



FEAR OF GETTING EARMARKED'



MATTERS



- Mothkupally Narsimhulu, BRS leader P4

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Monday Mirchi

ALL EYES ON A HEADY POSITION THAT IS HEADLESS!

Filling a coveted position is a taxing job, more so if there is a commercial angle to it! An interesting question was posed to Yours Truly by those eager to find out who is the Commercial Taxes Commissioner. Well, the department has been headless for quite some time. In sarkari style of course, the websites of the Telangana government, except one, still list Neetu Kumari Prasad as the Commissioner of Commercial Taxes. For newbies, Neetu Kumari Prasad has been posted as Joint Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Government Of India with effect from 26 July 2023. While orders relieving Neetu Kumari Prasad of the post were issued, S Krishna Aditya was posted as Member Secretary, TS Pollution Control Board. Although many babus have since been angling for the post vacated by Neetu, there has been no word till date about who is going to helm the Commercial Taxes Department. That such a 'fetching' post is headless has become a hot topic of discussion among unabashedly ambitious babus.

ROOM WITH A VANTAGE VIEW, BUT...

The BRKR Bhavan, despite the hustle and bustle around it, has islands of soothing calm and serenity. One example is the office of the Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj. Ahead of the shift of the ad-hoc Secretariat to the new buildings, BRKR bhavan's 9th floor was renovated for the Chief Secretary. Vikas Raj is presently using a cabin that is situated at a vantage point, offering a panoramic view of the Tank Bund, Martyrs' Memorial, and the new Secretariat. The larger question is: Why was the Chief Secretary not using this prized cabin with a view? Nonetheless, the 9th floor of BRKR Bhavan obviously did not work out for former CS Somesh Kumar. Luckily Santhi Kumari moved out to the new Secretariat. Hopefully, at least the CEO will get his due and space to conduct the upcoming elections smoothly without the hassles that visited his predecessor Rajat Kumar, who used to sit in the D block of the old Secretariat in 2018.

HAS JANARDHAN REDDY HAD ENOUGH?

TSPSC chairman B Janardhan Reddy seems to be done and dusted with his post, beset as he is by trouble after trouble and wheels within wheels. A little bird told us that when he is hard-pressed by the ramifications of the leaks of TSPSC examination papers amid perceived shortage of staff, opposition parties are demanding his scalp. Janardhan

Reddy seems to be upset about the latest twist to the paper leak case. After paper leak, came Group-2 exams issues and now TSPSC Group1 exam has been cancelled again. He reportedly shared with his aides on whether he needs this headache now, and that too at a time when he stays overnight in office. There is a very serious discussion going on about his impending resignation. He is reportedly weighing various options as resignation now could send a wrong signal.

SILENT, BUT ACCOUNTABLE

There are people in the world who choose to adorn a castle with the stones you throw at them. Ronald Rose, as shrewd Commissioner of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, knows how to do the balancing act without hurting his political bosses. The Commissioner is invisibly active on social media, acting on complaints and grouses quietly. Municipal administration per se is a thankless job and this IAS officer getting trolled if garbage is not lifted is nothing if one considers what all Minister KT Rama Rao faces from irate members of the public. A little bird told us that Ronald has taken a conscious decision not to reply to trolls, while remaining accountable in the background. In fact, a top official working under him remarked: "Working with this Commissioner is different and better".

BABUS UNDER PRESSURE FOR POLL-RELATED TARGETS

Come elections, politicians fall back on their implemented promises and babus on the time and resources available for their implementation. It is expected that the Election Commission may announce the schedule of the Telangana Assembly elections in the first week of October. So, right now bureaucrats are facing the double whammy of meeting targets that reflect community benefits as well as benefits at the individual level well before the Model Code of conduct sets in.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has directed officials to complete the pending works by the end of this month. The Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues, during their visits to districts, give assurances to people. If those assurances are not implemented pronto, it will have a devastating effect on the ruling party in the elections. The babus must often make a difficult choice between individual benefits and community benefits. For, they don't know which way the wind blows when their political masters are involved in election campaigns.

-Yours truly

Krishna secures third place in school games

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district secured the third place in the under-14, 17 and 19 categories in the School Sports and Games-2022-23 organised by the School Games Federation Andhra Pradesh (SGFAP). The combined Krishna district scored 136 points in the under-14 and -17 categories and 70 points in the under-19 category.

Commissioner of School Education A Suresh Kumar felicitated SGF Krishna district secretaries Thota Ajay Kumar (Under -14&17) and Vemuri Ravi Kantha at a programme held in Vijayawada. Krishna district bagged 13 gold medals, 18 silver medals, and 21 bronze medals to bag the third place in sports and games in the under-14 & 17 categories. Also, in the under-19 category, the district won 10 gold medals, seven silver and five bronze medals.

However, NTR district bagged the first place in the School of Sports Excellence Awards for 2022-23.

2,00,000 dengue RDT kits available at YSR Health Clinics

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr. Vemireddy Ramireddy, Director of the Public Health Family Welfare Department in Andhra Pradesh, has announced a significant boost in the availability of dengue Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) kits. More than two lakh dengue RDT kits are now accessible at YSR Health Clinics, ensuring that these essential resources are widely distributed and easily accessible. In addition to these clinics, an ample supply of dengue RDT kits is also present at Primary, Urban, and Community Health Centres across the state. Furthermore, district and government public hospitals are equipped to conduct dengue confirmation tests through the Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) method. Dr. Ramireddy reassures the public that these measures eliminate the need for concern and encourages everyone to take



advantage of these facilities.

Dr. Ramireddy emphasises that government hospitals offer free testing for a range of illnesses, including malaria, dengue, typhoid, and various fevers. Confirmatory tests for dengue are exclusively conducted at Centenary Surveillance Hospitals. In cases where private hospitals lack ELISA testing capabilities, patients with positive dengue rapid test results are urged to seek assistance at government hospitals. Dr. Ramireddy also

highlights the availability of ample RDT kits for malaria diagnosis at village-level Dr. YSR Health Clinics and through health workers. Additionally, free malaria screening tests are accessible at Primary Health Centres, Urban Health Centres, Community Health Centres, Area Hospitals, District Hospitals, and Government Public Hospitals.

Dr. Ramireddy underscores the government's commitment to public health, with an allocation of over two lakh dengue RDT kits at Dr. YSR Health Clinics and adequate supplies at primary and urban health centers and social health centers. He explains that dengue diagnostic tests are administered via the ELISA method at area hospitals, district hospitals, and government public hospitals. Typhoid tests are also readily available at these healthcare facilities, including primary and urban health centers, community health centers,

area and district hospitals, and government public hospitals. Dr. Ramireddy urges the public to have confidence in the diagnostic process and take full advantage of the testing facilities available in state hospitals.

Dr. Ramireddy concludes by referring to the Andhra Pradesh Allopathic Private Medical Care Establishment Act No. 13/2002. He states that strict instructions have been issued to officials in the District Medical and Health Department to take stringent action against private laboratories that do not comply with the established rules and regulations, especially those charging exorbitant prices for tests. Similarly, private hospital-affiliated labs will face scrutiny.

Dr. Ramireddy adds that private hospitals and labs may receive permission from the respective District Medical and Health Officer under certain conditions if they employ experienced specialists.

Energy efficiency programme in housing scheme soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Under the AP state government's 'Pedalandariki Illu' initiative, as part of 'Navaratnalu', to uplift the underprivileged and marginalized, the state government will launch India's largest energy efficiency programme in the housing scheme soon.

Highlighting the latest advancements in the housing scheme AP Housing department officials said that the State government prioritises housing, aiming to provide permanent homes to eligible households through the 'Pedalandariki Illu' initiative and distributed 30.65 lakh house sites, with women holding titles to 71,811 acres so far, totaling cost of land given



approximately Rs 56,102 crore.

Of the total beneficiaries, a striking 19.91% belong to Scheduled Castes, 5.76% to Scheduled Tribes, 54.35% to Backward Classes, and 19.98% to Other Castes. For the first time in India, the AP government is Prepared to facilitate

each beneficiary with 4 LED bulbs, 2 LED tube lights, and 2 Energy Efficiency BLDC fans, supported by Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL). MOP. GOI

This initiative is expected to save about 734 units of energy per house per year, equating to

approximately Rs 352 crore in annual energy savings for the 15.6 lakh houses in phase 1. Ajay Jain, Special Chief Secretary for Housing, encourages housing beneficiaries to voluntarily take advantage of these energy-efficient offerings facilitated by the Housing corporation for an improved quality of life.

Ajay Jain, underlines Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's and Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh's strong commitment to uplifting the marginalized.

His "Pedalandariki illu" housing initiative, a core component of The "Navaratnalu" programme, is transforming the lives of the underprivileged, making Dignified living a reality for all.

Security concerns...

Continued from Page 1

The presence of a GPS tracking system in the bus proved invaluable.

Officials were able to trace the vehicle's location to Naidupeta, prompting police involvement.

Working in tandem with TTD officials, the police located the abandoned vehicle on a bypass road.

The incident underscores the importance of bolstering security measures to safeguard valuable assets like these electric buses.

The TTD and local authorities must collaborate to ensure that such incidents do not recur, especially during important religious events like the Brahmotsavam.

Is medical education...

Continued from Page 1

Things have come to such a pass that all 19 operational All India Institutes of Medical Sciences are functioning with half the faculty they need – 50.7 per cent – and AIIMS Delhi, India's premier medical college, is facing a faculty shortage of 36 per cent, going by official data. Out of the total 5,340 sanctioned faculty posts, 2,547 are vacant. Three more AIIMS are set to start.

Media reports suggest that rare and reduced interaction between faculty and students is causing mental health problems among students. A few years back, a batch of say 50 students at a government medical college in Kota, Rajasthan had professors who knew them all by name and face. Now, those colleges are expected to cope with 250 students and faculty members hardly know 7 or 10 of their students.

In the light of such aberrations in the medical and higher education fields, it is high time well-meaning authorities arrested the trend of positioning doctors everywhere around us with experts nowhere in sight.

TODAY	
ALMANAC	
Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:Ekadashi:	Sep 25 07:56 AM to Sep 26 05:01 AM
Dwadashi:	Sep 26 05:01 AM to Sep 27 01:45 AM
Nakshatram:	
Uttara Ashadha:	Sep 24 01:41 PM to Sep 25 11:55 AM
Shravana:	Sep 25 11:55 AM to Sep 26 09:41 AM
Rahukalam:	
Yamagandam:	7:38 AM to 9:08 AM
Varjyam:	10:38 AM to 12:07 PM
Gulika:	03:32 PM to 05:00 PM
1:37 PM to 3:07 PM	
Amritakalam:	12:15 AM to 01:42 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:44 AM to 12:31 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER	
Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms	
Temp: 32°	
Humidity: 66%	
Sunrise: 5:56 AM	
Sunset: 6:07 PM	
Updated: September 24, 2023 5:00 PM	

Naidu's remand extended...

Continued from Page 1

As part of the interrogation, the court allowed three deputy superintendents of police (DSPs) from the Economic Offences Wing of the CID, accompanied by six more junior police officers, one professional videographer and two official mediators to participate in the interrogation.

The court also permitted the assistance of a team of lawyers for Naidu during the interrogation at reasonable intervals of five minutes after every one hour of questioning.

It allowed the questioning of Naidu on the premises of the jail itself, considering the paucity of time, as well as the health and age of the former chief minister, helping him avoid the nearly 200 km-long journey from Rajamahendravaram central prison to the CID office in Mangalagiri. Naidu was arrested on September 9 for allegedly misappropriating funds from the Skill Development Corporation, which resulted in a purported loss of over Rs 300 crore to the state exchequer.

CID concludes...

Continued from Page 1

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Brakes to IT car rally in support...

Continued from Page 1

She said while she had the freedom to go anywhere in the country, she was not free to move in Andhra Pradesh.

The TDP shared visuals on social media of the car rally which started from Hyderabad.

It can be recalled that Chandrababu Naidu, who was arrested by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) on September 9, is lodged in Rajahmundry Central Jail on remand. Police have also tightened the security in Rajahmundry as a precautionary measure. Prohibitory orders banning meetings and rallies remained in force in the town.

The CID continued questioning Naidu for a second day on Sunday.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCAM

‘Lokesh running false campaign in Delhi’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a fiery statement, Rajya Sabha member and YSRCP national general secretary, V Vijayasai Reddy, has accused Lokesh of orchestrating a false propaganda campaign in the nation's capital, New Delhi, on the ongoing skill development scam. Reddy vehemently refuted claims that Chandrababu Naidu, the former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, is innocent.

Vijayasai Reddy did not mince words, stating unequivocally that Chandrababu Naidu was deeply entangled in the web of the Rs 371 crore Skill Development scam from its inception to its ignominious end. According to Reddy, Naidu's involvement was glaring, as he had reportedly signed documents related to the scandal at a staggering 13 different locations. Furthermore, Achchennaidu, another prominent figure, had his signature on two key documents. It is alleged that both Naidu and Achchennaidu exerted undue pressure on authorities to secure the release



of funds associated with the scandal. The damning evidence doesn't stop there; CID officials are said to have provided the accused with copies of these incriminating details.

MP Vijayasai Reddy went on to accuse Chandrababu Naidu of a four-decade-long plunder of public funds, questioning the origins of the massive wealth he has amassed. The MP suggested that those who rallied behind the TDP chief in Delhi, participating in candlelight vigils, may not be privy to the secrets behind Naidu's wealth accumulation. Reddy asserted that shortly after assuming power in 2014, Naidu presided over the notorious Skill scam amounting to

a staggering Rs. 371 crores and hinted at the possibility of further scandals coming to light.

Switching gears, MP Vijayasai Reddy expressed his satisfaction with the launch of the Vande Bharat Express train connecting Vijayawada and Chennai. However, he also seized the opportunity to make a request to the Railway Minister - urging the commencement of Vande Bharat train services between Visakhapatnam and Tirupati at the earliest convenience. He pointed out that many passengers, particularly those from the middle class, find the ticket prices for Vande Bharat trains to be exorbitant. In a bid to make train travel more accessible, Reddy appealed to the Railway Minister to consider reducing ticket fares, emphasizing the importance of addressing the issue promptly.

The allegations and counter-claims surrounding the Skill Development scam continue to roil the political landscape, leaving the public with much to ponder.

PM virtually flags off...

Continued from Page 1

Students, members of the traveling public, and officials alike welcomed the train with resounding cheers and jubilation. School children donned the attire of iconic freedom fighters to greet this beloved national symbol, accompanied by cultural performers. The crowd enthusiastically chanted 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' on this historic occasion.

Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar commenced her speech with the thunderous slogan 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', eliciting a terrific response from the audience. She extended her heartfelt thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ashwini Vaishnav, the Railway

Minister, and the Government of India for providing Andhra Pradesh with its third Vande Bharat Express in just nine months. She highlighted that more than one crore people had traveled on this indigenous semi-high-speed train to date.

Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's grand vision to make the nation self-reliant and self-sustainable in all aspects. She described 2023 as a momentous year for rail travel and the upgrading of rail infrastructure, with the Vande Bharat Express standing as the true pride of India. Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar expressed her gratitude to the large and enthusiastic

crowd for their warm reception.

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas, City Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, and MLA Malladi Vishnu from Vijayawada Central also extended their thanks to Prime Minister Modi for granting the third Vande Bharat Express to the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Amidst great fanfare and celebration, the iconic Vande Bharat Express departed from Vijayawada Railway Station. Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager of Vijayawada, D Srinivasa Rao, ADM for Infrastructure, M Srikanth, ADM for Operations, and senior railway officials were present at the event.

‘Centre providing best healthcare to citizens’

Bharati Pravin Pawar inaugurates blood donation camp under Ayushman Bhava scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar has said that the Central government has been providing the best health and medical care to every citizen of India by implementing the Ayushman Bhava scheme. She opined that the scheme aimed to ensure good treatment facilities for the common man.

As part of Ayushman Bhava, Union Minister Bharati Praveen Pawar inaugurated the mega voluntary blood donation camp organised by the NTR District Health and Medical Department at KBN College in Vijayawada on Sunday. Also, she participated in the Ayushman Bharat Health Card distribution held at the Urban Primary Health Centre at HB Colony in the city.

The initiative that com-



menced on September 17 will continue till October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. After inaugurating the blood donation camp, the Union Minister stated that Ayushman Bhava was the most extensive healthcare scheme in the world. It was initiated to bestow full health coverage to every person under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said.

Further, she said that the

beneficiaries would receive health services worth Rs.5 lakh under the scheme. The Union Minister further explained that they were implementing several schemes for medical, health and family welfare through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

"Besides, various programmes are being implemented for the diagnosis and prevention of diseases like TB in rural and urban areas. Camps under

Ayushman Bhava are being organised for distributing Ayushman Bhava identity cards in the State. Blood donation and organ donation are necessary," she said.

She added that many people were dying due to shortage of blood. Apps related to blood donation and organ donation are being developed and people are invited to come forward for donation, the minister added.

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas (Nani), Municipal Corporation Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, MLAs V Srinivasa Rao and Malladi Vishnu, State Medical and Health Commissioner J Nivas, Joint Collector P Sampathkumar, DM&HO Dr M Suhasini, VMC Corporator Boyi Satya Babu, KBN College Principal Narayana Rao and others were present.



Lord adorned with stone-studded bangle garlands

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The Snapana Tirumanjanam was observed for the third and last time during the ongoing nine-day annual Brahmotsavam in Tirumala on Sunday in the temple of Sri Venkateswara.

For the first time, garlands and crowns made of stone-studded bangles were decked to the processional deities of Sri Malayappa, Sridevi, and Bhudevi besides yellow rose petals, mixed dry fruits, 'kuru-vetiver', various dry petal garlands after 'snapanam' was performed with each sacred ingredient. The entire premises were tastefully decorated with different orchids hanging from the roof. Both the senior and junior pontiffs of Tirumala, EO AV Dharma Reddy and others were present.

VMRDA's bulk auction of land to spur growth in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Given the information indicating the impending relocation of the chief minister's office to Vizag during the Dasara celebrations, the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) has slated an auction for the sale of 14 substantial land parcels in the Madhurawada region by the end of this month. In total, these parcels cover an area of roughly 87.8 acres, and they come with a fixed minimum price of Rs 30,000 per square yard.

In the event that all the land parcels from the auction are successfully sold, even at the initial price, the urban development authority could potentially yield close to Rs 1,200 crore in revenue. This auction not only functions as an indicator of market sentiment for VMRDA but is also anticipated to trigger a domino effect on the local real estate market.

This marks the VMRDA's inaugural venture into conducting a large-scale bulk land auction, especially in the pres-



tigious Madhurawada locality. Over the past two decades, Madhurawada has gained prominence as a sought-after residential area and an IT hub for Vizag city. It also hosts an IT special economic zone. Given these significant factors and the reports about the Chief Minister's Office relocating, the auction is poised to attract keen interest from top builders throughout the state.

Dr A Mallikarjuna, Collector of Visakhapatnam district, has disclosed that the 87.8-acre land in Madhurawada has been subdivided into 14 large land parcels, each ranging from three to 12 acres in size. These parcels, known as "Madhurawada Heights," come with an 80-foot road and access to electricity. According to the master plan, the area is designated as a mixed-use zone, allowing for development for both residential and commercial purposes. Mallikarjuna pointed out that the upset price of ₹30,000 is significantly lower when compared to the prevailing market rates in the Madhurawada area.

2,500 health workers deployed for sanitation: TTD

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD Health Officer Dr Sridevi said that around 2,500 sanitation workers were deployed for Srivari annual Brahmotsavam to keep Tirumala hill shrine and its premises clean and hygienic.

Addressing media at the Rambagicha Media Centre on Sunday, she said while 243 were pressed into service during normal days, 747 were deployed on the 'Garuda Vahana Seva' day.

Nearly 136 tonnes of waste were removed. Three ride-on machines. Twelve jet equipment and one gulfer were used to clean up the Mada streets from time to time.

She said along Mada Streets, 278 workers were used and 187

water points were set up in addition to the existing 230 points with the support of 681 Srivari 'sevak' for distributing water.

She said drinking water and food packets were tested frequently by experts of the Kurnool regional lab and TTD food lab.

Similarly, price lists in food stalls and food items were subjected to frequent inspection with devotees' feedback.

23,230 devotees utilise medical aid in 6 days

TTD Incharge CMO Dr Narmada has said that in all 23,230 devotees were given medicines in medical outlets set up all over Tirumala in the last six days during the ongoing annual festival.

Addressing media in RBGH's two media centres on Sunday she said besides Ashwini Hospital eight more centres were set up in addition to the existing six dispensaries and six primary health centres in Tirumala for Brahmotsavams.

The medical fraternity consisting of 40; doctors, 35 paramedics and 13 ambulances drawn from SVIMS, BIRRD and Ruia hospitals were stationed on a 24x7 basis.

While 4,800 pilgrims were treated on Garuda seva day alone and 10,000 on Mada Streets were given treatment at mobile battery vehicle clinics remaining days.

Dr Kusuma Kumari, Medical Superintendent of Ashwini Hospital, and APRO P Neelima were present.

ABHA accelerates healthcare services at KGH in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an effort to enhance the efficiency of healthcare services, King George Hospital (KGH) in Visakhapatnam has implemented the ABHA number (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) as a component of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. This unique 14-digit identifier is generated at random and functions as a crucial tool for accessing health records effortlessly, encompassing everything from registration to treatment and discharge, while eliminating the need for paper documentation.

Patients who come to the Outpatient Department (OPD) at KGH now have the option of utilizing the ABHA app to scan a QR code. This action enables them to transmit their ABHA profile details, encompassing their name, age, gender, and ABHA number, to the



hospital's Health Management Information System (HMIS). Although this initiative was created to shorten waiting periods during OPD registration, it appears that not all patients are readily adopting this digital token system.

Talking with The Pioneer, Dr Hima Bindu, the Nodal Officer, mentioned, "Since our launch

in June, we've consistently maintained an average of 750 to 900 online registrations via ABHA, and our highest recorded number so far has reached 1,000. It's worth highlighting that facing some initial resistance from the public is a typical and anticipated occurrence, considering the intricacies of these new procedures.

New office-bearers elected for IMA Guntur

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Dr Nuthakki Srinivas and Dr Boosireddy Narendra Reddy were unanimously elected as the president and secretary of the Indian Medical Association Guntur district branch. The members unanimously elected the new committee in a meeting held at the IMA hall in Guntur. Dr Nuthakki Srinivas was elected as the district president of the committee, Dr Velaga Mahesh as the vice president, Dr Boosireddy Narendra Reddy as the secretary, and Dr B Sai Krishna as

the joint secretary. IMA district leaders congratulated the newly elected members.

On this occasion, Dr Narendra Reddy and Dr Srinivas said that besides contributing to the development of the committee, they will work towards solving the problems faced by local doctors. They said that efforts will be made to organise special awareness programmes to introduce them to the technological developments coming in various fields around the world which will be useful to offer the best services to the patients.

Velampalli launches 'Jatayu Caravan'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister and Vijayawada West Constituency MLA Velampalli Srinivas on Sunday formally launched Sri Venkateswara Moto India Pvt Ltd. Jatayu Caravan is equipped with all facilities available in a house.

Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that it is commendable to launch the Jatayu Caravan in Vijayawada City where families can go on long tours. He said that the caravan is also used for the production of movies, serials, and short films. He com-



mented the team of six youths who came up with this bril-

liant idea. The MLA informed that this caravan is

equipped with complete facilities so that the family can easily go from one place to another and asked the people of Vijayawada to take advantage of it.

Caravan owners Vamsi and Vakkalagadda Naga Prasad said that they are happy to start the first caravan in Andhra Pradesh that too in Vijayawada. They said that the caravan has a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, fridge, indoor game, outdoor games, outdoor projector, and CC cameras have been arranged and three types of packages are available to hire the caravan, they said.

Lioness Maheswari died

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam announced with immense grief that a lioness named Maheswari, aged 18 years died at midnight on September 23. Maheswari was born in 2006 and brought to the Vizag Zoo from Sakkarbaug Zoo, Gujarat in 2019. The cause of death is severe myocardial infarction due to senility as per the Post-mortem report submitted by the Veterinary

Assistant Surgeon, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam. The average lifespan of a Lion in the wild is around 16-18 years. The lioness Maheswari was in her 19th year of life and has contributed to the cause of conservation and educated millions of people about the Asiatic lions through her presence in the Sakkarbaug and Vizag zoos. She has been celebrated throughout her life and the team of IGZP is ever grateful to her.



NTR Collector offers silk robes to Lord Ganesha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the Ganesh Sarannavaratri festivities, NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao performed special pujas at the Vinayaka Pandal that was installed at Gowthami River Breeze apartment at Tadepalli near Vijayawada on Sunday. He offered silk robes to Ganesha.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Dilli Rao expressed happiness that the festival was

conducted irrespective of caste and religion, which points to the unity among the people. He said people from various fields pray to the god to bless them to make achievements. He lauded the organisers for the grand Ganesha Chaturthi celebrations. Apartment Committee members K Sudhakara Rao, Venkateswara Rao, VV Prasad, V Krishna Prasad, V Koteswara Rao and others participated in the special puja.

Krishna boys win wrestling title

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Hosts Krishna district clinched the Under-14 boys' overall championship (Freestyle category) in the 67th School Games Federation Inter-District Wrestling Championship in under-14 and 17 categories. The tournament was organised by the Zilla Parishad High School, Nunna under the aegis of the School Games Federation Andhra Pradesh (SGFAP) at the Vikas Group of Educational Institutions at Nunna.

The three-day championship concluded on Saturday night. As many as 650 wrestlers



from all 13 combined districts participated in the tournament.

In the under-14 boys' freestyle category, Krishna district bagged 160 points to win the overall championship. Krishna boys won two gold,

four silver, and two bronze medals. In the girls' category, Chittoor district won the title. Meanwhile, in the under-17 category, Nellore bagged the championship in the boys' category and Visakhapatnam district, in the girls' category.

the famous Theravada Buddhist philosopher who hailed from Kotanemalipuri near Piduguralla in Palnadu district, lived in these caves for some time and wrote Visuddhimagga. He appreciated the Mathale Buddha Vihara for running a school in the name of Acharya Buddhaghosha even today.

Dr E Sivanagi Reddy and Mallepalli Laxmaiah, Special Officer Buddhavanam, thor-

oughly studied the rock-cut cave architecture, the monastery and the antiquities recovered from the surroundings datable to the period between the third century BCE and fifth century CE and the Buddhist connection between Andhra and Sri Lanka. Prof Gamini Ranasinghe, Director General, Central Cultural Fund, Sri Lanka, participated in both the programmes.

VIZAG OPEN GOLF-2023

Thangaraja champion

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

N Thangaraja from Colombo, Sri Lanka, emerged winner with a final round of six under-66 at the Rs 1 crore Vizag Open Golf-2023 held at the East Point Golf Club (EPGC) in Visakhapatnam.

Thanga, as he is popularly known, received the winner's cheque worth Rs. 15 lakh and moved to the sixth position in the Tata Steel PGTI rankings from the 24th position, and became the 11th winner on the PGTI this season.

Chandigarh's Akshay Sharma (67-68-73-73) finished



runner-up with a seven-under 281 after his fourth round of 73. The quartet of Samarth Dwivedi (68), Om Prakash Chouhan (69), Saarthak Chhibber (70), and Harendra

Gupta (69) secured third place with a six-under 282.

AP State Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy handed over the trophy to N Thangaraja.



JAGANANNA AAROGYA SURAKSHA

62 medical teams to hold 477 camps in Eluru dist programme

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh said that the 'Jagaanna Aarogya Suraksha' programme would begin in the district on September 30 in which 62 medical teams extend services in 477 medical camps across the district.

The Collector here on Sunday released brochures on the JAS programme and reviewed the arrangements to organize the programme with the officials. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector described the JAS programme as a historic decision by the state government to protect the health of people.

He said that the volunteers conduct door-to-door inquiries about the health condition of the people under the JAS programme.

A special action plan was formulated to implement the JAS programme more efficiently and special duties were allocated to the officials in this regard and orders were issued, he stated.



Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that a comprehensive health survey would be conducted and seven medical examinations would also be conducted to detect the diseases.

"The State government has made revolutionary changes in the field of health and medicine in these four years and brought every household under the protection of the health of poor people," the

Collector stated.

Prasanna Venkatesh said that the volunteers would distribute brochures explaining the Aarogya services to the 5,47,790 beneficiaries. The health camp would be conducted at one of the towns in every mandal in which the doctors and para-medical staff would examine the patients and medicines would also be given free of cost.

1,087 liquor bottles seized

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The SEB officials seized 14 lakh liquor bottles which were brought from Goa illegally and arrested five persons.

Police said that on a tip-off, the police conducted a raid on the house of a woman Madhavi at K Bitragunta and seized 1087 liquor bottles including 271 (750 ML) liquor bottles, 816 (180 ML) bottles.

The seized liquor bottles were worth over Rs 14 lakh. The police said that Accused Madhavi and other accused Ravi, Umamahesh Naidu, Papinaidu, and Balaji were bringing huge quantities of liquor bottles from Goa illegally and selling them here. The police seized the liquor bottles, the vehicle and arrested the five persons.



Swift action of police saves lives of five persons

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Swift action by police personnel saved the lives of five youths at Suryalanka Beach.

The police with the help of five expert swimmers saved five persons when they were drowning in the sea. The police and the marine police jointly made elaborate arrangements for the safety of devotees during immersion.

SP Vakul Jindal said that on September 24, a group of 20 people brought Ganesh idols for immersion from Yanamadala village in Prathipadu mandal. During the immersion, the activists entered the sea for a bath. At the same time, a giant wave swept ashore in five youths were swept away.

Those who were on duty responded swiftly and rescued all five youths including Chintalapati Sharma, Utukuri Ganesh, Utukuri Koteswara



Rao, Meda Nagamalleswara Rao, and Kukka Krishna. After providing them first aid, the youths were handed over to their elders.

The SP appreciated Head Constable M Pothuraju, constable P Venkat Rao, and expert swimmers Kokkilagadda Subba Rao, Kokkilagadda Mastan, Kokkilagadda Ajay and Nageswara Rao for their timely action and rescuing the five

youths. The SP said that strong measures were taken to protect the tourists coming to Suryalanka beach, adding that since many devotees from the district as well as other districts come to the Suryalanka beach to participate in Vinayaka immersion programs, a large number of police personnel and expert swimmers have been appointed along the Suryalanka beach, the SP said.

District Collector travels on 'Vande Bharat' with kids

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar flagged off the 'Vande Bharat' train at the railway station here on Sunday when the train arrived from Vijayawada.

The Vijayawada-Chennai Vande Bharat train was newly introduced. When the Vande Bharat train arrived at Ongole station today, the Collector, flanked by some BJP leaders and activists, flagged off the train at the station formally on its maiden journey.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the Vande Bharat train would reduce the duration of the journey and it also provide a comfortable journey. The train is also convenient for the



people of Ongole and surrounding areas to go to Tirupati, he added. "The modernization of Ongole railway stations was taken up at a cost of Rs 26 crore," the Collector said.

Later the Collector, along

with his son and daughter, travelled in the Vande Bharat train to Singarayakonda station. The Collector personally saw the facilities and comforts of the train and interacted with the passengers travelling in the train.

Left parties to hold dharna against true-up charges

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In protest against the steep hike in power tariff, the Left parties have given a call to organize a dharna in front of the Collector's office on September 27. Talking to the media here on Sunday, CPI district secretary ML Narayana said the left parties had given a call to the activists to stage a dharna in front of the Collector's office here on September 27 protesting the policy of the government on the electricity and called upon all to take part in the programme.

The government has put an unbearable financial burden on the people of the state by steeply hiking power tariffs, he lamented.

"In order to borrow more loans, the Jagan Mohan Reddy-headed government is hiking the power tariff. The government is also trying to implement power reformers expeditiously. As part of smart electricity meters are being installed," he slammed.

Accusing the government of doing away with free power supply to below 100 units consumers,



Narayana said that the power tariff had been hiked seven times during the four-and-a-half years YSRCP regime. The CPI leader deplored that additional charges in the form of true-ups were being collected from the consumers.

CPM district secretary Sayyad Hanif said that if the electricity reforms were implemented, the agriculture sector would be further struck by the crisis. He objected to the fixing of smart meters to the agriculture pump sets.

CPI (ML) district secretary DVN Swamy and CPI(ML) New Democracy leader K Hanumantha Rao also spoke. CPI leaders R Venkata Rao, PVR Chowdary, GV Konda Reddy, Kankana Anjaneyulu, Chikati Srinivasa Rao, and CPI-ML leader S Lalita were among those who were present.

JSP-TDP tie-up has people's support: Nagababu

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Stating that the people of the state are welcoming the alliance of Jana Sena and TDP, JSP state general secretary Nagababu said that a clarification would be given on the alliance soon.

Talking to the media here on Sunday, Nagababu said that both the parties would work together with the aim of forming the next government.

The JSP would always be away from opportunistic politics, he claimed. "Pawan Kalyan always thinks about the welfare of people and the progress of the state. Achieving the YSRCP-free AP is the target of the JSP," he stated, adding that the TDP is also going in the same way. The way in which Chandrababu Naidu was arrested was painful. The political vendetta is not good in politics," he said.



Anganwadi workers take out huge rally, arrested

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

A large number of Anganwadi workers took out a huge rally on Sunday. The Anganwadi workers took out a rally raising slogans and holding placards demanding the government to concede their legitimate demands.

Later when they were going to the railway station to board a train to go to Vijayawada to

take part in a state-level meeting the police prevented them.

The anganwadi workers and the police grappled for some time on the road leading to a tense situation. The police prevented them from going to the railway station. However, some anganwadi workers reached the bus station in a rally. The police whisked them away to the police station in several vehicles.



Novel protest by TDP activists

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activists, led by MLA M Rama Raju, staged a dharna by standing waist-deep water in the irrigation canal at Undi on Sunday in protest against the arrest of TDP chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

The TDP activists standing in waist-deep water in the Undi irrigation canal held placards and raised slogans denouncing the arrest of Chandrababu Naidu.

Talking to the media, the MLA vowed to continue the



agitation till Naidu was freed from prison. He alleged that Naidu was jailed in an unjust

manner and the people of the state would teach a lesson to the YSRCP in the next election.

AP settlers can decide elections in 30 seats: Mothkupally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS leader Mothkupally Narsimulu said that settlers from Andhra Pradesh can decide election results in 30 Assembly constituencies in Telangana. Speaking to the media on Sunday, Revanth Reddy said that the BRS would not be able to win a single seat in erstwhile Nalgonda district without his support.

While responding to the

growth of the Congress party in State, Mothkupally said that the Congress gained strength only because of Revanth Reddy, he said and added Revanth is like his brother. He also made it clear that he has no enmity with Revanth. While targeting CM KCR, Mothkupally said that he was deceived by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao. He said that KCR had inducted him in the BRS party by himself inviting him but had kept him away since then.

"KCR insulted me by not giving me appointments for the last six months. I used to meet Chief Ministers NTR and Chandrababu Naidu easily. But KCR was not giving me time. KCR is a man who cleans his house with cow urine if a Dalit enters his house," Mothkupally said. He demanded that KCR should respond to the arrest of Chandrababu Naidu and that the BRS will be hit in case KCR fails to respond to the arrest of Chandrababu.

Prakasam dist Collector's Office gets ISO certificate

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The district administration centre, Prakasam Bhavan, has got the prestigious International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certificate.

The Prakasam district Collectorate has bagged the ISO certificate as the best Collectorate in the state. This rare recognition has come for the procedures adopted in the Collectorate in relation to the categories of documentation, monitoring system, files management, grievance redressal, and human resource management.

AS Dinesh Kumar, after assuming charge as district Collector, has started paying special attention to these issues. Steps have been taken to increase accountability in the work of employees, transparency in problem solving and technology in administrative affairs.

In this connection, on August 29th, the representa-



tives of ISO visited the Collectorate. The procedures and standards adopted in these five categories satisfied the representatives.

Sivaiah, the representative of the organization presented the ISO certificate to the District Collector Dinesh

Kumar, and congratulated him. He said that this type of certificate is being given to the Prakasam

District Collectorate for the first time in the state. Joint Collector K Srinivasulu and DRO R Sriatha were among those who were present.

More rain forecast in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

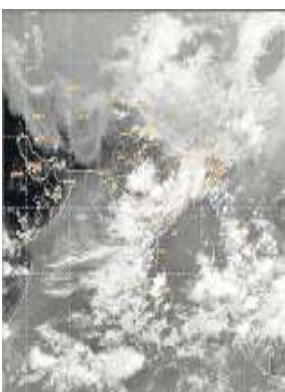
Heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours, the Meteorological Centre said on Sunday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that the same situation is likely to prevail in Rayalaseema during the next 24 hours.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours and in Rayalaseema during the next 24 hours.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are very likely to occur in many places or at a few places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

Heavy rain occurred at one



or two places in Vizianagaram district of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, YSR district, and Sathya Sai district of Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours.

Rainfall occurred at many places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, and dry weather prevailed during the same period. Southwest monsoon has been active in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema, the report added.

'Rozgar Mela' in Vja tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Posts will conduct 'Rozgar Mela' at the Vijayawada Divisional Railway Auditorium near the railway station in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

The event will be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually, according to an official press release.

The press release said that Minister of State for Steel, and Rural Development Faggon Singh Kulaste would be physically present for this programme.

He would be handing over the appointment letters to 203 recruits in the Central government.

STATE-LEVEL SCIENCE SEMINAR TODAY

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A State-level science seminar on 'Millets - a Super Food or a Diet Fad' will take place at the Murali Restaurant at Poranki near Vijayawada on Monday. As many as 26 students who are selected for this seminar will present posters.

As part of this, the NTR district-level science seminar was organised at the Andhra Loyola College in Vijayawada. Around 210 students belong-

ing to government and private schools attended the seminar and presented their posters. Of them, G Sandhya, ZPH School, Nunna, A Anjali, Sriram High School, Ajith Singh Nagar, and N Lohitha, Citizen High School, Vijayawada bagged the first three places.

Of these three students, N Lohitha has been selected for the State-level science seminar representing NTR district. The best performers will be selected for the national-level sci-

ence seminar, which will be sponsored by the National Council of Science Museum (NCSM) and the Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum (VITM), Bangalore.

After the district-level science seminar, NTR District Educational Officer (DEO) CV Renuka presented prizes to the winners. APSCERT Prof Bhagya Sri and juries Dr Sivakumari, Dr Bala Karnakumar and others were present.



VINAYAKA IDOL IMMERSED IN POLAVARAM CANAL

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The immersion of the Vinayaka idol which was installed at the Vikas Group of Educational Institutions at Nunna near Vijayawada was held grandly in the Polavaram Canal on Sunday.

Before the immersion procession, Vikas Group of Educational Institutions Secretary and Correspondent Naredla Satyanarayana Reddy couple performed a special puja.

As part of the Vinayaka Chaturthi, a six-foot idol was installed on the premises of the Vikas College. College lecturers

and staff participated in the festivities along with their family members.


After the completion of the puja, a five-km long procession was organised to immerse the Vinayaka idol in the Polavaram Canal. College lecturers, staff and students enthusiastically participated in the programme. During the procession, students sang 'Ganapathi Bappa Bori', 'Jai Bolu Ganesh Mahara Ki Jai' etc.

Vikas Engineering College Principals Dr B Ramana and Dr PS Srinivas, Polytechnic College Principals Dr T Rama Rao and N Gopala Krishna and others were present.

INDIA CORNER


Mamata at SSKM Hospital for health check-up

A day after returning from her 12-day tour of Spain and Dubai, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday evening went to the state-run SSKM Hospital here for a health check-up, an official said. Banerjee, the official said, is being seen by doctors in Woodburn Block of the SSKM Hospital. "She is here for a routine check-up. At the moment doctors are seeing her," he told. Sources close to the chief minister said that Banerjee was having some uneasiness in her leg which was injured earlier this year when she was alighting from a helicopter that made an emergency landing at Sevoke airbase due to bad weather. She had suffered a ligament injury on her left knee and had to undergo microsurgery. Banerjee returned to the city on Saturday evening after a 12-day official trip to Spain and Dubai to attract investments for the state.




Himachal varsity to showcase natural farming techniques

Low-cost natural farming techniques adopted by Dr. Y S Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni is expected to get global exposure at a 15-day international conference in France. The conference being held from September 24 to October 8 is convened by French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment in France. Representatives of eleven countries and fifteen institutes are participating in the conference on 'Natural Farming, Agroecology and Regenerative agriculture' and India is being represented by Horticulture and Forestry University, Nauni (Solan). The conference would have several rounds of discussions on theme project named "Plant protection in Agroecology" and Nauni University, which has done extensive work in natural farming is representing India, said Rajeshwar Chandel, Vice Chancellor of Dr. Y S Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry.



46 pilgrims injured after private bus hits rock in Gujarat

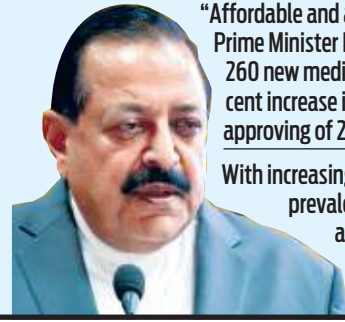
All 46 pilgrims travelling on a private luxury bus were injured after the vehicle moving down a slope hit a rock on the roadside near the temple town of Ambaji in Gujarat's Banaskantha district on Sunday, police said. Eighteen of the passengers were shifted to a civil hospital in district headquarters Palanpur, while the remaining were being treated at a government hospital at Ambaji town, local police inspector Dhaval Patel said. The victims were returning on the bus after offering prayers at the shrine located in the Arasur hills. "A private luxury bus carrying 46 pilgrims from Kanjari village in Kheda district met with an accident after the driver lost control of the vehicle on a hilly slope. The bus hit a rock flanking the road on the wayside, after which its roof got ripped off," the police official said. The bus was moving down the slope when the accident occurred, he said.



Affordable healthcare road map for healthy India, says Jitendra

PNS ■ KATHUA/JAMMU

Asserting that India has taken a lead in the production of vaccines for the prevention of malignancies like Cervavac, Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said affordable and accessible healthcare is the road map for a "healthy India". He said India has moved from a sectoral and segmented approach to health service delivery to a comprehensive need-based healthcare service and is now seen as a role model in crisis management and preventive healthcare. The minister of state in the Prime Minister's office was speaking at the launch of Jammu and Kashmir's first ever state-of-the-art cancer care facility affiliated to Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai in the new block of Government Medical College Kathua. "India has taken a lead in the production of vaccines for the prevention of malignancies like cervavac the country's first quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine to fight cervical cancer. The Biotechnology sector is growing by leaps and bounds



"Affordable and accessible healthcare is the road map for Healthy India' under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which is evident from the fact that more than 260 new medical colleges have been established in the country with a 79 per cent increase in MBBS seats and 93 per cent in PG seats in nine years besides approving of 22 AIIMS."

With increasing lifespan, changing lifestyles and environmental factors, the prevalence of cancer is assuming epidemic proportions and cancers of all nature and all organs are happening everywhere. A Tata satellite cancer care facility in Kathua will therefore prove to be a great boon for the region.

as India is set to achieve USD 150 billion Bio-economy by 2025, which stood at over USD 100 billion in 2022," he said. "Affordable and accessible healthcare is the road map for Healthy India' under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which is evident from the fact that more than 260 new medical colleges have been established in the country with a 79 per cent increase in MBBS seats and 93 per cent in PG seats in nine years besides approving of 22 AIIMS," he said. Singh thanked Modi for bringing Preventive Health Care into focus in the country for the first time which is

the reason that in just a span of two years, India could produce two DNA vaccines and one nasal vaccine. Referring to the launch of the cancer care facility in Kathua, the minister said he felt pained to receive calls every day from different parts of the region from desperate family members pleading to arrange admission of cancer patients at Tata Hospital Mumbai or arrange accommodation for the attendants. Singh said he then decided to start the facility at Kathua and moved the papers to the Department of Atomic Energy which is the controlling authority of Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai.

"With increasing lifespan, changing lifestyles and environmental factors, the prevalence of cancer is assuming epidemic proportions and cancers of all nature and all organs are happening everywhere. A Tata satellite cancer care facility in Kathua will therefore prove to be a great boon for the region," he said. Under the leadership of Modi, he said, satellite hospitals and the facility of Tata Memorial Centre have been started in different parts of the country and in Guwahati, even Onco DM and MCh super speciality courses have been started, which could be contemplated for Kathua as well.

Protest at Jantar Mantra against Trudeau

Hindu Front accuses him of supporting Khalistanis


PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of people on Sunday staged a protest against Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the Jantar Mantar here, accusing him of supporting Khalistani separatists. The protesters led by United Hindu Front chief Jai Bhagwan Goyal also submitted to authorities a memorandum addressed to the prime ministers of Canada and India, the outfit said in a statement. "Since several months, the Canadian prime minister has been openly supporting and protecting anti-India Khalistanis. Despite repeated objections from the Indian government, the Canadian prime minister has not responded," Goyal said. "If the Canadian prime minister loves anti-India Khalistanis so much, why doesn't he give a part of Canada and create a new Khalistan nation? We will be the first to recognise it," Goyal said.

Proposed criminal laws to provide justice rather than punishment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the three proposed criminal laws are people-centric, have the flavour of Indian soil and their main purpose is to protect the constitutional, human and personal rights of citizens. Addressing the International Lawyers' Conference organised by the Bar Council of India here, Shah also said the approach of the three bills is also to provide justice rather than mete out punishment. He appealed to all lawyers in the country to provide their suggestions to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS-2023), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS-2023) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA-2023) so that the country can have the best laws that benefit all. The three bills, which were introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11, will replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Act, 1898, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 respectively. "India's criminal justice system was imprinted with colo-



With the introduction of three laws and three systems, we will be able to remove the delays in our criminal justice system in less than a decade.

India's criminal justice system was imprinted with colonial law. All three new bills do not have colonial imprint but have the flavour of Indian soil. The central point of these three proposed laws is to protect the constitutional and human rights of citizens as well as their personal rights.

These laws are coming after almost 160 years with a completely new approach and new system. Along with new initiatives, three initiatives have also been taken by the government to create a law-friendly ecosystem.

nial law. All three new bills do not have colonial imprint but have the flavour of Indian soil. The central point of these three proposed laws is to protect the constitutional and human rights of citizens as well as their personal rights," he said. Shah said the initiative has been taken to comprehensively change the criminal laws keeping in mind the present-day demands. "These laws are coming after almost 160 years with a completely new approach and

Use of simple language required in legal profession: SC judge



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjeev Khanna on Sunday stressed the need for using simple language in the legal profession to enable the citizens to take informed decisions and avoid unintentional violations. Justice Khanna, speaking at the valedictory session of International Lawyers' Conference organised by apex Bar body Bar Council of India, said laws were meant to resolve disputes, not become disputed themselves. He said the question of simplicity of law, i.e., use of language that is understood by common man, required greater attention. "Is law required to be demystified? Should law be a puzzle that needs to be solved? Laws are meant to resolve disputes, not become

disputed themselves. Law should not be mystery to the common man. Law is not written as an edict meant for the legal experts. They apply and govern almost everything in our daily lives and therefore use of simple language is required. This enables the citizens to take informed decisions and avoid unintentional violations. This equally applies to our decisions and judgements," he said. He said commercialisation of litigation and legal professions were of utmost concern. "Escalating cost of litigation exorbitant fees are formidable barrier to access to justice to ensure, and we must ensure that the justice remains accessible to all," Justice Khanna said. As prime stakeholders of the profession, he said, it was imperative for the lawyers and judges to introspect and address the issue of the declining interest in litigation as a career choice. "We must all survive to revive and preserve certain tradition of the legal professions which means court litigation should be mater of first choice and not the last," he said.



Vande Bharat train a vision of new India: Union minister Darshana Jardosh

PNS ■ SURAT

Vande Bharat train is the vision of new India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to fulfilling the Railways' pledge to embrace new technology and new speed, Minister of State for Railways Darshana Jardosh said here on Sunday. Earlier in the day, the prime minister flagged off nine Vande Bharat Express trains via video conferencing, connecting religious and tourist destinations across 11 states. Jardosh, who was present at Surat railway station, said the launch of Vande Bharat (VB) trains for different destinations, including the one connecting Ahmedabad to Jamnagar, was "a proud moment for the country."

Centre luring voters with women's quota Bill

Quota benefit only possible in 2034, says Kapil Sibal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hitting out at the Modi government, former Union law minister Kapil Sibal on Sunday said the earliest the women's reservation can come into effect is 2034 Lok Sabha elections, alleging it was brought with an eye on the upcoming state and

Lok Sabha polls. The Rajya Sabha MP made the remarks in his new 'Dil Se' initiative under which he will engage fortnightly in a conversation with a journalist on important issues. In the first episode he posted on social media, Sibal took questions on the women's reservation bill, the row over BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri's derogatory remarks against BSP MP Danish Ali, and his views on the new



Parliament building. Asked about Bidhuri's remarks, Sibal said the BJP MP must be

India carrying out lot of construction activities at China border: BRO DG

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has been carrying out a lot of construction activities at the China border in the last three years, BRO Director General Lt General Rajeev Chaudhry said on Sunday. The DG was here to inspect the ongoing construction work of an air dispatch unit of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), touted to be the world's largest 3D concrete printed campus.

Chaudhry said the government of India is fully supporting the BRO for carrying out infrastructure development projects by way of increasing the budget and new technology. The government of India has "increased our budget by 100 per cent in the last two years," he added. When asked if China is carrying out big infrastructure development near the border areas of India, the DG said that a lot of construction activities have been being

carried out by the BRO and other agencies at the China border in the last three years. The DG said that around 300 BRO projects worth Rs 8,000 crore were completed during the last few years. "In the last three years, we set up 295 road projects, bridges, tunnels and airfields which were dedicated to the nation," Chaudhry said. "In four months, our 60 more projects will be ready and the pace of our work has increased," he added.

Masked men loot jewellery shop in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Four masked men allegedly looted a jewellery shop in Delhi's Rohini area, police said on Sunday. The 48-year-old shopowner -- a resident of Pitampura -- said in his complaint at Vijay Nagar police station that he was calculating the day's collection on Friday when a man wearing a mask and a helmet entered the shop around 7 pm.



Govt has 'mismanaged' economy across all sectors: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged that the government has mismanaged the economy across all sectors and since it is "too inept" in fixing issues such as unemployment and price rise, it is distorting the data instead. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said now that the special session of Parliament is over, it is clear that the Modi government was trying to "distract and divert" the nation from some critical issues "the Adani scam, the caste census and especially the rising unemployment, growing inequality and the economic distress". In a statement, he said no matter how much the Modi government hides the data, the reality is that the vast majority of people are suffering. He claimed that some of the facts reported last week are being "brushed under the carpet".

Climate change, landslide push Raigad villagers to despair

PNS ■ IRSHALWADI (MAHARASHTRA)

The nightmare of a landslide that buried an entire village and the dread of watching a mammoth boulder on an unstable slope, fearing every day that it will roll down and kill them all. That's how it is for thousands of people in Maharashtra's Raigad area, even two months after 84 people were killed when the hillside around Irshalwadi village literally crumbled on the July 19 night of incessant, heavy rain. The trauma lives on for those in Irshalwadi who escaped and live in makeshift container homes just down the road and for those in other villages around. Climate change, say experts and long-time residents, has come to their doorstep with extreme weather events that have led to hillsides get-



ting increasingly fragile and maybe dangerous. According to Prakash Gajbihiye, director, Geological Survey of India (GSI), Pune, rainfall has almost remained the same but the span has reduced and intensity of precipita-

tion increased. "When there are high (heavy) rains in a shorter span, saturation of soil and rocks leads to sudden landslides. This is exacerbated by manmade activities like deforestation, slope cutting for construction of roads, houses and agri-

cultural fields and changing natural drainage that results in deformation of slope forming material and this triggers landslides," he explained. As experts analyse broad trends, the villagers of the hill district of Raigad cope with their uncertain today and unknown tomorrow, wondering of and when they will have to move. On the face of it, Manisha Yashwant Dore's temporary home in a container close to the Irshadgad fort is better equipped -- there are two fans, decent flooring, cooking gas and tap water. Dore, who lost seven members of her family, including her 18-year-old daughter, survived the massive landslide on July 19. And realises that nothing can ever replace their lives in the hill village of Irshalwadi. "Although it was an arduous climb of an hour from the approach road

to Irshalwadi, life was good when we lived up there. We did not need fans, we drew water from our well and we ate vegetables we grew and also the ones we got from the forest," she said. Dore's voice trailed off and her eyes welled up with tears. The memory of her daughter Kanchan crying for help comes back to haunt her. Her brother who had come as a guest that night, her mother-in-law, step mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law also died. Recounting what had happened, the 35-year-old said there was first one landslide that buried some homes, including the house where her daughter Kanchan was sleeping. "We rushed to help and started digging in a bid to rescue her. In minutes, there was another landslide and mounds of earth swallowed the entire hamlet," added her husband Yashwant.

Nationwide cleanliness drive to be conducted on October 1: MoHUA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A nationwide cleanliness drive will be conducted on October 1 responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for "one hour of shramdaan for swachhata", the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said on Sunday. In a statement, the ministry said that in the run up to Gandhi Jayanti, a unique call has been given by the prime minister to fellow citizens. In the 105th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', the prime minister appealed for "one hour of shramdaan for swachhata" at 10 am on October 1 by all citizens collectively, and it will be a 'swachh-jali' to Mahatma Gandhi on the eve of his jayanti, it said.

"This mega cleanliness drive calls upon citizens from all walks of life to join in actual cleaning activities of public places like market spaces, railway tracks, water bodies, tourist locations, religious places etc," the statement said. "Every town, gram panchayat, all sectors of the government like civil aviation, railways, information and technology etc, public institutions will be facilitating cleanliness events led by citizens," it said. It also said that NGOs, resident welfare associations and private organisations interested in organising cleanliness events can also apply online on the portals of urban local bodies or district administrations.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Make believe?

India must put the lid on US' Canada envoy's allegation on Nijjar's killing

The killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a pro-Khalistan Canadian of Indian descent, by alleged Indian agents has taken the India-Canada relations to their lowest ebb. As the situation unravelled, Canada expelled a senior Indian diplomat and India reciprocated. The visa services to Canada in New Delhi have been suspended. Though Nijjar's killing is the trigger for the current spat, the relationship between India and Canada has remained strained for quite some time now. Canada has a sizeable Indian population from Punjab and many of them are vocal Khalistan supporters. India has repeatedly asked Canada to rein in such rogue elements but the demand has fallen on deaf ears. This is an unfortunate situation as both countries have historically enjoyed friendly ties. Now, yet another episode has exacerbated the situation. The allegations made by the US Ambassador to Canada regarding India's involvement in Nijjar's killing have indeed harmed India's image. While these allegations have not been substantiated, they



have cast a shadow over India's international standing and strained its relations with Canada. Allegedly, the said report prompted Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to make in the Canadian Parliament his controversial accusation of a "potential" connection between the Indian Government and Nijjar's murder on June 18. India has vehemently rejected Trudeau's claims, labelling them "absurd" and "motivated".

However, recent allegations by US' Canada Ambassador David Cohen, quoting the Five Eyes network, have put India in a precarious position. The Five Eyes intelligence network, comprising the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, has been

a cornerstone of global intelligence sharing. But David Cohen's comment marks the first acknowledgement by a US Administration official of intelligence sharing with Canada within the Five Eyes alliance. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has expressed deep concern over Prime Minister Trudeau's allegations against India and emphasised that the US is closely coordinating with Canada on the matter, aiming for accountability through a thorough investigation. It is indeed a serious situation for India. Our Government must counter it most vigorously as the onus now lies on India to prove its innocence. It must let the world know that though Nijjar --- officially designated as a terrorist by India in 2020 --- was a proclaimed offender who celebrated Beant Singh's assassination and openly advocated armed struggle against India, our nation does not support extrajudicial killing and had asked the Canadian Government on several occasions to check anti-India activities on its soil but with no luck. While Trudeau desperately tries to resurrect his falling ratings by playing in the hands of Khalistan supporters in Canada who wield certain influence and power there, he must realise that it would be counterproductive in the long run as history is replete with examples where extremists have bitten the very hand that fed them.

PICTALK



Tribal youth perform a cultural programme on the eve of Karma, a harvest festival, in Ranchi

PTI

New school education for emerging new India

New India faces new challenges, especially in the field of education and skill development, which must be addressed

In a rapidly evolving global landscape, the education sector is experiencing a profound transformation. This transformation is especially critical for a country like India, where education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of its burgeoning population. Burlington English, in collaboration with ScooNews, recently released a groundbreaking report titled 'Unlocking Success: Turning Policy and Frameworks into Real-World Action.' The report presents a compelling roadmap for the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework in India. By drawing insights from educators across the nation and offering practical toolkits, it has the potential to transform the school education landscape in India, making it more inclusive, innovative, and future-ready.

This report sheds light on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) implementation roadmap, drawing insights from the experiences and perspectives of over 1000 school teachers across six states in India. The key findings of this report discuss how it has the potential to revolutionise school education in India. One of the report's most compelling insights is its emphasis on embracing the 'Scope for Failure' as a crucial element of the learning journey. This perspective encourages a shift in the way educators and students perceive failure, turning it into an opportunity. This mindset shift is fundamental in preparing students for the challenges of the future. Besides, it acknowledges the importance of English and treats it as a skill that helps employability in India and abroad. The report suggests a two-language set up to take load off the students. One of the strengths of the report lies in the extensive research conducted. The insights gathered from over 1000 teachers, spanning the K-12 domain,



provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the Indian education system. This diverse sample size ensures that the report's recommendations are grounded in the realities faced by educators at all levels. The report addresses several key themes that are crucial to shaping the future of education in India: The concept of 'Future Schools' explores the need for educational institutions to adapt to the rapidly changing technological landscape. It emphasises the importance of incorporating innovative teaching methods and cutting-edge technologies to prepare students for a world that is vastly different from what it was a decade ago. Recognising that teachers are the backbone of any educational system, the report delves into the importance of providing teachers with the necessary resources, training, and professional development opportunities. Empowering teachers is key to improving the quality of education. To translate these key themes into actionable steps, the report provides

eight essential action points and three project toolkits designed for classroom implementation. These practical tools equip educators with the resources and strategies needed to transform their classrooms into dynamic learning environments. This hands-on approach bridges the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that the NCF is implemented effectively.

The report is particularly well-suited for the educational landscape of 'New India,' which is characterized by its aspiration for innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. The report aligns with NCF as the report directly addresses the NCF, aligning its recommendations with the national education policy framework. This ensures that its insights can be seamlessly integrated into the existing educational structure. The emphasis on adaptive assessments and teacher empowerment promotes inclusivity in education, catering to the diverse needs of students in a country as diverse as India.

(The writer is CEO of Burlington Group, India & Asia-Pacific; views are personal)



RATNESH JHA

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China's Afghan plan against India, US

In case China succeeds in cultivating relations with the Taliban regime, it will be easier to exert its authority in these troubled areas

China is at it again. Nothing can deter it from indulging in Anti India and Anti US grandiloquence besides projecting itself as a certain replacement of America as 'Super Power' hence making relentless efforts to enhance its relevance and area of influence in Asia as well as other countries in the world.

Against this backdrop, undaunted by the image of the Taliban infamous for its medieval mindset, anti-women dictate, tendency to harbour terrorists etc. China is poised to adopt a new strategy and long-term plan to create trouble for India and the United States which is evident from its recent decision to open a new mission in Kabul with immediate effect.

China has recently announced the appointment of Zhao Zhaohui as full-time ambassador to Afghanistan which makes it the first country in the world to establish a direct relationship. Several nations including India had embassies in Kabul but the volatile situation changed after the Taliban took over this troubled country.

China is eyeing mineral wealth

Experts say that China has ignored world opinion to have any official diplomatic relations with the Taliban but posting of a full-time ambassador amounts to indirect recognition and such a step could not be taken even by neighbouring Pakistan which used to claim the 'Savior' of the Kabul regime. China has been adopting a Soft policy towards the Taliban which was aimed at alluring the new regime in its debt trap to exploit immense mineral wealth. China's company Gochin expressed its willingness on April 13, 2023, to invest 10 billion USD in Afghanistan's Lithium deposits which had been confirmed by the Taliban's Ministry of Mines and petroleum.

The Chinese company has assured the Taliban regime that it will create 10 lakhs indirect and 120,000 direct jobs in this country. Similarly, Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Co (CAPEIC) signed a \$540 million deal to extract oil from northern



Afghanistan's Amu Darya basin In January 2023 which is under the plan to go for a bigger kill of vast mineral wealth valuing about one trillion. As per calculations of a joint team from the Pentagon, US Geological Service and USAID, Afghanistan's mineral deposits are worth at least \$900bn. As per data, vast mineral wealth in Afghanistan is untapped so far which includes Gold, Copper, Iron, Graphite.

China targets the US

China is keen to send the message to the world that it can spread its influence in other nations like the United States which is under its ambition to become a superpower. It intends to expand its China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor through Afghanistan which may create security concerns for several neighbors. China may soon start oil exploration.

Analysts opine that it will not be easy to succeed in Afghanistan which is known as the "graveyard of empires" and witnessed defeats of several nations including the United States. The Soviet Union was defeated in the 20th century though China's entry was based on its policy to exploit minerals hence it is trying to create an impression of subsequently benefiting the people of Afghanistan in the job sector besides earning huge revenues.



CHINESE MUSLIMS ARE FLEEING OWING TO PERSECUTION IN THEIR HOME PROVINCE XINJIANG TO SEEK SANCTUARY IN AFGHANISTAN

China has abandoned Pakistan and is directly trapping the Taliban regime which has already fallen to its prey. Taliban's desperate effort to survive is also a contributory factor in developing close ties with China which has pounced upon this rare opportunity. China will target Afghanistan to expand its Belt and Road initiative which involves an investment of billions of USD and the Taliban may accept it as a possible methodology for generating employment and a path of development that may prove to be a Mirage.

Given a wishful thinking of Pakistan, efforts were made to sell to the world that it would dictate the Taliban regime hence it manipulated to keep India out of the Doha dialogue which prepared a roadmap of US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan. But turmoil and strained ties between Pakistan and the Taliban have changed the entire scenario. Pakistan has been at the forefront since 2021 when the Taliban assumed the reign of power in Kabul but its 'joy-ride' to needle India proved to be 'short-lived' as the former has accused the latter of promoting and supporting the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which killed 179 people in Pakistan in 2022. Piqued over the grand

success of G20 in New Delhi, China may like to capture the Taliban who desperately need dome protector following their failure to get international recognition though two years have elapsed since they took over the reign of power in Kabul on August 15, 2021. Xi's absence at the G20 did not make much difference and India produced the Delhi declaration which was unanimously thereby enhancing its stature in the world diplomatic arena. Due to a huge investment of about Rs 22,350 crore in various projects, education and social sectors, India faces the unimaginable challenge of dealing with the Taliban if they walk into the trap laid by China. Second, India's north-south corridor may be affected after the active involvement of China in Afghanistan. Taliban have appreciated India's investment in Afghanistan in the past but nothing is certain about future investment. Chinese Muslims are fleeing owing to persecution in their home province Xinjiang to seek sanctuary in Afghanistan. In case, China succeeds in cultivating relations with the Taliban regime then it will make it easier for China to exert its authority in these troubled areas.

(The writer is political analyst and senior journalist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ARE SENIOR CITIZENS A BURDEN?

Sir — Senior citizens possess the potential to influence government policies and should, therefore, be respected for their wealth of life experience. To support seniors, numerous schemes should be implemented. While the government allocates substantial funds for welfare programs, senior citizens face dwindling incomes due to declining bank interest rates. Some may receive meager pensions, which are still subject to income tax. Hence, senior citizens deserve certain privileges, including concessions in train and air travel, as well as essential medical assistance. It's disheartening that Indian senior citizens are ineligible for medical insurance after the age of 75, denied loans on EMI terms, and even refused driving licenses. They have faithfully paid taxes and insurance premiums throughout their working years, and it is unjust that they have now become a burden on society.

Jayanthi CK Maniam | Chennai

UNPARLIAMENTARY BEHAVIOR

Sir — In response to the obscene communal statements made by BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri, a prominent political figure issued a statement, expressing remorse "if" the Opposition felt hurt by the member's remarks. The use of the word "if" distinctly implies that the BJP/NDA feels no regret for Bidhuri's offensive comments, suggesting they find nothing objectionable about them. This stance is framed as an act of magnanimity and liberalism on the part of the party and government, conditional upon the Opposition's feelings. It reflects the divisive philosophy of "Hindi Hindu Hindustan" that has firmly rooted itself in national politics.

This attitude indicates that, within Parliament, the ruling party MP's offensive words should concern only the Opposition, along with the targeted religious community outside Parliament. It appears that there is no expectation of shame or concern from the MPs of the ruling party, the NDA government, the BJP, or even Hindus and Indians as a whole,

Row with Canada



The world is currently experiencing severe tension due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and China's contentious policies. This has instilled fear of an impending economic recession. In this delicate situation, the Trudeau government of Canada has exacerbated

ed tensions by levying unjustified accusations against the Indian government. Canada, known for being a hub of Khalistani activities, not only supports these organizations for political gain but also justifies their reprehensible actions as a form of freedom of expression. In light of these developments, it is advisable for India to reconsider its political and commercial ties with Canada. Just two months ago, Khalistani supporters demonstrated their autocratic tendencies by displaying the assassination of former PM Indira Gandhi in Canada, an act that was shockingly labeled as an expression of freedom. Consequently, India should adopt a firm stance in its dealings with Canada.

Jahangir Shaikh | Mumbai

in response to the worst possible comments made within the legislative body. The onus of protest is unfairly placed solely on the Opposition and Muslims. This demonstrates a moral failing on the part of the heavyweight politician and his party/government.

Kajal Chatterje | Kolkata

OBC'S STRUGGLE FOR FAIR DEAL

Sir — As we analyse the available data, it becomes evident that there is a significant underrepresentation of individuals from Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the leadership positions of our country's central universities. To illustrate, out of all the Vice-Chancellors in these universities, merely five belong to the OBC category. Similarly, when we examine the position of registrars, only three are from backward communities. Shockingly, a mere 4.5 percent of the reserved professorial positions in central universities have been occupied by individuals from OBCs. This trend is not unique to professors but extends to associate and assistant professors as well.

Furthermore, the situation is exacerbated by the misuse of the "creamy layer" concept, which has led to the unjust deprivation

of caste certificates for OBC individuals. This arbitrary restriction of rights with a nominal income limit of Rs 6 or 8 lakhs severely hampers the prospects of future generations. Curiously, no such creamy layer or similar restrictions apply to other reserved categories, allowing the children of senior officers from these categories to enjoy reservation benefits for generations.

It is imperative to emphasise that we cannot progress as a nation by leaving behind a significant portion of our society. To illustrate the magnitude of the issue, if we tally the vacant teaching positions in central government institutions, we find that a staggering forty to sixty percent of OBC posts remain unfilled. The loss of 16,000 medical seats allocated for OBCs is nothing short of a grave injustice. The responsibility for finding a solution to this issue lies squarely with the government. We must not neglect the well-being and empowerment of a substantial part of our population, especially when the facts clearly indicate disparities.


Satyavan Saurabh | Bhiwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

ZEN BUDDHISM: LAW OF ATTRACTION

A robust mind can develop the qualities to manifest the ‘Law of Attraction’



RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago a strapping youngster gained admission into an estimable Temple of Knowledge. He was fortunate to be imparted precious pearls of wisdom of Zen Buddhism by sagacious and knowledgeable masters. Over some time, he attained a reasonable degree of compassion and insight into the human mind. During his tutelage what struck him most was the simplicity, humility and truthfulness of his teachers who practiced Zen Buddhism.

What is Zen Buddhism?

As per Norman Fischer Zen Buddhism is:
‘A special transmission outside the scriptures.
No dependency on words and letters.
Pointing directly to the human mind.
Seeing into one’s nature and attaining Buddhahood.’

The cornerstone of the practice is that over some time, through unflinching practice of the appropriate techniques, a postulant becomes aware and awakened. The mind of such a person becomes pristine and gains clarity in the thought process. However, it is well-nigh impossible to effectuate such a state without the grace of a Guru, who can be thought of as the doorway to the ambrosia of divinity. The young monk was directed by the Masters of the monastery to spread the knowledge of Zen Buddhism. Significantly, the now more spiritually aware monk uttered only the truth and never denounced anyone.

Powers of the Human Mind

Exhausted and weary after relentless travel, one day he sat under a majestic blossoming tree. The monk was feeling ravenous and wished that his hunger would be satiated. Quite unexpectedly a maiden walking that way offered him a bowl filled with food, and no sooner did the monk express his desire. He was taken aback at the turn of events and expressed his gratitude to the damsel.



After the hearty meal, the monk felt extremely thirsty. He pined for a glass of water and sure enough, a stripling youngster offered him juices to quench his thirst. The monk was extremely beholden and appreciative of this serendipitous act of kindness. The mind of the monk was now suffused with joy as his twin desires of food and liquid were satiated with remarkable ease. He now wished to sleep. Suddenly it darkened and there was a cloud cover across the sky. The weather which was arid and hot turned salubrious. After sleeping for hours together he felt reinvigorated. The monk, when hungry was satiated with food, when thirsty was provided with drinks and was comforted by angels when he felt worn out.


The Law of Attraction

His thoughts and words were resonating in the universe and the mind became a unique springboard wherein whatever he wished for, eventuated. Once trained, the mind develops a few qualities. It becomes luminous and radiant, light as a feather and not weighed down by the baggage of negative thoughts. The monk was hungry, thirsty and deprived of rest. He meant it; there was no dubiety or incertitude in his mind. The mind was not wavering and his desires did not oscillate between “hope to be fed” or “if provided will partake of food.” A robust and radiant mind that can authentically develop the qualities of the Law of Attraction knows the art of letting go, dropping all affectation. The unique mantra of this success is when an individual genuinely believes in the production of dreams and corals thoughts to be efficacious ones. Pre-eminently for an individual blessed with these attributes, the Law of Attraction operates and resounds quite amazingly. “All that we are is a result of what we have thought,” said Gautama Buddha the Enlightened One.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd and a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Tap water for parched villages: An incredible turnaround

Clean drinking water through taps has brought about a radical change in the lives of the residents of Bundelkhand, but challenges remain



MANEESHA SHUKLA

(The writer is a social activist, based in Uttar Pradesh; views are personal)

Bundelkhand has been traditionally a drought-prone area with frequent droughts; the people had to work hard, and travel several kilometres in some cases to get clean drinking water. The Bundelkhand region of India grapples with several issues, including heavy reliance on rainfall, inadequate irrigation, and susceptibility to climate change and droughts. This area, encompassing thirteen economically disadvantaged and less-developed districts, heavily depends on agriculture for both employment and economic progress. While agriculture is pivotal for the region’s economic advancement, it frequently faces disruptions due to recurring droughts. In this situation, clean drinking water is nothing short of a luxury.

Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental right that has long eluded many rural households in India. Recognising this dire need, the ‘Jal Jeevan Mission’ scheme was launched with a singular goal: to provide clean drinking water to every rural family through taps. In Uttar Pradesh, the ‘Har Ghar Jal Yojana’, a part of the ‘Jal Jeevan Mission’, has witnessed remarkable success in the Bundelkhand region, fundamentally changing the lives of its residents. The Jal Jeevan Mission has transformed the Bundelkhand and Vindhya regions, which have suffered from water scarcity for decades. It has turned the dream of having pure drinking water in every household into a reality. The mission has saved these regions from major

drinking water crises, providing clean water to thousands of villages. The mission has involved laying pipelines, constructing water tanks, establishing water treatment plants, increasing water sources, and providing tap water connections at an impressive pace. This initiative has prioritized drought-affected areas, villages with water quality issues, aspirational districts, and those affected by diseases like Japanese Encephalitis and Encephalitis Syndrome. The Jal Jeevan Mission aimed to provide ‘domestic tap connections’ to 2,62,29,815 families by 2024 in Uttar Pradesh. Under the ‘Har Ghar Jal Yojana’, a daily supply of 55 litres of water per villager was promised. As of September 14, 2023, this mission has already made significant strides, with tap water facilities reaching 1,60,20,616 families and benefiting approximately 9,61,23,696 people. The Jal Jeevan Mission is not just about providing clean drinking water but also about creating employment opportunities. Training programs have been initiated, with 13 youths being trained under each Gram Panchayat. These efforts have empowered rural youth by providing training in various trades, including plumbing, electrical work, motor mechanics, fitting, masonry, and pump operation. “We wish to ensure people’s participation so that they become aware and stakeholders. After ten years it is the people who would be managing and oper-

ating these facilities” says Anurag Srivastava, the principal secretary of Uttar Pradesh. In addition to employment opportunities, the mission focuses on making rural women self-reliant by training five women from each village in water testing for clean drinking water. These women use field test kits to check the water quality in their villages, assessing 11 different parameters in sources such as taps, wells, hand pumps, and tube wells. So far, more than 4,87,955 women have been trained in water testing, ensuring the quality of water supplied. The provision of clean drinking water has had a profound impact on public health. It has reduced the prevalence of waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid, and malaria. “There has been a marked fall in diseases in our village after the water plant started operating six months back,” says Hasmukh Parihar, Gram Pradhan. The Bundelkhand region has seen remarkable progress under the Har Ghar Jal Yojana. As of now, 1,280,292 functional household tap connections (FHTCs) have been provided out of a total of 1,419,730 FHTCs in the region. This means that 7,681,752 villagers in Bundelkhand have access to clean drinking water through taps. The Bundelkhand Piped Drinking Water Project is a significant part of the Jal Jeevan Mission. Work on this project is underway in seven cities: Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Banda, Chitrakoot, and Mahoba. There are a total of 71 schemes operating under 35 projects in the Bundelkhand region. These projects include intake wells, water treatment plants, clear water reservoirs, and overhead tanks, all aimed at ensuring a steady supply of clean drinking water. Indeed, Har Ghar Jal Yojana is changing lives but there is a long way to go till total coverage is secured. Besides, issues of the quality of water and its perennial supply must be ensured. While the project is providing the drinking water it has yet to seep into the psyche of the people as a lot of it is still wasted and often people do not use it at all for different reasons. Thus creating awareness must be an integral part of the project and be given priority.

Simultaneous polls are the way forward

Frequent elections impose enormous social and economic costs on the nation, which leads to corruption and disruption



UTTAM GUPTA

The Union Government has set up a committee under the chairmanship of the former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind to examine holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha (LS), state assemblies, panchayats and other local bodies. Even as the committee has kicked off the deliberations (its first meeting is scheduled for September 23, 2023) the idea is being staunchly opposed by many political parties. The opposition isn’t new as in 2019 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened a meeting on June 19 that year to discuss ‘One Nation, One Election’ (ONOE), it was boycotted by about 50 per cent of the parties who were invited.

What are the grounds for opposition?

A major ground for their opposition is that this will be an onslaught on the federal polity, hence, unconstitutional. The parties argue that in a scenario of simultaneous poll to both the LS and all the state assemblies, the national issues will dominate over the state-specific subjects. This may yield fortuitous benefits to the dominant national party as the voter won’t be able to clearly articulate his/her choice while casting a vote for electing members of the assembly.

The national party getting a clear majority in the LS who does not enjoy the confidence of the state subjects on local issues will thus get to rule the states as well. Most opposition parties fear that BJP which enjoys a clear edge at the national level will be able to install its governments across the country. This will violate the federal character of the constitution which envisages running the affairs of the state in sync with local needs and aspirations.

The above line of argument is completely flawed. It presumes that while voting at the same time for the Parliament and the Assembly, the choice of the voter will get obliterated to favour the dominant national party (read: BJP). How could a mere act of asking her to press the button for choosing candidates for two entirely different elections - one for the LS and the other for the state Assembly - around the same time lead to obliteration? It grossly underestimates the ability of the voter to make ‘educated’ and ‘informed’ choices on national and local issues. That this isn’t the case; that the voter is intelligent enough to make the right choice is amply corroborated by the results of LS polls in 2019 when elections to some State Assemblies, viz Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, were held co-terminus.

Despite an overriding national narrative favouring Prime Minister Modi, voters in these States showed clear preference for regional parties, namely the YSR Congress and the Biju Janata Dal, who got an absolute majority in the assembly. Just because the voters exercised franchise at the same time for both the LS and the State did not deter them from giving overriding importance to local issues. The fallacy of the opposition’s argument may be seen from another angle.

In the above example, apart from securing a clear majority in the state Assembly, the YSR Congress and the Biju Janata Dal also cornered a major chunk of seats from the state in the LS. Now, if one were to believe opposition that vot-



THE MOST DEVASTATING IMPACT HAS TO DO WITH ALMOST EVERY POLITICAL PARTY PROMISING MORE AND MORE SOPS TO WIN ELECTIONS

(The writer is a policy analyst)

ers’ choice gets distorted (courtesy, the same timing) then are we to say ‘local issues are dominating over the national issues’?

The crux of the matter is: that the voter is intelligent enough to make a distinction. While voting for a candidate in the LS election, she is guided by national issues whereas, in the Assembly election local issues dominate her mind. She won’t mix up things just because she has to press the relevant buttons around the same time. There is nothing unconstitutional in holding simultaneous elections.

The founding fathers of the Indian constitution had contemplated simultaneous elections only. Indeed, things were on the right track till the mid-60s, when the then ruling dispensation disturbed the apple-cart by the ‘premature’ dissolution of some state assemblies (1968/1969) and LS (1970). Over time, the mismatch got aggravated with the dissolution of many more assemblies. If, during the initial phase (from 1952 to 1967) when elections to both the LS and state assemblies were held concurrently, everything was hunky dory, how come now, restoration of that very dispensation be construed as an assault on federalism.

The existing system wherein a State Assembly goes to polls almost every other year imposes unprecedented social and economic costs on the nation. It is not just the official expense of conducting elections (in a big state like Maharashtra, it can go up to Rs 1,000 crores) but also

several thousand crores being spent by political parties. In turn, this gives a boost to corruption and other unethical practices even as parties seek to raise funds to support the mammoth expenditure.

Then, there is a continuous distraction from issues of governance even as the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) - each time an election exercise is taken up - leads to the stoppage of all major policy decisions that impede development work. The delay in project implementation and resulting cost escalation (a case in point, the delay in completion of the dedicated freight corridor project) imposes an unsustainable fiscal burden.

A third indeed the most devastating impact has to do with almost every political party promising more and more sops to win elections. After the five guarantees promised by the grand old party in Karnataka did the trick, it is giving guarantees in almost all state elections due this year. Others such as AAP are following suit. Such sops have the potential of denuding the state exchequer.

Finally, given the political parties in election mode year after year, no incumbent Government at the Centre has the gumption to implement hard reforms, particularly considering that the party at the helm has stakes in the states as well. A case in point is fertilizer subsidy which the then finance minister Arun Jaitley promised to prune drastically; yet

fertiliser subsidy not only continues but has increased by leaps and bounds (during 2022-23, it was Rs 255,000 crore). To end these maladies, the subsisting system has to go and the ONOE restored in sync with the intent of the authors of the Indian Constitution. This will enable both the Centre and States to focus on governance for a full five years without any distraction. This will help save thousands of crores in election expenses, ensure continuity of policy decisions enabling unhindered project execution and development work, drastically curtail election-oriented populist sops and give a boost to the implementation of hard reforms. Opposition parties have pointed towards uncertainties that could arise if the ruling party loses the vote of confidence before its mandated term. But they need to recognise that this can at best be a rare situation and not a matter of routine (the public gives a mandate to a government to run its full-term and all stakeholders should ensure that this is honoured). Still, such a scenario (albeit rare) can be addressed by either electing a new leader (who enjoys the confidence of the House) or holding a fresh election for the “residual” term.

Apart from required constitutional amendments, the switchover to ONOE will entail some increase in expenses on procuring extra EVM and VVPAT. But that is a very small price for achieving monumental socio-economic gains.

MONEY MATTERS

Luxury carmakers expect bumper sales in festive period

Luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz, Lexus and Audi expect sales momentum to continue in the ongoing festive season with demand remaining robust for high-end cars. With off-take remaining strong, the festive season push could even see the luxury car segment posting its highest ever volumes in a year in 2023. In an interaction with PTI, Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Santosh Iyer noted that the festive season looks very promising as compared with last year. "This year the festive season is spread across four months and we are optimistic as we started on a very positive note, from Onam onwards," he stated. With a strong demand primarily driven by recent launches and buoyant customer sentiment, Mercedes-Benz expects the growth momentum to continue, Iyer said. Lexus India President Naveen Soni said the luxury car market continues to grow in the country. "This year, the demand for high-end cars has brought cheer to the industry."



Deadline to add nominees for mutual fund investors to end soon

All individual demat account holders and mutual fund investors have time till September 30, to nominate a beneficiary or opt out of it by submitting a declaration form, failing which their demat accounts and folios will be frozen, and they will not be able to redeem their investments. This mandate applies to both new as well as existing investors, according to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The move is aimed at helping investors to secure their assets and pass them on to their legal heirs. "This will ensure smooth and hassle-free transfer of securities to the legal heirs of the investors in case of any unfortunate event," Tejas Khoday, co-founder and CEO at FYERS, said. Under Sebi's rule, new investors must either nominate their securities or formally opt out of nomination through a declaration form when opening trading and demat accounts.



Edtech startup selected for Finland's 'Talent Boost' project

Kerala-based educational technology startup has been selected for Finland's 'Talent Boost' project, which aims to attract skilled talent and investors across diverse sectors. Interval, an innovative edtech startup, says it is the sole Indian startup to receive this invitation. The startup, based out of Areekode in Kerala's Malappuram District, caters to more than 25,000 students across 30 countries. It delivers a one-to-one live tutoring model in which educators directly deliver classes to students, ensuring personalised attention for each learner, the company said. The 'Talent Boost' project was initiated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Finland. The selection took place at the global tech gathering 'Experience Tampere', which was held from September 12 to 16 in Finland's city of Tampere, which is known for the "finest startup ecosystem in all of Europe", the company said in a release. Interval's founder Ramees Ali said the support received by the company is exceptional.



RBI likely to keep interest rate unchanged amid high inflation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank is likely to maintain status quo on policy rates for the fourth time in a row at its bi-monthly monetary policy review meeting early next month, as retail inflation continues to remain high and the US Federal Reserve has decided to keep a hawkish stance for some more time, according to experts.

The Reserve Bank had raised the benchmark repo rate to 6.5 per cent on February 8, 2023 and since then it has retained the rates at the same level in view of the stubbornly high retail inflation and certain global factors including elevated crude oil prices in the international market.

The Reserve Bank Governor-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting is scheduled for October 4-6, 2023. The last meeting of the MPC, the highest rating-setting panel, was in August.

"We do expect the RBI to hold on to a status quo position this time as inflation is still high and liquidity tight. In fact, going by RBI forecast on inflation, it



would be above 5 per cent in Q3 too, which will ensure that the status quo prevails for the calendar year for sure and probably Q4 too," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Sabnavis further said there are uncertainties relating to Kharif crop, especially on pulses, which can increase prices.

"The comfort is that there is less concern on growth which is on target," he added.

Although the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation eased a bit to 6.83 per cent in August from 7.44 per cent in the

preceding month in July, it remained above the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent. It may be mentioned that the government has mandated the RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent with 2 per cent margin on either side.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Limited said the headline CPI inflation is expected to ease to 5.3-5.5 per cent in September 2023 from 6.8 per cent in August 2023, benefitting from the halving of the average price of tomatoes as well as a favourable base.

"... We expect the CPI infla-

tion to ease to 5.6 per cent in Q3 FY2024 and further to 5.1 per cent in Q4 FY2024, amid upside risks to food inflation on account of the impact of uneven and sub-par monsoons and low reservoir levels on Kharif yields and Rabi sowing, respectively," she said.

Nayar said ICRA expects the MPC to remain on hold in October 2023 policy, while continuing to demonstrate caution amid a cloudy outlook for food inflation and elevated crude oil prices.

The Reserve Bank has projected CPI inflation at 5.4 per cent for 2023-24, with Q2 at 6.2 per cent, Q3 at 5.7 per cent and Q4 at 5.2 per cent, with risks evenly balanced. CPI inflation for Q1, 2024-25 is projected at 5.2 per cent.

On his expectations from the next bi-monthly monetary policy, Sanjay Bhutani, Director, Medical Technology Association of India (MTAI) said the RBI has gone along with the market sentiment of retaining the benchmark interest rate at 6.5 per cent for quite some time now.

Real estate fractional ownership mkt touches Rs 4K cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fractional ownership of real estate is gradually gaining acceptance among investors as assets under management have touched Rs 4,000 crore, according to a report.

TruBoard Partners, a tech-enabled real asset management company, has come out with a report on fractional ownership.

Many private companies have set up fractional ownership platforms that allow investors to own a fraction of real estate assets. "Fractional ownership typically involves the ownership of an underlying real estate asset among multiple investors."

This lowers capital requirements and facilitates participation of a larger set of players in real estate asset ownership," the report said.

Investors infuse their fund in securities issued by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), established by the fractional ownership platform.

G20 DECLARATION

Govt must give big push to MSMEs: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The declaration of G20 nations under India's presidency should spur the government to give a big push to the MSME sector by simplifying the regulatory process and enhancing their access to affordable capital, say experts.

The commitments made in the G20's New Delhi declaration with regard to the MSMEs ought to be followed by the member nations as the sector has the potential to generate employment and promote sustained growth.

The New Delhi Declaration adopted early this month said the G20 recognise that startups and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are natural engines of growth. They are key to socio-economic transformation by driving innovation and creating employment.

"We welcome the establishment of the Start-up 20 Engagement Group during India's G20 Presidency and its continuation," it said.

Chairman of CII Delhi State



Council and MD and CEO of Samtel Avionics Limited Puneet Kaura said the MSME is considered important the world over and the G20 declaration has once again underlined the need for extending financial and non-financial support by the governments to this sector.

"It was heartening for MSME to have received the due recognition by the G20 under India's presidency. These promises, however, should not remain on paper but must result in action on the ground as the sector has immense potential to generate quality employment across the country

and contribute to the country's exports which have been suffering on account of global problems," he said.

Bhagyashree Bhansali, CEO of The Disposal Company (TDC), said that to further promote startups/MSMEs, the government should simplify regulatory processes, enhance access to affordable capital, foster industry-academia collaborations for innovation, and provide targeted skill development programmes. Creating robust incubation and mentorship ecosystems will also nurture entrepreneurship and innovation in India.

Markets to focus on global trends, trading activity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global trends, trading activity of foreign investors and movement of oil benchmark Brent crude would dictate terms in the domestic markets this week, analysts said.

Equity markets, which fell nearly 3 per cent last week, may face volatile trends amid the monthly derivatives expiry on Thursday.

"This week marks the September month Futures and Options (F&O) expiry, which is expected to bring about volatility in the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Concerns like rising crude oil prices, firm US dollar index and treasury yields coupled with continuous FII selling have been denting the sentiment in the markets, Amol Athawale, Vice President - Technical Research, Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

"Global and domestic macroeconomic data, trend in global stock markets, crude oil prices, movement of rupee against the dollar, investment by FIIs (Foreign Institutional Investors) and DIIs (Domestic Institutional Investors) will be in focus. "Market will take further cues from some key events



such as the US GDP data, UK GDP and Eurozone inflation," Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services Ltd, said.

In the past week, the BSE benchmark fell 1,829.48 points or 2.69 per cent, and

the Nifty declined 518.1 points or 2.56 per cent.

Equity benchmark indices stayed on the back foot for the fourth straight session on Friday.

"Last week has seen significant profit-booking in the

market, primarily driven by a steep decline in HDFC Bank, weak global cues, and substantial selling by foreign institutional investors. The global markets are facing challenges, particularly after the ultra-hawkish FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) policy," Meena said.

After reaching record high levels, equity benchmark indices fell last week amid a weak trend in global markets. "While the FOMC kept key interest rates unchanged in their recent meeting, the markets reacted negatively to the US Fed's hawkish stance on interest rates."

As many as 412 infra projects show cost overruns of Rs 4.77 L cr



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 412 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.77 lakh crore in August this year, an official report said.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,762 projects, 412 reported cost overruns and as many as 830 projects were delayed. "The total original cost of implementation of the 1,762 projects was Rs 25,01,400.62 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 29,78,681.31 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,77,280.69 crore (19.08 per cent of original cost)," the min-

istry's latest report for August 2023 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till August 2023, is Rs 15,57,188.10 crore, which is 52.28 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

However, it stated that the number of delayed projects decreased to 624, if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion. Further, it stated that for 339 projects, neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of the 830 delayed projects, 194 have overall delays in the range of 1-12 months, 190 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 323 projects for 25-60 months and 123 projects have been delayed for more than 60 months.

ONGC signs up HPCL for sale of oil from Mumbai offshore fields

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has signed an agreement to sell crude oil it produces from Mumbai offshore fields to HPCL - the second such agreement in as many months, as India's top oil and gas producer prefers term contracts over auctions where refiners hammer deep discounts.

In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, ONGC said it has inked "term agreement with HPCL for sale of crude oil from Mumbai offshore."

While it did not give details, sources aware of the matter said the pact for sale of about 4.5 million tonnes per annum of crude oil to Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd's (HPCL) Mumbai refinery. "This is the second term

agreement sealed for sale of Mumbai Offshore crude oil post marketing freedom," ONGC said.

Last month, ONGC had signed a similar pact to sell 4 million tonnes per annum plus an optional 0.5 million tonnes of crude oil to Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), which too has a refinery to convert the crude oil into fuels like petrol and diesel at Mumbai.

ONGC produces 13-14 million tonnes per annum of crude oil from its fields in the Arabian Sea, off the Mumbai coast.

In June last year, the government abolished a rule that said oil from blocks awarded prior to 1999 must be sold to government-nominated customers, mostly state refiners.

FPIs' outflow in equities crosses Rs 10,000 cr mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have pulled out over Rs 10,000 crore from Indian equities in the first three weeks of September, primarily due to rising US interest rates, recessionary fears, and overvalued domestic stocks.

Before the outflow, FPIs were incessantly buying Indian equities in the last six months from March to August and brought in Rs 1.74 lakh



crore during the period.

Mayank Mehra, smallcase, manager and principal partner at Craving Alpha, believes that strong economic growth prospects, attractive valua-

tions, and government reforms could support foreign investment flows in the next month.

"Since valuations remain high even after the recent pullback and US bond yields are attractive (the US 10-year bond yield is around 4.49 per cent) FPIs are likely to press sales so long as this trend persists," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Percentage of Indians appearing for TOEFL rising

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The percentage of Indians appearing in TOEFL to pursue secondary education and certifications abroad has seen a gradual increase over the years while those taking the test for immigration purpose has declined, according to Educational Testing Service (ETS).

The Princeton-based ETS, which conducts the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE), said the trend reflects the shifting aspirations of the younger demographic.

According to data exclu-

sively accessed by PTI, the percentage of Indian test takers for licensure, certification or to attend secondary school abroad, has gone up from 5.83 per cent of the total aspirants in 2021 to 7.77 per cent in 2022. During the same period, the percentage of Indian test takers appearing in TOEFL for employment or immigration has declined from 8.19 per cent to 7.22 per cent.

Top officials at ETS have confirmed that the trend is being observed since 2018.

The data showed that the percentage of Indians appearing in TOEFL to attend a graduate or postgraduate business programme/a graduate or post-



graduate programme, other than a business programme, has increased from 70.84 per cent in 2021 to 71.87 per cent in 2022.

"From our data, we observed a growing trend of secondary education students opting for

the TOEFL test. This trend is testimony to the shifting aspirations of the younger demographic, especially in their pursuit of international education," Sachin Jain, the Country Manager of ETS India and South Asia, told PTI.

There was a 53 per cent growth in Indian TOEFL test takers in 2021 compared to the previous year. In 2022, the number of test takers saw a 59 per cent rise over 2021.

"There are so many industry reports that talk about the number of Indian students heading abroad hitting 2.5 million in the next three to five years. So that, I think, is a very strong macro push that is happening," Jain said.

"The second thing is, I think there is a lot more, I would say enablement by foreign countries towards Indian talents... another big macro kind of pull which is happening right from Australia, Canada and the UK,

the big destination markets as we call them like all of them have changed," he added.

The top cities in India with the highest number of test takers are New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, Hyderabad, Gurugram, Chennai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad.

Starting July 26, ETS executed a series of changes in the English language proficiency test to create an optimal experience for those taking it. Reducing the duration to less than two hours instead of three and allowing the candidates to be able to see their official score release date upon completion of the test, were among a few of the changes.



BABY INCOMING! VIKRANT MASSEY, SHEETAL THAKUR ANNOUNCE PREGNANCY

Actors Vikrant Massey and Sheetal Thakur on Sunday announced they are expecting their first child. The couple, who tied the knot in 2022, shared the news on Instagram. The baby is due next year, they said.

"New beginnings. We are expecting, Baby coming 2024," Massey and Thakur posted on their respective official accounts.

Massey, 36, and Thakur, 30, who began dating in 2015, have worked together in the Ekta Kapoor-backed series *Broken But Beautiful* (2018). Thakur is also known for her work in films such as *Chhappad Phaad Ke*, Massey will next be seen in *12th Fail*, a movie directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

Millie Bobby Brown tells why she considered blocking her mom on Tiktok

Actress Millie Bobby Brown, best known for her role in the sci-fi-horror-series *Stranger Things*, said that she once considered cutting off her mom from Tiktok due to her constantly sending videos of sad animals on the platform.

The 19-year-old English actress revealed in an interview with Buzzfeed, that while she doesn't often send memes or TiktTok videos to others, she receives "many" from her mom, but they just aren't ones that she likes to see, reports People. "I have been contemplating blocking her," Brown teasingly admitted during the interview, adding that her mom often sends "sad, sad TiktToks of dogs being rehabilitated."

She continued: "But I've now

had to come forward and tell her, you know, 'I cannot have any of this end sadly because I walk right onstage for something really important, and I just watched a cat be hit by a car.'"

The *Enola Holmes* actress jokingly added that despite telling her mom that she never wanted to be sent the videos "ever again," her mom noted: "But, you know, it does happen." The mother-daughter pair did eventually come to some sort of agreement.

"And I'm like, 'Let's not make this normal. This isn't normal.' So we have made an agreement now to only send happy videos..."

Brown, who began filming *Stranger Things* at the age of 12 making her first appearance as the psychic character Eleven has said that she is ready to move on from the series, after it concludes its finale with Season 5.

"I think I'm ready. It's been such a huge factor in part of my life, but it's like graduating high school, it's like senior year."



Priyanka Chopra Jonas hails passing of women's reservation bill as a 'step in the right direction'

Terming the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill a "historic milestone", actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas said the next step would be its swift and effective implementation. Priyanka took to her Instagram stories on Sunday and welcomed the passing of the long-pending bill, named Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, in the Parliament earlier in this week.

"Inspiring a new age with this historic milestone... The passing of the women's reservation bill - 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' is indeed a step in the right direction, but the crucial

next phase is its swift and effective implementation," the actor, now based out of Los Angeles, wrote.

"Here's to an India that truly supports and empowers its women," she added.

The bill to reserve one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women received the parliamentary nod on Thursday as the Rajya Sabha unanimously voted in its favour. The Lok Sabha passed it on Wednesday. It will now require the approval of a majority of the state assemblies.

The reservation, however, will come into effect only after the completion of the census and delimitation exercises.

In the past, actors Kangana Ranaut, Bhumi Pednekar, Tamannaah Bhatia, Kirti Kulhari have voiced their support for the bill.



Leonardo DiCaprio borrowed diplomatic car to avoid traffic jams

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio reportedly dodged traffic by zipping around in a diplomatic car.

The Oscar-winning actor, 48, is rumoured to have been avoiding London's jams after being loaned the luxury bright blue Range Rover with blacked out windows by an Ivory

Coast official, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"It's no secret that Leo has friends in high places but even by his standards this is well connected. All diplomatic cars are clearly recognisable via their number plates and more often than not the person at the wheel has diplomatic immunity so speeding or jumping a red light now and again wouldn't be a concern," a source told The Sun.

"He even had it drop him off and pick him up at Chiltern Firehouse, where he likes to hang out in the capital. It's alright for some, eh?"

The usual speeding rules London's millions of drivers

are bound by are generally dodged by diplomatic cars like the one said to be used by Leonardo from his West African connection. Even though cars are technically still held to UK rules of the road, they are often ignored by the police when it comes to traffic offences and are driven by chauffeurs or security exempt from prosecution under diplomatic immunity.

The actor was spotted partying with models Georgia Grace Martin, 28, and Nour Rizk, 23, at the Chiltern Firehouse on Saturday, September 16. He shielded himself behind a face mask and donned one of his signature LA Laker's

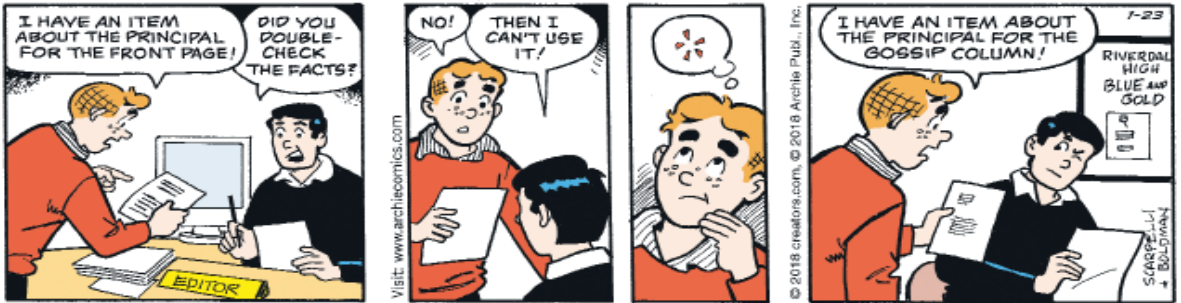
baseball caps as he arrived at the celebrity spot.

DiCaprio has been hit with more backlash over his taste for younger models after he was seen publicly kissing Italian model Vittoria Ceretti, 25, in Ibiza last week. The pair were spotted during a recent visit to Hi Ibiza nightclub on the Spanish island.

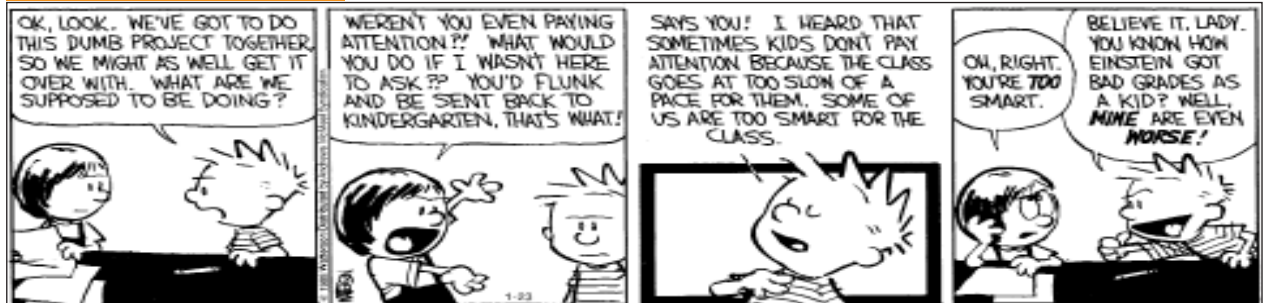
Critics joked online he "won't be looking at her from next year" when she turns 26, as the actor has a reputation for only dating women 25 or under.

FUN


ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



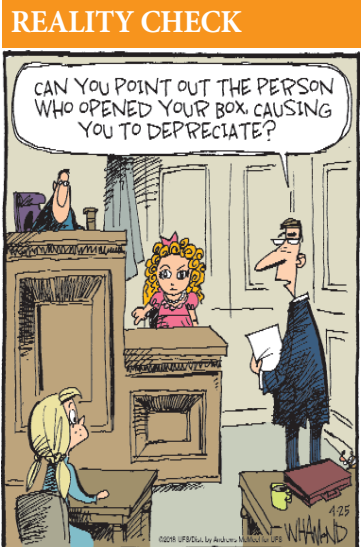
NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
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			12	
13				
14	15	16	17	18
19				

SUDOKU

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

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

6 A machine in a kitchen

8 Frequently

10 A room just under the roof

13 A country famous for making watches

14 Imagine things while you are asleep

17 Normal

19 A large African animal with a horn on its nose

7 Thinks over

9 More than is needed

11 Speaks

12 Not many

15 A door out of a building

16 This orbits the Earth

17 Second-hand

18 On

DOWN

1 Fog

2 Skinny

3 Molten stuff from a volcano

4 Closed

5 A large reptile with a long body and sharp teeth

SOLUTION

W	O	U	N	D	S	A	C	R	O	S	S
A	C	R	O	S	S	A	C	R	O	S	S
L	E	A	D	P	L	A	I	N	G		
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KRIKA KAMRA

I HAD NO FEAR OF GETTING EARMARKED



MAKING A HUGE STATEMENT FOR HERSELF IN THE OTT WORLD IS ACTRESS KRITIKA KAMRA. ALL SET TO GET INTO THE SKIN OF A SAVAGE GANGSTER, SHE GETS CANDID WITH *THE PIONEER* ABOUT *BAMBAI MERI JAAN*, PREPARING FOR HER CHARACTER, AND MORE.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

After eating into colossal television viewership—Kritika Kamra has moved away from those classic sanskaar and sindoos scenes and looked long and hard. She's here exercising her control over some remarkable OTT projects starting opposite A-listers! Now offering so much more of her creativity, in an exclusive interview with us, *Bambai Meri Jaan* fame shared, "I am not a Bombay girl. In the initial years, the film industry was just my day-to-day routine. So my introduction to this world has been through movies and books. But there was enough reportage about the underbelly of the Mumbai mafia. So our characters are based on reportage only. Even though I had a very romantic image of Bombay, now I know a lot more. Our dialogue writers are from the south of Bombay, so they knew all the insights!" Questioning the idea of crime and punishment, the actress further developed into how happy she was to be a part of a fresh story like this. "I wretchedly wanted to play the role of a gangster. You know why? We hardly have women gangsters as criminal bosses. There is only drama shown, not a savage gangster who is a woman. Enough of love interests! Or else the show is driven on the basis of a moral compass, but here I was—a fully involved hoodlum part of the main

gang. There's not much reference for it, by the way." A big-budget tentpole show and its smart packaging made us wonder more about what Kritika had to offer. She replied, "All said and done, I didn't take the pressure at all. As an actress, we can't do things in isolation; we are as good as the script at the end of the day. I was so fortunate to be working with Excel Entertainment because they produce quality content. The director has spent almost five years of his life on this show. The script was almost like reading a book to me! We were already bogged down by how critics would receive it, so I didn't want to do anything differently." Taking us through the process, the *Kitni Hai Mohabbat* fame spoke, "I was given the backstory of it already; I was supposed to get the dialect right. And I don't like to ape anybody else; I like to use my own imagination. How I even sat on a chair was so important for the makers. I wasn't trying too hard." Now that the series had put together some old stories, there were presumptions too. Sharing those, the actress said, "We knew there would be comparisons because there's the mention of Dongri and the mention of mafias during the seventies. But this is not a biopic! I had no fear of getting singled out. Watch the show because it's cinematic. The world is authentic, but the characters are fictitious. This is what is

called cinematic liberty, right? The Mumbai Mafia doesn't exist today; it was the tabloid version. Then we shot at very few live locations. A set was built twice! It was like a mini-city in itself. It wasn't a facade. It wasn't just the exteriors; you could really go inside, open the cupboards, and find stuff. The production details were as such! I was transported into a different era. We used to spend twelve hours a day." They even hosted a special screening of it in London. She expressed, "It was such a cool moment for me to pose for the camera against the backdrop of such a beautiful city landscape where my own show is being promoted. An Indian series was getting global recognition once again! Avinash and I were the representatives. The citizens of London got to see the era of old Bombay, and they were quite impressed. Our digital hoardings were put up on Times Square."

We hardly have women gangsters as criminal bosses. There is only drama shown, not a savage gangster who is a woman. Enough of love interests! Or else the show is driven on the basis of a moral compass, but here I was—a fully involved hoodlum part of the main gang.

Heightening the Indian cinema on the global stage

A prominent filmmaker is with us today—Shaili Sanghvi is a writer, director, and producer located in Los Angeles, who has gained a lot of traction in the entertainment industry. She offered her views about films to us and all about her film-making process.

To illustrate, "Ahmedabad gave me the push to start. With my undergraduate in Mass Communication as I moved to Mumbai, I got exposed to being on a real set for the first time with Zee! And that is when I decided that this is it—this is what I want to do. Los Angeles has been a different ball game all together. While working in India, it exposed me to the creatives of the industry, LA taught me the technical part of it making it a perfect combination."

Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Zoya Akhtar are two so different and yet unique in their way of story telling. Shaili is always attempting to take inspiration from them in her films. She loves the humane layers of grey Zoya Akhtar adds to her characters. She makes them so easy to relate to that is why audiences love her characters. May that be Hritik and his defense mechanism of overworking or Tara from *Made in Heaven* and how she was taught to always be the survivor and do what it takes for it. With maestro Sanjay Bhansali, his each frame is worth studying. So Shaili loves his use of colours to show the emotions and personality. Like in *Bajirao*

Mastani his colour palate changes as and when Mastani starts getting a little more acceptance, each frame is designed in a way that no matter where you pause, it is a visual marvel.

The acclaimed filmmaker continued, "When I made my first film, I had no idea about so many things. Production design, sync sound or lighting. I borrowed a friend's DSLR and shot at my house. My parents ended up doing the set dressing and my friends ended up acting for me. It was a complete guerrilla shoot. Only when I went on a real set, I realised there is so much more to consider before even getting on the floor to shoot."

At Zee, she wasn't even out

cast go through which is often unnoticed by a layman. Besides, "Honestly, sometimes being a woman, you have to be a little more assertive to for your work to have the attention it deserves. But overtime, I realised that if your work is good, you get the respect you deserve. There is no reason to not be your confident self. For instance, Ektaa Kapoor is a genius. Since I was her creative associate, I got to see her in every aspect, and god does she excel in all of those. I have seen her give seasonal arcs for shows in like five minutes. She is brilliant in what she does, so deserving of all the accolades she has."

There are quite a lot of differences actually. Like an air



Filmmaker Shaili Sanghvi, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing her insights on the filmmaking process, women filmmakers, and more.

step right on the beat with difficult camera movements within two takes. Especially the last shot of the film. It is a 360-degree shot where we merge the past and present and see both characters two times in different costumes in the same shot. That was the most difficult to shoot. The whole crew was running around to make that happen. But when it did, it looked so good, it was all worth the effort."

When she got her first award, she was sitting in the audience and they said her name. For a second she froze because honestly she didn't expect to win. It took her a minute to get up and go to the stage to receive the award. It felt surreal to talk about the film and the process with fellow filmmakers and get appreciation on that. Shaili's quantum leap! "I love writing my own films. When I am working on a project, I eat sleep breathe that project, those characters. So when I do that, I am very aware of the flaws that I want to include in my character and the reason behind that behaviour. I like keeping my character grey because that is how we are as humans. We act according to our own context and situation and so should the characters in movies. There is no perfect hero. The last two projects that I did were both Indian stories talking about different aspects of Indian culture. This would be my attempt to clear misconceptions about our culture

and show the real essence of it in different stories."

The global exclusive also said that film festivals are a great way of getting feedback on your films especially from fellow filmmakers. While they work as a good critics system it is also a great way of appreciation for your work. Getting nominated and awards from international film festivals validates your belief in the project and your craft, which one could use often in this extremely competitive industry. Currently, she is working on the post-production of two of her films which she is hoping to get out by November! Along with this, she is also working on the pre-production of a couple of other films including shorts and a series.

Understanding PCOS and fertility Keeping an eye on the do's and don'ts

Globally, there are approximately 100 million women grappling with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). Its most prevalent symptoms encompass irregular menstrual cycles, abdominal weight gain, hirsutism characterised by excessive body hair, particularly on the stomach and chest, as well as frequent acne breakouts. In certain instances, individuals with PCOS may experience hair thinning and infertility. Diagnosis of PCOS entails a comprehensive medical history review, a general physical examination, and diagnostic procedures such as ultrasound scans to identify cysts, along with blood tests to assess androgen and hormone levels that can contribute to PCOS.

Treatment typically involves dietary modifications and an increase in physical activity. Gynaecologists may also prescribe oral contraceptives to regulate menstruation and diminish acne occurrences. PCOS arises due to heightened androgen production by ovarian cells, which subsequently exerts an influence on the pituitary gland. Hyperandrogenism is responsible for amenorrhoea, resulting in irregular or missed menstrual periods.



PCOS affects your chances of conceiving

Irregular Ovulation: One of the primary mechanisms through which PCOS affects fertility is by inducing irregular ovulation or preventing it entirely. The absence of consistent egg release makes conception more challenging.

Hormonal imbalances: PCOS disrupts the balance of hormones in the body, particularly insulin and luteinizing hormone (LH). These imbalances can further hinder ovulation and affect the quality of eggs released.

Increased risk of miscarriage: Those with PCOS may face an increased likelihood of miscarriage due to hormonal imbalances and other factors linked to the condition.

The dos and don'ts for those trying to conceive while dealing with PCOS

DO'S

Seek advice from a fertility or gynaecological specialist: If you have PCOS and are attempting to become pregnant, it is crucial to consult with a healthcare professional, preferably a reproductive endocrinologist or fertility expert. They can offer customised advice and treatments designed to address your unique requirements.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle: Adopt a balanced diet and engage in regular physical activity to help manage weight and insulin levels. Maintaining a healthy weight can improve fertility in individuals with PCOS.

Monitor your cycle: Track your menstrual cycle and use ovulation prediction kits to help pinpoint when ovulation occurs. This information can assist in timing intercourse for optimal chances of conception.

Consider medications: Your healthcare provider may prescribe medications such as clomiphene citrate or letrozole to stimulate ovulation. These drugs can be effective in regulating the menstrual cycle and enhancing fertility.

Manage stress: Stress can exacerbate PCOS symptoms and impact fertility. Explore relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, or mindfulness to reduce stress levels.

DON'TS

Delay Seeking Help: If you've been trying to conceive for an extended period without success, don't wait too long before seeking professional assistance. Early intervention can increase your chances of a successful conception.

Overlook other factors: While PCOS is a significant factor in fertility issues, it's crucial to consider other potential factors, such as your partner's health and any additional underlying conditions. Comprehensive testing can identify any coexisting issues.

Self-medicate: Avoid self-prescribing fertility medications or herbal remedies without consulting a healthcare provider. These substances may interact with your PCOS or other medications and cause complications.

Neglect emotional support: Infertility can be emotionally challenging. Don't underestimate the importance of seeking emotional support from friends, family, or support groups. Counselling or therapy can also be helpful in managing the emotional aspects of fertility struggles.

PCOS can certainly influence the likelihood of achieving pregnancy, but it's not an insurmountable hurdle. With appropriate medical direction, lifestyle modifications, and following the recommendations provided in this article, numerous individuals grappling with PCOS can effectively achieve their goal of conceiving and creating the families they aspire to have. Keep in mind that every individual's path is distinctive, and it's vital to seek professional guidance and assistance to navigate the complexities of PCOS and infertility.

(The author, Dr. Lavi Sindhu, is a consultant at Birla Fertility & IVE, Gorakhpur.)



Iyer, Gill, Sky fire India to 399/5

PTI ■ INDORE

Shubman Gill continued his sensational run with a fifth ODI hundred of the year while Shreyas Iyer hit a timely ton under pressure to fire India to a record 399 for five against Australia in the second game here on Sunday.

Gill (104 off 97 balls) and Iyer (105 off 90 balls) shared a stroke-filled 200-run stand off 164 balls after Ruturaj Gaikwad (8) missed out on a batting beauty.

Suryakumar Yadav (72 not out off 37 balls) and skipper K L Rahul (52 off 38 balls) plundered a pedestrian-looking Australian attack in the death overs to provide the final flourish for India.

The last 10 overs yielded 103 runs as India racked up their highest-ever total against Australia in ODIs.

The Holkar Stadium tends to produce high-scoring games and Sunday's game proved no exception.

Gill's peerless form is an ominous reminder to rivals

ahead of next month's World Cup.

It was a second consecutive ODI hundred for the 24-year-old at this venue, having hammered 112 off 78 balls against New Zealand earlier this year when India ended with a match-winning 395.

Unlike Iyer, Gill began slowly on Sunday, collecting nine off his first 19 balls before going after the Aussie bowlers with disdain.

He was unstoppable after his first strike which was a straight six off pacer Sean Abbott in the ninth over.

Cameron Green tried a short one against Gill who was happy to pull him away for a six over fine leg. But the rain caused a 40-minute delay, putting a temporary halt to the entertainment.

Both Gill and Iyer, who struggled with cramps towards the end of his innings, continued to find boundaries after resumption.

The highlight of Gill's knock was how frequently he danced down the track against



SHREYAS IYER WAS THE FIRST TO COMPLETE THE CENTURY, WHICH IS ALSO HIS THIRD IN ODIs, WHILE SHUBMAN GILL GOT TO THE MILESTONE, HIS SIXTH IN THE FORMAT, 19 BALLS LATER.

the fast bowlers while Iyer's aggressive intent from ball one stood out in a scenario where he was desperately searching for runs.

Both Iyer and Gill got their half-centuries with straight sixes, off debutant Spencer Johnson and Green respectively.

Conditions were ideal for the batters but Australian

attack, missing the likes of Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, looked short on ideas. Lead spinner Adam Zampa too could not stem the flow of runs.

Iyer was the first to complete the century, his third in ODIs, while Gill got to the milestone, his sixth in the format, 19 balls later.

When both the batters departed, Rahul and Kishan (31 off 18) played some bold strokes to up the scoring rate.

Suryakumar, who had to change his game in the previous match to adapt to the needs of ODI cricket, came out to bat in the 41st over.

In the T20 context, it was an ideal time for him to come and explore his 360 range from ball one. He did just that to power India to a formidable total.

His innings included four sixes in a row off Green in the 44th over. The towering pacer conceded 103 runs in his 10 overs, so symbolic of their wretched outing with the ball on the day.

Iyer settles middle-order debate with timely hundred

PTI ■ INDORE

India might be treating the ongoing ODIs against Australia as a warm-up exercise before the World Cup but Shreyas Iyer had all to play for going into the three-match series.

The 28-year-old has had to deal with his share of injuries since making his international debut back in 2017.

The Asia Cup that India won marked his comeback from a back surgery after six months but a back spasm in the middle of the tournament meant he only got to bat once over the course of two weeks.

Considering what he has gone through the year, especially the range of emotions in the last one month, a third ODI hundred could not have come at a better time for him.

Iyer was India's designated number four before the injury pegged him back and a virtual no show in the Asia Cup meant his place in the playing eleven was far from secure.

In the meantime, Ishan Kishan also made a strong claim for a middle-order spot with a few good knocks.

Iyer had a lot to prove in the Australia series and a run-out in the first ODI showed that luck too was not on his side. However, he made his own luck at the high-scoring Holkar Stadium on Sunday.

When he walked out to bat at number three, he had Gill at the other end like he had on Friday when got run out attempting a single.

The mix up might have played on his mind but in a high-pressure scenario, Iyer oozed confidence from the start and showed the same faith in Gill while taking a quick single to get off the mark.

Iyer is known for his belligerent play against the spinners but he was equally effective against the pacers.

He began with a lofted hit off debutant Spencer Johnson before producing a couple of crisp cover drives off Josh Hazlewood. As Gill took his time to get going in the powerplay, Iyer found the gaps with ease.

An odd short ball was directed at Iyer deliberately but he was



quick to put it away.

An aerial strike over cover off Sean Abbott pretty much confirmed that Iyer was in his elements. The 45-minute rain delay did not disturb his rhythm and he returned to do what he does best: take the attack to the spinners.

After slapping left-arm pacer Johnson for a straight six to bring up his fifty, Iyer punished leg-spinner Adam Zampa for bowling a half-tracker and his third six came in the following over from offie Matthew Short, a massive hit over wide long-on.

Strike rotation was also a key part of his innings comprising 39 singles.

Iyer completed a memorable hundred with a single off Zampa in the 30th over. The roar from him after reaching the milestone was understandable considering the series of events over the past six months.

The much needed runs from his bat might have come on a belter of a track and against an ordinary looking Australian attack.

But it might just be enough to settle the middle-order debate going into the World Cup at home.

Indian women to face SL for gold

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Pooja Vastrakar bowled a sharp and incisive spell to take the Indian women's cricket team to its maiden Asian Games final, crushing Bangladesh by eight wickets in a lop-sided semi-final here on Sunday.

Right arm seamer Vastrakar, who replaced Anjali Sarvani in the squad just before leaving India, had career-best figures of 4/17 in four overs as Bangladesh were bowled out for 51 in 17.5 overs -- their lowest ever T20 score against the neighbours.

India will face Sri Lanka in the final on Monday. Lankans defeated defending champions Pakistan, who had won the gold at Incheon Games



2014, by six wickets in the semifinals.

Against Bangladesh, Vastrakar and her young new-ball partner Titas Sadhu (1/10 in 4 overs) extracted all

the juice available from the deck as they bowled quick, with the bounce on offer also helping.

Only skipper Nigar Sultana (12) was able to reach double figures for Bangladesh.

The chase of 52 was a cakewalk as it was achieved in only 8.2 overs. Kanika Ahuja (1 not out) and Jemimah Rodrigues (20 not out) took India home despite losing skipper Smriti Mandhana (7) and Shafali (17) cheaply.

It was also sweet revenge for the women's team, who were forced to play the second game on the trot without their regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who is serving a two-match suspension.



India enter round of 16 in men's football

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Riding on a Sunil Chhetri strike, the Indian men's football team held Myanmar to a 1-1 draw and progressed to the round of 16 in the Asian Games here on Sunday.

They will play Saudi Arabia in the pre-quarters.

Chhetri scored from the spot in the 23rd minute but it was Rahim Ali who earned the penalty when he was brought down inside the box by Hein Zeyar Lin.

While Lin was shown a yellow card for his sliding tackle, the peerless Chhetri made no mistake in finding the back of the net, in what was a repeat of the act he performed against Bangladesh in the second group game two days ago.

Coming off the bench, Kyaw Htwe found the equaliser for Myanmar when he headed the ball past Dheeraj Singh in the 74th minute at

the Xiaoshan Sports Center Stadium.

However, despite the two teams having same points, India progressed as the runner-up from Group A, as the Chhetri-led side has scored more goals than Myanmar in the tournament.

All in all, it was a creditable performance from the Indians who were thrashed 5-0 by hosts China in their opener, before getting their act together to eke out a scrappy 1-0 win over Bangladesh. China topped the pool.

India showed intent from the beginning but seemed to struggle in the final third. However, they still managed to take the lead in the game thanks to Chhetri's goal.

However, they could not end the group stage on a winning note.

The last time the two teams met, earlier this year in Imphal, India beat Myanmar 1-0.

Indian men lose to South Korea 0-3 in TT quarterfinals; women bow out

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The Indian men's team missed out on an Asian Games bronze medal in table tennis after a second-string South Korea blanked them 3-0 in the quarterfinals here on Sunday.

Harmeet Desai lost the first match 0-3 to An Jaehyun. G Sathiyan tried to put up a fight, but it was not enough to get past Park Ganghyeon as India trailed 0-2 after the first two ties.

The onus was on Achantha Sharath Kamal to bring India back into the contest.

However, things did not quite unfold in the manner the Indians would have liked as the veteran from Chennai went down 2-3 to Oh Junsung.

The defeat would have been even more hurting for the Indians as South Korea's top three players did not even play in the match.



Earlier in the day, Sharath raised his game just in time to help India escape unscathed against Kazakhstan.

But the women's table tennis team imploded against a resilient Thailand to bow out of the Games.

Star Indian paddler Manika Batra failed in both her singles matches as the

women's team lost 2-3 to a resilient Thailand.

The match against Kazakhstan was locked 2-2 when Sharath Kamal produced a face-saving win in the decisive fifth rubber.

Sharath had lost the opening singles tamente 1-3 (11-8, 9-11, 11-6, 11-8) to Krill Gerasimenko, the top-ranked player from Kazakhstan.

The world No. 78 started briskly and ended in the same vein, despite Sharath winning the second game.

Sathiyan accounted for Aidos Kenzhigulov 14-12 11-8 11-5 to level the scores before Harmeet put India ahead. The world No. 69 Indian beat Alan Kurumangaliyev 11-7, 12-10, 11-5.

However, Sathiyan faced stiff resistance from Krill in their reverse singles, but the world No. 107 struggled, eventually losing 5-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-5, 5-11.

Nikhat begins Asiad campaign with dominant win

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

In a rematch of World Championship final, top Indian boxer Nikhat Zareen outclassed Vietnam's Thi Tam Nguyen 5-0 to move to the women's 50kg pre-quarterfinals while Preeti Pawar (54kg) sealed a place in the quarterfinals of the Asian Games here on Sunday.

Two-time world champion Zareen defeated the two-time Asian Champion Nguyen by unanimous

decision.

One of only four boxers to not get a first round bye in the 50kg event despite being the reigning world champion, Zareen controlled the proceedings from the word go.

"I had not expected it (to be a one-sided bout) but my plan was to make it one because it's happening in another country and I didn't want to give any chance to her. My plan was to win the first two round unanimously and then relax in the third,"



Zareen said after the win.

In the opening two rounds Zareen landed accurate punches, rattling her opponent.

Such was her power that the referee was forced to give Nguyen the eight count twice in 30 seconds in the opening round.

Nguyen tried to attack in the second round but Zareen retaliated with strong combination punches, forcing a third eight count upon the Vietnamese boxer.

After rejections, Arvind sings redemption song

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian rower Arvind Singh was a worried man after four failed attempts at cracking the army entrance exam. The son of a farmer didn't wish to follow in his father's footsteps.

But then, having taken in his strides the rejections, he cleared the test in his fifth attempt and joined the Indian Army. Then rowing happened, and things changed for the better.

On Sunday, Singh opened the country's account at the Asian Games with a silver medal in men's lightweight doubles sculls event along with Arjun Lal Jat.

"For a farmer's son, joining Army was the only option I had... Otherwise I would have been forced

to do farming to make ends meet," Singh remembered his days of struggle while talking to PTI from the Hangzhou Games Village.

With a sturdy six-foot, one-inch frame, the young athlete also tried his hands in his 'favourite' sports, cricket and athletics, but couldn't make much progress there.

"So, this medal is dedicated to my father, (Vijay Singh) who faced so many hardships but ensured that I keep on trying to get into Indian Army. Despite our financial constraints, there was little pressure on me, and I didn't give up.

"Whatever I'm today is because of my dad, he has made so many sacrifices. I'm sure they would be so happy today."

Singh managed to get into the Indian Army in his fifth attempt,



in 2013, and was picked for the rowing team because of his "tall" 184-centimetre frame, in 2016.

"Forget about knowing the sport, till then, I didn't even hear the word rowing but I learnt the sport and made rapid progress," he said giving credit to his Indian coach Ismail Bag.

The best thing that happened to him was in 2018 when he got his partner Arjun Jat, also a son of a farmer and the duo showed a fine chemistry to make a formidable lightweight Indian double sculls pair.

In the next year, the duo won a silver at the Asian Rowing Championship in South Korea, and they also competed together in the Tokyo Olympics where they finished 11th.

Last year, the duo won the National Games gold in Gujarat and also the Asian Championship.

"But this medal is on top of everything. When I go back home I will get a new cabinet just for this," he said.

At the Fuyang Water Sports Centre on Sunday, the duo had a timing of 6:28.18s to finish behind China's Junjie Fan and Man Sun, who won gold with 6:23.16s.

The Uzbekistan pair of Shakhzod Nurmatov and Sobirjon Safariliev bagged the bronze clocking 6:33.42s.

"It was a tough race and we could have won a gold, but missed it. But we are not disappointed, it's a learning curve and we hope to turn this into a gold in the next edition in 2026," he said.



RAM POTHINENI WANTS TO TAP UNCONVENTIONAL MATTERS

PNS| HYDERABAD

Skanda marks Ram Pothineni's first film with director Boyapati Srinu, as well as his first pan-Indian release. He conducted a couple of interviews with YouTubers to promote the film. Here are some of the interesting points he mentioned! "Skanda is a typical

Telugu film, not a multi-lingual pan-Indian production. We shot it in Telugu only. However, this one is designed for a theatrical experience. So, Hindi audiences who have previously enjoyed my films on their mobile phones and television sets should watch it in Hindi because it provides the best experience in the theaters." Ram remembers something distinct how director Atlee and his wife Priya are his friends. So Atlee introduced him to Shah Rukh Khan. SRK valued Ram Pothineni and treated him with respect and love. He inquired about his film and asked that Ram send the trailer. "He has such a kind heart," says Ram. In fact, "I have done a lot of action films in my career, but

working with Boyapati is a completely different experience. He envisions grandiose action sequences and ensures that they are realized without compromise. We spent 24 days filming Skanda's climax sequence. You can imagine how much time and effort we put in." The Devadasu fame's grandfather served in the military. His mother was raised in Kashmir and Assam. As a result, Hindi is also spoken at home. Since his childhood, he has been listening to Hindi songs at home. His favorite song as a child was *Tujihe Dekha To Ye Jana Sanam* from *Dil Wale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. So he's looking beyond diaspora!



‘Many suggested me to not take risk making movie with newcomer’

The pre-release event of Srikanth Addala's latest film *Peddha Kapu-1* with debutant Virat Karanna was held in the presence of the team and a few special guests. A huge crowd attended the function.

Anasuya Bharadwaj revealed her character name as Akkanna and thanked director Srikanth Addala for giving her such a powerful role in the movie. "You'll see a new Srikanth Addala as a director and as an actor. Virat Karanna is the star in the making."

Chota K Naidu appreciated direc-

tor Srikanth Addala and the team. "Everything about Srikanth Addala is exceptional. His dialogues and acting are too good. In my entire film career, the most surprising film is *Peddha Kapu-1*. This story happens in the 80's. Ravinder Reddy believed in the story and spent a high budget."

Producer Miryala Ravinder Reddy stated that no actor would get such a script or a director for their debut movie and Virat is lucky.

Srikanth Addala said that he never treated Virat as a newcomer. "Many including my close friends

suggested me to not take the risk of making movie with a newcomer. This story will reach many people, only if it is made with a newcomer. This movie is the signature of a common man. There is a Part 2 and this movie is the life of *Peddha Kapu*."

Hero Virat Karanna thanked his director for believing that he could pull off the character of a common man. "First movie is very special for any actor. I have many memories with this movie." The movie *Peddha Kapu-1* is gracing the cinemas on September 29.



Varun Tej's Gandeevadhari Arjuna makes its OTT debut

Mega Prince Varun Tej recently starred in *Gandeevadhari Arjuna*, an action drama directed by Praveen Sattaru. Regrettably, the movie didn't perform well at the box office. Sakshi Vaidya played the leading role.

As previously announced, the film has made its OTT debut on Netflix today. Interestingly, it's not limited to Telugu; it's also available in other major Indian languages – Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada.

The film features a cast including Vinay Rai, Narain, Roshini Prakash, Manish Chaudhari, Abhinav Gomatam, Ravi Varma, Kalpalatha, and Baby Vedain in significant roles. Produced by Sri Venkateswara Cine Chitra, the movie boasts the musical brilliance of Mickey J Meyer. Stay tuned for more OTT updates.



‘Jyothika has always been a mother figure to me,’ says Karthi

According to rumours making the rounds in Kollywood, star Suriya and his wife Jyothika have relocated to Mumbai. Some even speculate that the family is no longer intact. Suriya, however, said that they just moved to Mumbai in order to have children. Karthi, meanwhile, spoke up about the subject and said he saw Jyothika as his mother.

Regarding Jyothika, Karthi brought up the fact that, despite countless comments against Suriya's family being shared online, no one from their family has spoken up until this point. There have been a lot of comments on social media about how Jyothika's involvement is seen as the main reason for the family's split.

However, Karthi expressed his discontent with these remarks and responded, "I've never regarded Jyothika solely as an actress; she has always been a mother figure to me. Likewise, she saw us as her children. Currently, with my mom residing in Mumbai, our home feels empty. It's not our doing that she is apart from us in this house. We cherish our moments with her (Jyothika) and find immense happiness in her presence."

On the work front, Karthi is working on an exciting film titled *Japan*.



‘Animal will show what real violence is,’ hints Sandeep Vanga

Animal, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, delves into a complex father-son relationship amidst a backdrop of extreme bloodshed in the underworld. At its core, it's a bizarre love story between a son who is deeply devoted to his father.

However, the father's frequent absences due to work prevent him from grasping the extent of his son's affection. Paradoxically, this ardent love becomes a source of conflict between them. Ranbir Kapoor, who stars in the movie, has described it as a departure from his usual roles, calling it a crime drama with shades of gray. He admitted that the role challenged him and forced him to elevate his acting skills, pushing him beyond his comfort zone. Sandeep Reddy Vanga has always maintained that it is going to be one of the most violent films to be ever made in India. When people questioned him why he showed so much violence in Arjun



Reddy/Kabir Singh, he answered that he would show what real violence is with his film *Animal*.

The story sounds very interesting, and it would be pretty exciting to see how Vanga will execute it. It is pretty clear that he is a



crazy director, but no one knows how his thinking process works beyond the Arjun Reddy universe, which makes *Animal* a film to watch out for! With *Animal* set for release on December 1, the filmmakers are actively building

excitement. They recently revealed character posters, including Anil Kapoor's, and shared a first look at Rashmika Mandanna's role, intensifying the anticipation for this unique exploration of love, violence, and family dynamics.

Akhil to star next in Lingusamy's directorial

Tollywood actor Akhil was last seen in *Agent*, a movie that faced a lacklustre response at the box office. Since then, there hasn't been any official confirmation regarding his next project, leading to a surge of speculation on social media.

According to the latest buzz, Akhil Akkineni has been considered for the lead role in a film directed by Lingusamy, whose previous work, *The Warrior*, didn't fare well commercially. However, credible sources have

clarified that Akhil is currently not committed to any film and will announce his next project in due time.

Additionally, there is speculation about a potential collaboration between Akhil and an assistant director from the film *Saaho* for his upcoming venture, although specific details remain uncertain.

Well, for now we'll have to wait for more updates on this project and the upcoming films of Akhil.



VIJAY DEVERAKONDA CREATES A SENSATIONAL RECORD ON WHATSAPP

Recently, the most popular messaging app, WhatsApp, introduced a new feature called Channels, which quickly gained global popularity.

Renowned Tollywood actor Vijay Deverakonda was among the early adopters of this feature and has now achieved a remarkable milestone on the platform. He is the first Telugu actor to

amass over 1 million followers on his official WhatsApp channel, a testament to his significant online popularity.

On the professional front, Vijay Deverakonda, who

recently appeared in *Kushi*, is gearing up for his next project, a cop drama directed by Gautam Tinnanuri. Anirudh Ravichander is composing the music for this movie.

