravin, an upcoming archer from Tamil Nadu said, he is training at the academy for more than six years and aiming to perform better in the coming championships. Amit Thakur from Reasi said, “We are focusing on Khelo India games and National Championships to perform better and earn medals.”

(The writer is Senior Correspondent of The Pioneer)

(The writer is a young climate thinker based in Delhi-NCR)

UK PM Rishi Sunak planning global AI watchdog: Report

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering a London-based global artificial intelligence (AI) watchdog to oversee any threats posed by the fast-growing technology, according to a UK media report on Saturday.

Sunak will discuss ways to cooperate on monitoring AI when he meets US President Joe Biden at the White House next week, according to The Times'.

Among the ideas under consideration in Downing Street is setting up a global AI authority in London, modelled on the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The IAEA, founded in 1957 with 176 countries including India as members, monitors the use of nuclear energy, promotes safe standards, and checks that it is not used for military purposes.

A British minister told the newspaper that the UK would be "the best place" in the world for any new body because many leading companies already have a strong presence here.

Though plans are at an early stage, if Sunak pushes ahead, the UK government could seek to recruit rapidly to get the authority up and running.



"The Prime Minister is very alive to the need for international alignment on the approach to AI as the technology evolves to ensure we can benefit from the opportunities but manage the risks," a government source was quoted as saying by The Times'. The possibility of Sunak creating a regulator comes as the European Union (EU) is refining its Artificial Intelligence Act, which is expected to take a hard line on oversight of the sector. The US is also considering how to regulate but is expected to be less severe, as the world grapples with concerns about the safety of AI technology.

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Key step toward landmark treaty to end plastic waste

Global negotiators have agreed to craft an initial draft treaty to end plastic pollution, a preliminary but crucial step toward tackling one of the most lasting sources of human waste.

Environmental advocates cautiously welcomed the outcome of five days of UN talks in Paris on plastic pollution, but expressed concern that the petroleum industry and some governments would water down the eventual treaty. Most plastic is made from fossil fuels.

Delegates at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Plastics agreed on Friday evening to produce an initial draft before their next meeting in Kenya in November, participants said.

The committee is charged with developing the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution, on land and at sea.

A coalition of "high-ambition" governments led by Norway and Rwanda, along with environmental groups, want to end plastic pollution altogether by 2040 by slashing production and limiting some chemicals used in making plastics.

"Projections suggest that a child born today will see plastic production double by the time they turn 18, but we know that the consequences of increasing plastic production will be disastrous for our health, the planet, and the climate," said Dr Tadesse Amera, who led the International Pollutants Elimination Network's delegation at the talks.

"The stakes are high, but we are optimistic by the growing awareness among delegates of the need for global controls."

Countries with big petroleum industries like the US, China and Saudi Arabia are focusing instead on plastic recycling, and want country-by-country rules instead of across-the-board limits.

Stew Harris, senior director for global plastics policy at the American Chemistry Council, argued for allowing each government to "use the right tools based on their unique circumstances."

In a statement to The Associated Press as the talks wrapped up, he said that circularity or reusing plastics was "at the forefront of the negotiations as a means to tackle pollution and be more sustainable in producing and consuming plastics. We agree that's the best path."

Humanity produces more than 430 million tons of plastic annually, two-thirds of which are short-lived products that soon become waste, filling the ocean and, often, working their way into the human food chain, the UN Environment Program said in an April report. Plastic waste produced globally is set to almost triple by 2060, with about half ending up in landfill and under a fifth recycled, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Over 2,000 participants from nearly 200 countries, including governments and observers, took part in this week's talks.

Waste pickers and some advocacy groups said they were initially denied access to the talks.

Then debates about rules of procedure including whether decisions would require consensus or just two-thirds approval dragged out the proceedings, participants said.

But they ultimately agreed to produce a draft treaty by November, which keeps things on track to produce a final version by the target deadline of late 2024.

This week's talks were the second of five rounds of meetings due to take place to complete the negotiations.

"Time is running out and it is clear from this week's negotiations that oil-producing countries and the fossil fuel industry will do everything in their power to weaken the treaty and delay the process," said Graham Forbes of Greenpeace USA global plastics campaign.

"While some substantive discussions have taken place, there is still a huge amount of work ahead of us."



INSIDE THE PENAL COLONIES

A glimpse at life for political prisoners swept up in Russia's crackdowns

Tallinn (Estonia), Jun 3 (AP) — When Alexei Navalny turns 47 on Sunday, he'll wake up in a bare concrete cell with hardly any natural light.

He won't be able to see or talk to any of his loved ones. Phone calls and visits are banned for those in "punishment isolation" cells, a 2-by-3-metre (6 1/2-by-10-foot) space. Guards usually blast patriotic songs and speeches by President Vladimir Putin at him.

"Guess who is the champion of listening to Putin's speeches? Who listens to them for hours and falls asleep to them?" Navalny said recently in a typically sardonic social media post via his attorneys from Penal Colony No. 6 in the Vladimir region east of Moscow.

He is serving a nine-year term due to end in 2030 on charges widely seen as trumped up, and is facing another trial on new charges that could keep him locked up for another two decades. Rallies have been called for Sunday in Russia to support him.

Navalny has become Russia's most famous political prisoner and not just because of his prominence as Putin's fiercest political foe, his poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin, and his being the subject of an Oscar-winning documentary.

He has chronicled his arbitrary placement in isolation, where he has spent almost six months. He's on a meagre prison diet, restricted on how much time he can spend writing letters and forced at times to live with a cellmate with poor personal hygiene, making life even more miserable.

Most of the attention goes to Navalny and other high-profile figures like Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was sentenced last month to 25 years on treason charges. But there's a growing number of less-famous prisoners who are serving time in similarly harsh conditions.

Memorial, Russia's oldest and most prominent human rights organization and a 2022 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, counted 558 political prisoners in the country as of April more than three times the figure than in 2018, when it listed 183.

The Soviet Union's far-flung gulag system of prison camps provided inmate labour to develop industries such as mining and logging. While conditions vary among modern-day penal colonies, Russian law still permits prisoners to work on jobs like sewing uniforms for soldiers.

In a 2021 report, the US State Department said conditions in Russian prisons and detention centres "were often harsh and life threatening. Overcrowding, abuse by guards and inmates, limited access to health care, food shortages and inadequate sanitation were common in prisons, penal colonies, and other detention facilities".

Andrei Pivovarov, an opposition figure sentenced last year to four years in prison, has been in isolation at Penal Colony No. 7 in northern Russia's Karelia region since January and is likely to stay there the rest of this year, said his partner, Tatyana Usmanova. The institution is notorious for its harsh conditions and reports of torture.

The 41-year-old former head of the pro-democracy group Open Russia spends his days alone in a small cell in a "strict detention" unit, and is not allowed any calls or visits from anyone but his lawyers, Usmanova told The Associated Press. He can get one book from the prison library, can write letters for several hours a day and is permitted 90 minutes outdoors, she said.

Other inmates are prohibited from making eye contact with Pivovarov in the corridors, contributing to his "maximum isolation", she said.

"It wasn't enough to sentence him to a real prison term. They are also trying to ruin his life there," Usmanova added.

Pivovarov was pulled off a Warsaw-bound flight just before takeoff from St. Petersburg in May 2021 and taken to the southern city of Krasnodar. Authorities accused him of engaging with an "undesirable" organisation - a crime since 2015.

Several days before his arrest, Open Russia had disbanded after getting the "undesirable" label.

After his trial in Krasnodar, the St. Petersburg native was convicted and sentenced in July, when Russia's war in Ukraine and Putin's sweeping crackdown on dissent were in full swing.

He told AP in a letter from Krasnodar in December that authorities moved him there "to hide me farther away" from his hometown and



they can have food from personal supplies.

But Gorinov said prison officials still carry out "enhanced control" of the unit, and he and two other inmates get special checks every two hours, since they've been labelled "prone to escape".

There is little medical help, he said.

"Right now, I'm not feeling all that well, as I can't recover from bronchitis," he said, adding that he needed treatment for pneumonia last winter at another prison's hospital ward, because at Penal Colony No. 2, the most they can do is "break a fever".

Also suffering health problems is artist and musician Sasha Skochilenko, who is detained amid her ongoing trial following her April 2022 arrest in St. Petersburg, also on charges of spreading false information about the army. Her crime was replacing supermarket price tags with antiwar slogans in protest. Skochilenko has a congenital heart defect and celiac disease, requiring a gluten-free diet. She gets food parcels weekly, but there is a weight limit, and the 32-year-old can't eat "half the things they give her there," said her partner, Sophia Subbotina.

There's a stark difference between detention facilities for women and men, and Skochilenko has it easier in some ways than male prisoners, Subbotina said.

"Oddly enough, the staff are mostly nice. Mostly they are women, they are quite friendly, they will give helpful tips and they have a very good attitude toward Sasha," Subbotina told AP by phone.

"Often they support Sasha, they tell her: You will definitely get out of here soon, this is so unfair here." They know about our relationship and they are fine with it. They're very humane," she said.

There's no political propaganda in the jail and dance music blares from a radio. Cooking shows play on TV. Skochilenko "wouldn't watch them in normal life, but in jail, it's a distraction", Subbotina said.

She recently arranged for an outside cardiologist to examine Skochilenko and since March has been allowed to visit her twice a month.

Subbotina gets emotional when she recalled their first visit.

"It is a complex and weird feeling when you've been living with a person. Sasha and I have been together for over six years waking up with them, falling asleep with them then not being able to see them for a year," she said. "I was nervous when I went to visit her. I didn't know what I would say to Sasha, but in the end, it went really well."

Still, Subbotina said a year behind bars has been hard on Skochilenko. The trial is moving slowly, unlike usually swift proceedings for high-profile political activists, with guilty verdicts almost a certainty.

Skochilenko faces up to 10 years if convicted.

Moscow. That interview was one of the last Pivovarov was able to give, describing prison life there as "boring and depressing", with his only diversion being an hour-long walk in a small yard.

"Lucky" inmates with cash in their accounts can shop at a prison store once a week for 10 minutes but otherwise must stay in their cells, he wrote.

Letters from supporters lift his spirits, he said. Many people wrote that they used to be uninterested in Russian politics, according to Pivovarov, and "only now are starting to see clearly".

Now, any letters take weeks to arrive, Usmanova said.

Conditions are easier for some less-famous political prisoners like Alexei Gorinov, a former member of a Moscow municipal council. He was convicted of "spreading false information" about the army in July over antiwar remarks he made at a council session.

Criticism of the invasion was criminalised a few months earlier, and Gorinov, 61, became the first Russian sent to prison for it, receiving seven years.

He is housed in barracks with about 50 others in his unit at Penal Colony No. 2 in the Vladimir region, Gorinov said in written answers passed to AP in March.

The long sentence for a low-profile activist shocked many, and Gorinov said "authorities needed an example they could showcase to others (of) an ordinary person, rather than a public figure".

Inmates in his unit can watch TV, and play chess, backgammon or table tennis. There's a small kitchen to brew tea or coffee between meals, and

Intelligence associated with taking more time to solve complex problems

People with higher intelligence were found to take more time to solve difficult problems than those with lower intelligence, in a new study that wanted to understand how the brain's decision-making processes work.

Those with lower intelligence, or those with reduced synchrony between brain areas, were found to "jump to conclusions" when making decisions, rather than waiting until their other brain regions could complete the processing steps needed to solve the problem.

Researchers in the study from Berlin Institute of Health at Charité (BIH) and Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany, performed brain simulations of 650 participants' "personalised brain models", created using data from these people to refine a "general" human brain model. The "general" model was initially constructed using digital data from MRI brain scans as well as mathematical models based on biological processes.

Publishing their findings in the journal Nature Communications, the researchers also found that while the higher intelligent models also needed more time to solve challenging tasks, they made fewer errors.

The human brain's amazing range of capabilities is made possible by the 100 billion or so neurons, each of which connects with an estimated 1,000 neighbouring or distant neurons to form an unfathomable network.

MRI scans showed slower solvers to have a higher average functional connectivity, or temporal synchrony, between their brain regions, something further corroborated by in silico brain models used in the study.

The models revealed this greater synchrony to allow neural circuits in the frontal lobe to hold off on decisions longer.

On the other hand, reduced synchrony was found to result in the information required for decision-making neither being available when needed nor being stored in working memory.

"Synchronisation, i.e., the formation of functional networks in the brain, alters the properties of working memory and thus the ability to 'endure' prolonged periods without a decision," explained Michael Schirner, lead author of the study. In everyday terms, an easy task would consist of quickly braking at a red light, while a hard task would require methodically working out the best route on a road map. In the study, participants were asked to identify logical rules in a series of patterns, the complexity of the rules increasing with each task. In the brain model, a so-called winner-take-all competition was observed to occur between different neural groups involved in a decision, with those neural group(s) prevailing for which there is stronger evidence.



Young adulthood window best to treat schizophrenia, autism for lasting effects

Targeting and stimulating underperforming neurons in the dopamine system and increasing its activity in young adulthood could help treat neuropsychiatric disorders like schizophrenia and autism with long-lasting effects, according to a new study.

In mice, researchers from the University of Rochester, US, found that stimulating the neuron cells providing dopamine to the frontal cortex strengthened the circuit

and rescued structural deficiencies in the brain that cause long-term symptoms.

In previous studies, the research team had found this specific arm of the dopamine system to be flexible in adolescents but not in adults.

In this study, published in the journal eLife, they exploited this window for plasticity in the system as an opportunity for therapeutic intervention, effects of which could affect the brain circuitry into adulthood.

Essential in higher cognitive processing and decision-making, dysfunction of the dopamine system has been found to often begin in young adulthood.

"Brain development is a lengthy process, and many neuronal systems have critical windows - key times when brain areas are malleable and undergoing final maturation steps," said Rianne Stowell, a postdoctoral fellow in the Wang Lab at the University of Rochester Medical Center and

co-first author on the research.

"By identifying these windows, we can target interventions to these time periods and possibly change the course of a disease by rescuing the structural and behavioral deficits caused by these disorders," said Stowell.

"If we can target the right windows in development and understand the signals at play, we can develop treatments that change the course of these brain disorders," said Stowell.