

LEGAL POWER NOT ENOUGH FOR JUDGE ‘Stronger tool is desire to understand human life’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Legal power is not enough for a judge for whom the stronger tool is their desire to understand human life and people's problems, Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a function organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) to felicitate newly appointed judges- Justices Satish Chandra Sharma, Augustine George Masih, Sandeep Mehta and Prasanna B Varale-Chandrachud said with their elevation, the apex court is once again operating at its maximum mandated strength of 34.More importantly, the



top court would benefit from the diversity of their experience, the CJI said.

"Legal power is not enough for a judge. The stronger tool is their desire to understand human life. The journeys of Justice Sharma, Justice Masih, Justice Mehta and Justice Varale demonstrate their commitment to understanding human life and to improving it with the help of our laws," Chandrachud said.

Vigilance raids on HMDA offices

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Vigilance officials reportedly conducted searches at Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) offices. A special team of 50 people reportedly seized files.

The Vigilance surveillance team, which went with an arrest warrant, enquired about the files approved by the two previous directors of the HMDA.

Vigilance officials reportedly seized the files which were given permission in the previous government. Vigilance has reportedly seized all the files on the fourth floor of Maitrivanam. Apart from that, the seventh floor of Swarna Jayanthi complex is also being inspected.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who expressed anger over the destruction of the ponds from online data, warned the GHMC and HMDA officials that raids would take place, four days ago.

ACB also conducted raids in the HMDA offices a few days ago. The files of various zones were checked at the HMDA office in Swarna Jayanthi Complex, Ameerpet.

On the one hand, while the vigilance searches are continuing, on the other hand, CM Revanth Reddy conducted a review on the HMDA.

Cleaning of 6 major river basins on cards Govt ropes in 12 institutes to conduct study



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will undertake the work of cleaning six major river basins on the lines of the Ganga and has roped in 12 top technical institutes to conduct a study and formulate a management plan, Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Wednesday.

Following the success of the Ganga River Basin Management Plan framed by a consortium of seven IITs led by IIT Kanpur, the government on Wednesday signed agreements with different technical institutes for preparing the outlines of river basin management plans for the Narmada, Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery, Periyar, and the Mahanadi.

The agreements were signed between the institutes and the National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

The Mahanadi River Basin Management Plan will be undertaken by IIT Raipur and IIT Rourkela, Narmada by IIT Indore and IIT Gandhinagar, Godavari by IIT Hyderabad and NEERI Nagpur, Cauvery by IISc Bengaluru and NIT Trichy, and the Periyar River Basin Management Plan by IIT Palakkad and NIT Calicut.

Speaking at the event, Shekhawat highlighted that an announcement in this regard was first made by then President Ram Nath Kovind in an address to a joint sitting of Parliament in 2019.

"In 2019, then President Ram Nath Kovind had spoken about working on six river basins in the country on the same level as the work done in the Ganga basin.

Uncover Cong ‘conspiracies’ on Kaleshwaram: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtira Samithi working president and former minister KTR has called on the rank and file of the party to uncover the conspiracies of the Congress government on the Kaleshwaram project.

Peddapalli Zilla Parishad Chairman Putta Madhukar on Wednesday unveiled a document titled 'Facts of the Kaleshwaram project' in Sircilla.

Speaking on this occasion, KTR accused the Congress party of plotting to demolish the Kaleshwaram project for votes in the MP elections. He

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said that the government, which was supposed to remove and repair the three sagging pillars in Medigadda and take up the restoration of the project, was plotting to defame the

BRS party by making false allegations.

The reputation of the project was being tarnished by showing "small technical errors" in the Kaleshwaram project,

NDA likely to get majority in Rajya Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is likely to get a majority in the Rajya Sabha in April this year once the remaining six vacancies under the nominated category are filled and those newly elected take oath.

According to data available with the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, the BJP, which currently has 94 members, gained two seats in the Upper House in the just concluded elections, pushing its own strength to 96.

The strength of NDA, which at present has 113 members, will cross the half-way mark of 123 in the 245-member House in April this year once all nominated members take oath.

At present, there are only six MPs who have been nominat-



ed by the President of India as members in the Rajya Sabha, with some having joined the BJP later. There are a total of 12 nominated members in the House.

The data shows that with the support of some independents and nominated members, the NDA which did not have a majority in the Upper House so far will finally achieve the magic figure this April, helping it get crucial legislations passed in the Council of States.

Disney, Reliance to create...

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Mukesh Ambani said this is a "landmark agreement" that heralds a new era in the Indian entertainment industry and welcomed Disney as a key partner of Reliance group.

"We have always respected

Disney as the best media group globally and are very excited at forming this strategic joint venture that will help us pool our extensive resources, creative prowess, and market insights to deliver unparalleled content at affordable prices to audiences

across the nation," he said.

Walt Disney Company CEO Bob Iger said India is the world's most populous market, and is excited for the opportunities that this joint venture will provide to create long term value for the company.

Govt will facilitate BRS’...

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"KCR was not only the Chief Minister but also the Irrigation Minister. He acted as the Chief Designer, Chief Planner, and Chief Architect of the project. Therefore, KCR should visit Kaleshwaram and tender an apology, not others who know nothing about it," he remarked.Uttam Kumar Reddy recalled that the Congress government and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had invited KCR to the Assembly to speak on the Kaleshwaram project and explain the fiasco and fraud that had occurred in the name of irrigation project. "We even offered to arrange a helicopter for KCR to visit Kaleshwaram, but he is not

coming out," he said.

Interestingly, he noted that leaders not directly involved in the projects were planning to go to Kaleshwaram. Even former minister K Tarakarama Rao had stated that he was not in the loop regarding irrigation projects. "Someone who designed, planned, and did the engineering is not going. The visit of other leaders is only a political gimmick and drama," he emphasized. The Irrigation Minister said that the Director-General of the Vigilance Department had briefed him about the status of the inquiry. The vigilance report would be submitted soon. "Based on the vigilance report, we will file cases against whoever is guilty of the act.

Telugu language is classical: Governor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



"Telugu language means classical language," said Telangana Governor N.T. Ramalinga Reddy. "Speaking Telangana language brings a lot of happiness. Telugu language and culture should be spread throughout."

The Governor participated in the 16th Convocation of Potti Srimamulu Telugu University held at Ravindra Bharati. Degrees were awarded to those who completed PhD in many courses. Later, she said that Telugu should be taught to all the people who speak other languages. She said that there is no short cut to achieve progress, hard work

is the basis.

"Graduation is a big festival. It is our responsibility to give something new to the society. Mother tongue is connected with our life. Telangana language is a classical language. It brings happiness while speaking. There are many Telugu people in many countries. The Telugu language and culture should spread throughout."

Next 5 years will see rapid development, asserts PM

Says NDA will top 400-seat tally in LS polls

PNS ■ YAVATMAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asserted that the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will cross the 400-seat mark in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls and said the next five years will see rapid development in the country.

Speaking at a public rally in Yavatmal district, Modi slammed the Congress over pending irrigation projects in the country, especially in the Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra, where the district is located.

"We (BJP-led NDA) will cross the 400-seat tally this time," Modi said ahead of the Lok Sabha polls which are

likely to be held in April-May. The Lok Sabha has a total of 543 seats.

"The coming five years will see rapid development," the Prime Minister maintained.

He attacked former Union minister Sharad Pawar and said when he handled the agriculture portfolio (in the Congress-led UPA government from 2004 to 2014), financial packages would be announced for farmers, but the money would be siphoned off before it could reach the beneficiaries.

The PM said prior to 2014, the year when the BJP came to power at the Centre, of the 100 families, only 15 had access to piped water in the country.

Lashes out at DMK

PNS ■ TIRUNELVELI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday strongly criticised the DMK in Tamil Nadu for being 'oblivious' to the nation's achievements in space sector, after a newspaper advertisement by a state minister belonging to the party over a spaceport kicked up a row over what the BJP claimed had a 'Chinese flag'. Modi alleged the DMK has disregarded India's success in space technology and demanded that the Dravidian party apologise for featuring China in its advertisement in a daily.

KCR decided even...

Continued from page 1

Increase it to 10,000 cubic metres per day"... We will release all these after vigilance releases their reports."

He said that they were vetting the minutes of the meeting legally so that they could disclose further details of the decisions taken by KCR.Uttam said that the Completion Certificate was given in a fraudulent way.

Contrary to norms, the coffer dam was not removed. "There are dams and barrages that have life of 100 years. It was great KCR who built a barrage that collapsed in 3 years". Uttam said that they would try to restore it by this summer season after they get

NDSA report. "NDSA will tell us how to repair; we will do as advised. If they say to start from a scratch, we will. We have told L&T to take up the repair at their cost"."Our argument for KWDT-2 is, we will ask as per our catchment area - 68% for water sharing", Uttam said.

There is no geographical profile, as per initial reply to NDSA. "The chief designer (KCR) decided on the construction. It is floating structure but constructed it as rigid structure", Uttam said.Uttam Kumar Reddy said that they were planning to do department reorganisation. Chief Minister and Irrigation Minister will visit Karnataka to seek more water for Telangana.

National parties...

Continued from page 1

Besides the BJP and the Congress, BSP, AAP, NPP and CPI-M have declared their income.

The BJP, Congress and AAP collected 49.09 per cent or Rs 1,510.61 crore of national parties' total income from donations through electoral bonds for FY 2022-23.

The BJP received Rs 1294.15 crore through electoral bonds, while the Congress received Rs 171.02 crore and AAP Rs 45.45 crore.

Citing data shared by the SBI in response to its RTI, the ADR said electoral bonds worth Rs 2,797.356 crore were redeemed by parties in FY 2022-23.

Fifty-four per cent or Rs 1510.62 crore of this has been redeemed by national parties.

Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the BJP's income increased by 23.15 per cent or Rs 443.724 crore from Rs 1,917.12 crore in to Rs 2,360.84, the ADR said.

The income of National People's Party (NPP) -- the only party from the northeast to have the national party status -- increased from Rs 47.20 lakh during FY 2021-22 to Rs 7.562 crore during FY 2022-23, a rise of 1,502.12 per cent

or Rs 7.09 crore.

The AAP's income increased by 91.23 per cent (Rs 40.631 crore) from Rs 44.539 crore during FY 2021-22 to Rs 85.17 crore during FY 2022-23.

Between the 2021-22 fiscal and 2022-23 fiscal, the income of the Congress, CPI(M) and BSP decreased by 16.42 per cent (Rs 88.90 crore), 12.68 per cent (Rs 20.57 crore) and 33.14 per cent (Rs 14.50 crore) respectively, it noted, citing their records submitted to the Election Commission.

It also said the BJP declared a total income of Rs 2360.844 crore during FY 2022-23, but spent only 57.68 per cent, which comes to Rs 1,361.684 crore of the total income.

The Congress' total income was Rs 452.375 crore while it spent Rs 467.135 crore, with its expenditure for that year exceeding its total income by 3.26 per cent.

The CPI(M)'s total income was Rs 141.661 crore while it spent Rs 106.067 crore - 74.87 per cent of its income.

Similarly, the AAP's total income was Rs 85.17 crore while it spent Rs 102.051 crore -- its expenditure for that year exceeding its total income by 19.82 per cent.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: Feb 29 04:18 AM to Mar 01 06:22 AM

Shashthi: Mar 01 06:22 AM to Mar 02 07:54 AM

Nakshatram: Chitra: Feb 28 07:33 AM to Feb 29 10:22 AM

Swati: Feb 29 10:22 AM to Mar 01 12:48 PM

Rahukalam: 1:56 PM to 3:23 PM

Yamagandam: 6:42 AM to 8:09 AM

Varjyam: 04:32 PM to 06:18 PM

Gulika: 9:33 AM to 11:01 AM

Amritakalam: 03:07 AM to 04:52 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:05 PM to 12:51 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 33°

Humidity: 43%

Sunrise: 6:35 AM

Sunset: 6:22 PM

Updated: February 28, 2024 5:00 PM

Modi to visit TS in March...

Continued from page 1

The state BJP has already started campaigning for the upcoming elections with the ongoing five Praja Sankalp Yatras covering all the 17 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

In 2019, the BJP had bagged four Lok Sabha seats, which was the party's best-ever performance in Telangana.

In the last Assembly elections, the BJP bagged eight seats in the 119-member state Assembly, a big improvement from its tally of just one seat in the 2018 polls.

Speaker suspends 15...

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The suspended BJP MLAs, who include the leader of the opposition Jai Ram Thakur, initially refused to leave the House -- in an apparent bid to stall the assembly from passing Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu government's Budget through voice vote.

The BJP wanted voting on the Budget, which they felt would reveal that the Congress has lost its majority in the state assembly.

But in the afternoon, the crisis was staved off for the time being as the House passed the Finance Bill by voice vote with no Bharatiya Janata Party member being present. The Speaker then adjourned the session sine die.

Chief Minister Sukhu dismissed speculation that he was resigning. "Neither the high command, nor anyone else has

asked me for resignation," Sukhu told PTI Videos.

Congress stalwart Abhishek Manu Singhvi was defeated by BJP's Harsh Mahajan Tuesday through a draw of lots, after the two candidates bagged 34 votes each.

The result meant that the

TS netas keenly observing...

Continued from page 1

"You see what will happen after the Parliament elections. Their behavior is such. For a very long time they were not in power. So, now suddenly they are in power and have no limits. What is the language used by the Ministers? Keep your responsibilities. After elections, we will know whether it will be Himachal or Karnataka. Today

their own Minister is speaking. We need not have doubts that such a situation may not occur in Telangana. They just have 64 seats."A BRS MLA, who did not want to be named, said: "If it can happen in Himachal, why not in Telangana? The majority is not huge for Congress. We should see how equations change post poll not just in Himachal, but Telangana and Karnataka too."



Regional parties are supporting Modi: CM

The Chief Minister made it clear that government will stand by Christian community

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said that the State government will stand by the Christians who spread the message of peace and love in the society. Medak Diocese Bishop Padmarao, Reverend John George AMJ Kumar, Rev. Sam Abraham, Anil Thomas along with representatives of various churches and independent churches called on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at the Secretariat on Wednesday.

Revanth Reddy said that the regional parties have no relevance in national level elections and all the seats won by regional parties are supporting Narendra Modi. The Chief Minister recalled that KCR won 11 MP seats in 2014 and 9 MP seats in 2019. The BRS party supported abrogation of article 370, GST, demonetisation and anti-farmer bills brought by the Narendra Modi government. KCR supported



Modi at every stage. The Chief Minister appealed to people to support the Congress to form a secular government at the national level.

The Christian delegation explained to the Chief Minister the problems including the encroachment of church properties. In a quick response, the CM made the promise of protecting church properties and facilitating the construction of new churches. Required land will be allocated for Christian burial grounds. The Chief Minister expressed his

willingness to visit the Medak Church again as he visited in the capacity of TPCC President during the Assembly elections.

The Chief Minister said that before Malkajigiri MP election, he discussed many issues with Christian religious leaders in Secunderabad. After being elected as MP, he participated in many celebrations including Christmas. Revanth Reddy reiterated that his government respects religious freedom.

Revanth Reddy said that a frightening situation prevailed after the formation of Narendra Modi government at the center and KCR government in the state in 2014. The chief minister expressed concern that the conditions of living as second-class citizens have come against the spirit of the constitution. The Chief Minister cited the incidents of Manipur and Gujarat saying that when riots and conflicts happened in the past, the rulers

used to suppress them. Today, the rules are behind the conflicts. This is not good for the welfare of the country and everyone should exercise utmost patience. Rahul Gandhi's goal is to love the people and keep all sections of people together. For this, Rahul Gandhi undertook the trip from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and then started the second leg of the trip from Manipur to Gujarat. The Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister did not go to Manipur, where clashes are taking place.

After Rahul Gandhi's visit, the central and state governments came down and controlled the clashes.

A secular government has been established in Telangana, the CM said, appealing to everyone to cooperate in the establishment of a secular government at the Centre.

The Chief Minister also appealed to everyone to support Rahul Gandhi as the Prime Minister.

INTERMEDIATE FIRST-YEAR EXAMINATIONS

‘Not even one minute’ rule proves to be testing time for students across TS

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

‘Not even one minute late’ rule proved to be a testing time for Intermediate first-year students across the state. Though some students made all efforts to reach in time but they could not make it to examination center due to ‘one minute late’ rule as they reached 5 to 15 minutes late. But the authorities did not allow them inside the examination hall citing one minute late rule. But some colleges took the matters into the hands and allowed students inside the examination center.

One of the lecturers of the government college told The Pioneer that “No politician comes in time... no employee comes in time. Even our lecturers will not come in time. However, this one minute late rule introduced due to Corporate colleges. The Corporate colleges leak papers to their students and those students come late to the center while reading answers. However, genuine students suffer in reality due to corporate colleges leaking question papers to their students. Now new trouble the colleges facing is from media. The media is



For representation purpose only

making an issue if allowed or not allowed. So the colleges are following government rules’.

There are traffic snarls-up, there are troubles in the homes of the students because all are not born with silver spoon in their mouth. There are troubles with buses and cabs...there are many other issues. Due to these issues, they are failing to reach in time.

Jyothy, a parent of intermediate first year student, questioned the intermediate board to tell how a girl student will reach in time if the examination center is allotted 6 kilometers

away from her residence that too odd route East Marredpally.

“Girl students will have several problems that cannot be revealed in public. Exam is at 9 am. We faced lot of troubles to reach examination center. My child didn’t write exam very well due to the tension with one minute late rule”, Jyothy told The Pioneer.

Assistant Professor Anand from Osmania University said that ‘one minute late’ rule is a barbaric rule. “If the students do not come to examination Hall in time...they have to

lose their valuable one year...what is this? Corporate colleges find new ways to leak question papers even the government implemented one minute late rule”, he said.

Despite the opposition from all quarters, the Telangana State Intermediate Board persisted in implementing ‘one minute’ rule.

Venkat Reddy, another student's father, told The Pioneer that one minute late rule has been mounting unwanted pressure on students as well as parents. Due to this rule, the students are concentrating their mind on reaching examination center issue instead of the subject they are going to write.

Ramesh, an intermediate lecturer, opined that one minute late rule is a cruel one and it should be abolished immediately. The government has to take serious actions on paper leakers but not to punish the innocent fresh students if comes one minute late, he lamented. He said one or two students at each center comes late due to various reasons but not allowing them inside the examination Hall is atrocious one, he said. One year punishment to the students will lead to various troubles,

Cadbury chocolates contained worms; State food lab says its not safe to eat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Food Laboratory has declared that a sample of Cadbury chocolate was unsafe to consume as it was found to be contaminated with white worms and webs. Hyderabad resident Robin Zaccheus found a worm crawling in a Cadbury chocolate purchased at Ratnadeep Metro in Ameerpet on February 9.

The food laboratory received Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate (Roast Almond) and Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate (Fruit and Nut) for testing. After the test, the laboratory confirmed that the sample contains white worms and webs. Hence, it is considered as unsafe under Section 3.1(zz)(iii)(ix) of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

Robin Zaccheus posted on X, “It is perhaps high time that FMCG companies are made accountable and penalised for supplying unsafe food that our children

consume very often.”

Mondelez India spokesperson said, “We follow the internationally accepted HACCP (Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points) programme, which is the most comprehensive food safety system in the world, to ensure that our products are free from any physical, chemical and microbiological issues. Chocolate like any other food product requires specific care and attention in the distribution chain, retail environment and in storage. Every Cadbury carries the label - ‘Store in a cool, hygienic and dry place’. We have tested the samples of the same batch, as well as other batches manufactured around the same time and found no issues. We are confident that the product has not been affected during the manufacturing process. The quality of our products and safety of our consumers is our highest priority and we remain committed to ensuring our consumers continue to love our products.”

Eggs thrown at Bandi Sanjay’s convoy at PV’s village

PNS ■ BHEEMADEVARAPALLI

Eggs were thrown at BJP MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar's convoy at Vangara under Bheemadevarapalli mandal in Hanamkonda district on Wednesday.

Tension built up in the area when BJP activists reached there in large numbers following the incident.

Bandi Sanjay visited the village as part of his Prajagathi Yatra to seek voter support for the party in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

As part of the Yatra, he visited the residence of former



prime minister PV Narasimha Rao.

Having visited the PV's house, he embarked on his journey to proceed to Mulkanoor when two persons threw eggs at the convoy. They fell on the vehicle in which media persons were

travelling, leading to prevalence of tension in the area.

The BJP leaders alleged that Congress activists resorted to throwing eggs on Bandi's convoy at the instance of the Minister Ponnab Prabhakar.

Bandi Sanjay said in an angry tone that the police remained mute spectators when miscreants threw eggs at his convoy.

I did not need any security from police. Police need not come with the convoy. My party activists will take care of my security,” Bandi Sanjay said in a voice choked with anger.

‘Cong govt conspiring to project Medigadda Barrage as lost’

PNS ■ VEMULAWADA

BRS leader B Vinod has accused the Revanth Reddy Government of conspiring to unleash false narrative that the entire Medigadda barrage is in a dilapidated state though only two or three piers of the total 84 sunk.

The State government is not undertaking repairs to the damaged piers with the intention to project it as if it was unfit for repair. If the barrage got washed away, the water in the barrage run downstream towards the AP. Vinod alleged that Revanth hatched the conspiracy to benefit his political guru N Chandrababu Naidu, he alleged.

Addressing the BRS leaders and activists of Vemulawada constituency here on Wednesday, Vinod said that bringing Godavari waters, which are at a higher altitude, to the fields became feasible only with Kaleswaram project.

Lifting Godavari waters to a height of 400 meters, the BRS



government provided irrigation facility to over one crore acres, he said accusing the Congress of embarking on a vilification campaign on the project. However, the people give no credence to the words of Congress leaders, he observed.

To demonstrate facts to the people, the BRS is arranging a trip to Kaleswaram project on March 1.

Refuting the allegations levelled by CM Revanth Reddy against BRS supremo KCR and BRS working president KT Rama Rao, he observed that the Congress leaders them-

selves were heard commenting that the Congress regime is going to be short-lived. The Congress rank and file would have no faith in the party leaders, he said adding that people were at a loss of comprehension on what the Congress leaders would do.

The BRS emerged as a strong opposition in Telangana with 39 MLAs. Therefore, it should prove its mettle in the forthcoming LS elections, he said. The party position is better with the BRS leadership at the grassroots level. “Let us build the party on a grand scale overcoming the mistakes,” he said.

The BJP and Congress did not have the capacities that the BRS has had, he observed.

The BJP has been suffering from over confidence, while the Congress has low self-esteem, he said. Therefore, the BRS leaders should sweat it out to some extent to help BRS win not only Karimnagar LS seat but also all other seats in Telangana.

3 farmworkers die as TSRTC bus hits auto-rickshaw

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Three women farmworkers died on the spot and 12 others were injured in a road accident as a TSRTC bus hit an auto-rickshaw at Mothe in Suryapet district on Thursday morning.

The deceased were identified as Kandula Nagamma

and Chevula Narayananamma from Vijayaraghavapuram and Pakala Anasuraya under Munagala mandal in Telangana State.

A TSRTC bus belonging to the Madira depot rammed into the auto-rickshaw from behind. The women farmworkers were on their way to Burkacherla underr Mothe

mandal in the ill-fated auto-rickshaw.

The injured persons were shifted to the Government General Hospital in Suryapet.

The condition of three of them was stated to be serious. The driver of the auto-rickshaw Sompangu Pavan also suffered injuries in the accident.

Drug abuse case: Director Krish to cooperate with cops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telugu film director Krish Jagarlamudi would reportedly attend the investigation into the drug abuse case on Friday. He was listed as accused-10 in the First Information Report (FIR) in the drug abuse case, which occurred on February 25.

Krish reportedly asked the officials for two more days' time to attend the interrogation. He told them that he was in Mumbai. So, he would attend the investigation on Friday.

On Tuesday, Madhapur DCP Vineeth said that three people have tested positive. In that FIR, which was registered on Sunday, police named 10 accused, who are Gajjala Vivekanand, Abbas, Nirbhay, Raghu Charan, Kedhar, Sandeep, Swetha, Lishi, Neil and Krish. The drug supplier Syed Abbas Ali has been arrested and police are in search of the other contacts in his phone and they may include a few others in the case. Police were reportedly questioning about the sources of the narcotics also.

Mother, son end life

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A mother and her son committed suicide in their house in Malkajigiri on Wednesday.

According to the Malkajigiri police officials, the duo has taken the extreme step due to family problems. The two were upset over the divorce case of the son Sridhar that was currently in a local court.

The bodies of deceased Vijayamma (65) and her son Sridhar Goud (48), residents of Pragathi Nagar, Malkajigiri, were found hanging to the ceiling fans in different rooms of the house. The locals alerted the police. The police reached the spot and shifted the bodies to the Gandhi Hospital morgue. A case was registered and investigation is on.

Begumpet Police arrest four for manufacturing spurious goods

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Zone Commissioner's Task Force, in coordination with the Begumpet Police on Wednesday arrested four persons involved in manufacturing spurious garlic paste and ginger worth Rs 5,00,000.

The accused were identified as Panduranga Rao (72), a businessman and resident of Begumpet; Raheem Charaniya (36), Ajay Kumar Aheer (43), a resident of Begumbazar and Pradeep Sankla (29), a resident of Panjagutta. The primary accused Charaniya is a native of Gujarat, who migrated to Hyderabad a few years ago.

Charaniya began trading under the company name Deccan Traders; in

order to make easy money, the accused established manufacturing machinery in Upperpally, Rajendranagar where adulterated garlic paste and ginger were produced.

It contained chemical, powder red in colour by using citric acid and spurious components. The spurious products were sent to various kirana stores as genuine products.

Charaniya engaged Rao, Kumar and Sankla who sold the adulterated products. He also supplied the material in Telangana and other states. The adulterated ginger garlic paste is hazardous to human life. The spurious material may cause life threatening effects even in small amounts and with short exposure.

PG Diploma in Smart Manufacturing introduced

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Work Integrated Learning Programmes (WILP) division of Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani, has introduced a new PG Diploma programme in Smart Manufacturing, which is designed to help engineers working in diverse industries to design, implement and manage manufacturing operations using digital technologies. The programme can be pursued without a career break and has been developed in collaboration with organisations from the manufacturing sector.

The PG Diploma programme has three broad themes — additive manufacturing, industrial IoT, and operations management which sup-

port a wide range of processes from data acquisition to the realisation of digital factories. It covers the technology enablers of digital factories, such as mechatronics, industrial IoT, big data analytics, machine learning, blockchains, cloud computing, connected manufacturing, microfabrication, and cybersecurity. The last date for applications for admission to this program is March 18, 2024.

According to Fortune Business Insights, the global smart manufacturing market size was valued at \$277.81 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow from \$310.92 billion in 2023 to \$754.1 billion by 2030, exhibiting a CAGR of 13.5 percent during the forecast period.

CM Revanth draws inspiration from AP CM Jagan’s volunteers’ system

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The successful volunteers system of Andhra Pradesh which became popular across the nation, is being taken up Telangana also. Taking inspiration from Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy also decided to bring such system in Telangana. The change in this is only the name. Revanth Reddy recently announced that Indiramma Committees will be constituted

in every village with five members. In Andhra Pradesh it is called as volunteers system and in Telangana it is called as Indiramma committees. The style of functioning and the duties are the same.

In Andhra Pradesh, CM YS Jagan appointed one volunteer for every 50 families. Through these volunteers the government is implementing all the welfare schemes.

With this, middlemen and corruption in the implementation of welfare schemes is mostly eradicated. The beneficiaries are directly getting every

welfare scheme through these volunteers at their doorstep.

This system has become very popular and received praise from many in the country. During the Covid time, the services of these volunteers were appreciated by everyone. Now on the same lines, Revanth Reddy has decided to constitute Indiramma committees.

CM Revanth said Indiramma committees would be constituted with party workers from all sections and the government's programmes and welfare schemes would be

taken to the people by involving the Indiramma committees.

CM Revanth further said that the role of Indiramma committees is to take the schemes to the people effectively and to ensure that the government image is enhanced. In AP, CM Jagan collects the ground level information on whatever issue and subject through these volunteers. In the same way, Telangana CM Revanth also can get ground level information from these Indiramma committees.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Upper hand

Showing astute political strategy in RS polls, BJP seems all set for Lok Sabha elections

Even before the Lok Sabha elections, whose dates are yet to be confirmed, the BJP is busy securing one political citadel after another. Beyond the mathematical calculation of winning eight Rajya Sabha seats of the 15 available in three States, it has managed to bag two extra seats — the lone seat in Himachal Pradesh and one in Uttar Pradesh, dealing another body blow to the INDIA bloc, an Opposition alliance. Worse, the upset in Himachal would likely embolden the saffron party to demand a trust vote against the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Government. Already, the Congress Government is seeing a fresh scramble for power amid abandonment by its own members, the latest being the announcement of resignation by State PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh. Trouble has been mounting for the Congress since Tuesday, when it lost the sole Rajya Sabha seat to the BJP with six of its members cross-voting in the poll. The RS elections are often seen as a litmus test of political equations within



States and among parties. They reflect the ability of political parties to rally support and secure positions of influence in the Upper House of Parliament. However, the cross-voting has added a new dimension to the political landscape, indicating possible shifts in alliances and loyalties. The INDIA bloc, comprising 28 Opposition parties, had hoped to consolidate its position in the Rajya Sabha. However, this setback has raised questions about the cohesion and effectiveness of the Opposition alliance, even in States where the Congress is in power.

These instances of brazen cross-voting have not only raised eyebrows but also sparked speculation about

its potential implications for the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP's success in securing additional seats through cross-voting underscores its growing clout and organisational strength, especially in key battleground States. For the Opposition, the Rajya Sabha poll results serve as a wake-up call, highlighting the need for greater unity and coordination. The failure to prevent cross-voting not only reflects internal fissures but also raises questions about the effectiveness of their electoral strategy. As the Lok Sabha elections draw near, the Opposition parties must regroup and realign their priorities to present a formidable challenge to the BJP. At the same time, the BJP's latest triumph should not be viewed in isolation. It reflects the party's relentless pursuit of expanding its footprint across regions and States. The BJP's ability to capitalise on opportunities, whether through defections, alliances or cross-voting, underscores its status as a formidable political force. Looking ahead, the Rajya Sabha poll results indicate a shifting landscape where traditional alliances may no longer hold sway, and parties must adapt to changing realities to stay relevant. The BJP's latest success is a testament to its adaptability and astute political strategy. In modern times, political expediency is everything; moral values, ideologies and loyalties can be taken up later.

PICTALK



Visitors during the Bharat Tex 2024, a global textile expo, in New Delhi

PTI

Dropshipping: The human touch in a digital era

With its low-risk, high-reward approach, dropshipping offers a gateway to success, empowering ventures to thrive in the competitive arena

As technology has become more accessible to billions of individuals, the e-commerce sector has emerged as a dominating force in today's complex and global marketplace. According to Mordor Intelligence, India's e-commerce market size is expected to skyrocket to \$299.01 billion by 2029, with a CAGR of 21.50%, and is estimated to be \$112.93 billion in 2024. While it might seem easy to others, the truth is that succeeding in e-commerce requires significant effort. This is where to establish a trustworthy reputation in today's competitive era, dropshipping has emerged as a viable option for entrepreneurs and small businesses. **The importance of Dropshipping:** Dropshipping has revolutionised the e-commerce landscape, providing an entry point for entrepreneurs and small businesses with low investment and risk. Unlike traditional retail models that necessitate inventory and logistics management, dropshipping enables businesses to collaborate with reliable suppliers, allowing them to



focus on marketing and customer service, ultimately creating a unique brand identity that appeals to their target audience.

Furthermore, this personal touch in the digital age sets them apart from their competitors and helps establish trust and loyalty among customers. As online shopping continues to grow, dropshipping will become a critical tool for staying competitive in the ever-changing e-commerce market. Plus, according to IMARC, the global dropshipping market is expected to reach \$1,787.4 billion by 2032, with a growth rate (CAGR) of 23.46% from 2024-2032.

How to craft a unique brand identity with dropshipping: In an era where having a

unique brand identity is imperative, dropshipping offers a convenient and cost-effective way to achieve this. With dropshipping, companies can customise their brand image and choose unique products to appeal to particular clientele groups. Through dependable supplier partnerships and efficient marketing techniques, entrepreneurs can also establish a distinctive brand identity that appeals to their intended market. This uniqueness helps firms stand out from the competition in the digital era and draws in customers while also encouraging brand loyalty.

Empowering businesses to succeed!

While dropshipping uses technology and automation to streamline operations, it is ultimately the human touch that sets businesses apart in the digital age. Thus, by embracing the human touch and prioritising meaningful interactions, small businesses and entrepreneurs can differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace and build a loyal customer base that transcends transactions. Furthermore, when business-

es dropship and focus their operations, a plethora of opportunities arise that empower them to succeed in today's ever-evolving era. In conclusion, as technology continues to democratise commerce, the e-commerce sector thrives, with India's market poised for exponential growth. Amidst this landscape, dropshipping emerges as a vital strategy for entrepreneurs and small businesses to navigate the competitive realm.

By leveraging reliable suppliers and focusing on branding, dropshipping facilitates unique market positioning, crucial for sustained success. As the global dropshipping market burgeons, embracing this model empowers businesses to craft distinctive identities, fostering customer loyalty and longevity. Ultimately, while technology drives efficiency, it's the human touch that propels businesses forward, ensuring relevance and resilience in the dynamic e-commerce sphere.

(The writer is prominent player in the Indian eCommerce industry and domain expert of dropshipping; views are personal)



PARAS THAKKAR

The US presidential election: Trump redux

Former US President Donald Trump's recent victory over his challenger, Nikki Haley, in South Carolina has injected fresh energy into the American presidential election race

On Saturday, former US President Donald Trump's win over his challenger, Nikki Haley, intensified the American presidential election race. With this win, Trump is moving toward a clear path to the Republican nomination. He dominated the primaries so far, in which voters select a party's nominee who will compete in the general election. "On November 5, we'll get up here and say, 'Joe, you're fired! You're fired! Get out!'" Trump said after his South Carolina win.

According to polls, the next presidential election on November 5 is expected to be close. It will be a replay between the current President, Joe Biden, and the former President, Donald Trump, just like in 2020. Additionally, there will be third-party candidates in the upcoming election. Both presidential candidates are old. American media reports suggest that some people prefer a third option. They believe there is little difference between them. Fewer Americans are interested in a potential rematch between these two candidates. Biden wants to finish the work he started in his first term. He believes winning a second term is crucial to preserving America's democratic traditions. However, some people worry about his age and the reported memory loss, while others support him. Republicans have criticised him for this. Historically, since 1944, no US President has lost an election without a recession during the election cycle or just before. Being the incumbent President is in Biden's favour. He has no serious challengers in his party. Though Biden's poll numbers are low, the Democrats do not have an alternative plan. The two presumptive presidential candidates must complete several steps before the November elections. From January 15 to June 4, 2024, states will hold caucuses and primary elections to choose their preferred candidates. The two candidates with the most support from their party members will officially become the nominees during the conventions. The Republican National Convention will occur from July 15 to July 18



in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From August 19 to August 22, the National Convention of the Democrats will be held in Chicago, Illinois. Democrats and Independents prioritise preserving democracy and concerns about inflation and immigration. The campaign will focus on essential topics such as reproductive rights, climate change, democracy in America, and US support for Ukraine.

Suppose President Trump is re-elected for a second term; he may seek retribution against his adversaries. There are concerns about whether Trump intends to decrease the number of federal civil service employees, tighten immigration regulations, and terminate the Affordable Care Act. Trump has also vowed to make trade with China more challenging, hinting that he may not defend all NATO partners. Biden's low approval ratings and reported memory issues made it necessary to impress his supporters that he has the energy and ability to serve another four years as President.

He will be 81 when elections take place on November 5. Trump will be 77. Biden is confident that he is the only Democratic candidate capable

“AMERICANS TEND TO VOTE FOR THE PARTY THAT BEST SERVES THEIR ECONOMIC INTERESTS. HISTORICALLY, THEY HAVE TENDED TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNING PARTY DURING GOOD TIMES, WHILE IN BAD TIMES, THEY PREFER THE OPPOSITION

of defeating Trump. He has emphasised his role in protecting democracy overseas. In the campaign, he's been focusing on the threat to democracy within the USA. United States. As for his performance, Biden fulfilled vital campaign promises, like creating jobs and restoring normalcy after COVID. Americans tend to vote for the party that best serves their economic interests. Historically, they have tended to support the governing party during good times, while in bad times, they prefer the opposition. In 1992, Bill Clinton used the campaign slogan "It's the economy, stupid" to emphasise the significance of the economy in politics.

Trump faces 91 criminal charges under four indictments. They are: For falsifying his business records in New York; For withholding classified federal government documents in Florida; And for attempts to overturn the 2020 election in two separate cases in Washington and the state of Georgia. Despite these serious allegations, a significant number of members of the Republican party continue to show support for him. He has the support of those who believe in

"White supremacy." It remains to be seen how Trump's potential convictions will impact his popularity. The next President will also have to deal with the unexpected and the crises.

The international community closely monitors the situation, anticipating the outcome of the country's next major democratic test. The world wants to know how well the country will fare in its next big democratic test, as President Biden and Democrats project Trump as a threat to democracy. While the November election will be closely contested, independent voters, especially in swing states like Michigan, Wisconsin, and Georgia, will decide the outcome of the polls.

America values youth, but how they will compromise with Trump or Biden is still being determined. The country has seen their performance. They have no choice except to choose one or the other. Trump hopes that a second term could deliver vindication for him, who has pushed baseless claims that the 2020 election was stolen. For Biden, it would be a chance for continuity.

(The writer is a popular columnist, views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIDI'S HOLLOW SLOGAN

Sir — The horrific events that have unfolded in Sandeshkhali have paid to Mamata Didi's vaunted slogan of Maa, Mati, and Manush. The political slogan coined by Mamata herself has turned out to be a grim joke on the state's people. Murder, Mayhem, and Molestation have usurped Maa, Mati, and Manush, going by the horror stories coming out of Sandeshkhali. The deliberate misreading of the Calcutta HC stay order on the formation of an SIT and CM Mamata Banerjee's stock response to the horrific incidents at Sandeshkhali - outsiders and BJP/ RSS people are involved - leaves nobody in doubt that the main accused, Shahjahan Sheikh, enjoys the protection and patronage of Didi. Now that the HC has rapped the West Bengal government on the knuckles, it has promised to arrest Sheikh within a week. This sudden volte-face indicates that Sheikh is within earshot. Didi has now no option left but to arrest Sandeshkhali's bête noire and her party's henchman, Shahjahan Sheikh. Here's hoping Didi will show some spine.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

SPENT FORCE

Sir — In the never-ending battle between the police and the Maoists, either in Chhattisgarh or Jharkhand, the former has almost decimated the latter. The latest was the killing of three Maoists in the Koyalibeda forest area of the Kanker district in Chhattisgarh on Sunday. Significantly, Home Minister Amit Shah in a series of posts on X on Friday had said that the Centre's holistic approach, contributing to health and educational upliftment in the tribal areas dominated by the naxals, resulted in curbing naxalism to a great extent. Familiarity with the surroundings and rapport with the locals have acted as weapons for the police. Intelligence gathering has been a Maoist forte: the police have succeeded in beating the opponents at their own

Poverty on decline



Niti Aayog has recently made an important claim about poverty in the country citing the Consumer Expenditure Survey. Poverty in the country has been reduced by five per cent. Just read the news that the National Sample Survey Office conducted the survey. For this, about one lakh seven thousand families in urban areas and one lakh fifty-five thousand families in rural areas were selected. Along with this reduction in poverty, per capita monthly expenditure has doubled compared to 2011-2012. It has been men-

tioned in the report that the per capita monthly expenditure in the urban section is 6459 rupees and the expenditure in the rural section is 3773 rupees. People in both urban and rural areas have achieved economic progress.

Due to this, the race for development is going on. Compared to 2011-2012, the gap has reduced now. It has now come to 71 per cent from 84 per cent. Especially in the year 2004, this difference was almost 91 per cent. There have been changes in lifestyle in both these areas. As the purchasing power of both regions increases, they seem to be spending more on milk, fruits, and vegetables. Overall, this survey has brought out a big issue regarding the reduction of poverty. This is the result of the economic progress that has been going on under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi in the last ten years.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

game. Counselling the local tribals against giving in to the Maoist demands figures right on top of the agenda.

Over the years, many Naxals have given up their violent ways, and the credit should go to the concerted effort of the security forces. A combination of a humanitarian touch and taking the fight into the Maoist camps has paid rich dividends. According to Home Ministry data, in the last nine years, there has been a significant decline in left-wing extremism-related violence and deaths. Fatalities among both security forces and civilians have drastically reduced, by 72 and 68 per cent respectively, and these are exceptional numbers that we can see and it shows a positive figure.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

CRUELTY ON ANIMALS

Sir — The circus, often seen as a place of amusement and wonder, hides a darker truth behind its colourful curtains. Behind the spectacle, lies a world of suffering, as animals endure brutal

training methods including deprivation and beatings, to perform unnatural tricks. Tigers forced to jump through fiery hoops and elephants forced to balance on small platforms are emblematic of this exploitation.

The mental and physical well-being of the animal worsens as a result of this wrongdoing. Many suffer from injuries while others endure psychological distress from social deprivation and incarceration. Despite increased cognisance, the circus industry continues to prioritise profit over animal welfare. It's time to acknowledge the pain and suffering foisted upon circus animals in the name of entertainment. By boycotting animal-centric circuses and supporting cruelty-free entertainment, we can help end the exploitation of circus animals and create a world where laughter does not come at the expense of sentient beings.

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH EMPATHY

It is incumbent upon us to ensure that every student receives vital lessons in empathy



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

After being constantly taunted for her height, skin colour and academic performance by her fellow students for months, a 12-year-old girl cut her wrists in an attempt to end her mental agony. Fortunately, she was saved. But a 16-year-old student of Class 10, who jumped off the top floor of the apartment building he was living in, did not survive. It was his letter to his mother in which he wrote that the school had killed him, that revealed the shocking details of bullying he was subjected to and the school's failure to stop it. While several steps have been taken to put an end to bullying, penal action can only be a temporary deterrent and not a long-term solution especially in the present milieu of hyped social media, freely available toxic content and, peer pressure.

If children are taught to engage empathetically, can it inculcate feelings of respect, dignity and compassion for all? Project Empathy, an endeavour to bring empathy education into school curricula, believes being empathetic can nurture emotionally and mentally strong human beings. When young students understand the importance of living in harmony with one another, the 'walls of division' between them transform into 'walls of friendship'. Contrary to popular belief, empathy can be taught. While 50% of our empathic capacities are genetically inherited, research shows that the rest can be learnt. This is the biggest reason why empathy must be taught at a young age. Over the last five years, Project Empathy led by educationist Vibha Lakhera, introduced this concept and developed activities and stories that acknowledge, recognize and identify emotions and broaden the discussion around emotional health and well-being of every student.



Empathy education helps to enrich the emotional vocabulary of students and build their emotional and mental resilience. Introduced in about six schools mainly army schools like the Army Rifles Public Schools in North India and Kashmir and Alok Bharati Public School in Delhi, the project has been able to reach out to over 1500 students. Importantly, teachers, who lay the foundation for their values, have been recognized as critical to the success of teaching empathy.

This resource book for teachers draws from the education system and best practices in schools in Denmark and Finland, two countries among the top three happiest countries in the world according to the United Nations Happiness Report. Put together by Lakhera and veteran development journalist Usha Rai, the interesting manual explains the neuroscience of empathy with the help of psychologists and brain scientists sans any jargon. The mirror neurons, which light up when a person feels an emotion like sadness or joy, respond in the same way when this person sees another person also demonstrating the same kind of feelings or actions. This empathic reaction helps to understand and share experiences.


The manual also explains the types of empathy-cognitive, emotional and compassionate while differentiating between sympathy and empathy. Stories centred on children and their emotions have been innovatively used to provide practical guidelines on how to diffuse tensions, reduce stress, and strengthen understanding of each other's differences. At present, empathy is not included in teacher training programmes. Only a handful of schools have taken the initiative to introduce the concept of empathy education. There is a need to encourage all students to consider different perspectives and viewpoints. Only by being empathetic, can they understand and acknowledge differences of opinion and resolve conflict situations.

(Swapna Majumdar is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views are expressed are personal)

A roadmap for comprehensive socio-economic inclusion

The interim Budget for 2024 emerges as a crucial instrument for steering the nation towards inclusive development

As is the case with multiple developing economies across the world, India is faced with wealth inequality, unemployment, existing and persisting gaps in healthcare infrastructure and delivery, and environmental concerns. The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index based on data from 2021/22 finds that 16.4 % of India's population lives in poverty with 4.2% facing severe poverty. The Regional Human Development Report 2024 by UNDP finds that the top 10% of the population controls 65% of the nation's total wealth, underlining stark wealth inequality. The consequences are multi-dimensional – it negatively impacts upward intergenerational mobility and



NAGHMA MULLA

lowers the rate of economic growth. Lack of jobs has been an area of concern for the country for decades now. While the current unemployment rate for January 2024 is 6.8, unemployment amongst educated youth is concerning. The State of Working India 2023 by Azim Premji University reveals that over 42% of India's graduates under 25 were unemployed in 2021-22.


Marked by a distinct urban-rural divide, gaps in healthcare services and infrastructure are a major obstacle for people in small towns and rural areas. A large part of India's population suffers from inaccessibility to quality healthcare – leading to delayed treatments and high out-of-pocket expenditure. A United Nations report emphasises that approximately 75% of healthcare infrastructure, medical personnel, and other health resources are predominantly located in urban regions, home to merely 27% of the overall population. The impact of climate change and disasters on both people and the economy has been devastating. India experienced uninsured losses of \$32.94 billion from natural disasters between 2018 and 2022. The

ramifications of human loss are even more grave and are evident in the 55.9 million displacements from 237 disasters mapped between 2018 – 2022. The interim budget addresses these issues in a big way. It presents a comprehensive roadmap for national progress, meticulously designed to touch upon critical facets of development such as women empowerment, job creation, environmental conservation, and poverty alleviation. It aims to address the needs and aspirations of diverse social groups—'Garib' (the poor), 'Mahilayen' (women), 'Yuva' (youth), and 'Annadata' (farmers). This inclusion is notable as it envisages the significance of marginalised social groups in achieving a Viksit Bharat – a developed India by 2047 –

marking a century of India's independence. The budget prioritises support for the 'Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises' (MSME) sector with necessary finances, technologies, and training to enhance global competitiveness. The rooftop solarization policy is set to offer employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in technical and supply sectors. Additionally, the establishment of a separate Department for Fisheries and the expansion of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) underscore efforts to double production and exports in the fisheries sector, aiming to create 55 lakh new jobs and drive inclusive economic progress. A significant step is the focus on provisions for the inclusion of low-income groups and women. Initiatives like the disbursement of 30 crore Mudra Yojana loans to women entrepreneurs and financial support to 78 lakh street vendors under PM-SVANidhi emphasise the government's focus on enhancing workforce participation and providing earning avenues that drive upward mobility. The SHG model of development has also proved to be successful – enabling nearly 10 million women to achieve annual incomes of over INR 1 lakh. Capitalising on this success, the goal has been expanded to elevate the target from 2 crore to 3 crore lakhpati didis, showcasing a commitment to women's economic empowerment. The budget made notable health announcements. The focus on preventive healthcare through the provision of cervical cancer vaccinations for young girls and the integration of various maternal and child health schemes indicate a push towards addressing the specific health needs of vulnerable groups. The expansion of the Ayushman Bharat scheme to extend healthcare benefits to approximately 1.5 million AASHA workers and Anganwadi workers acknowledges the crucial contribution of these frontline health workers to primary healthcare services. Leverage existing hospital structures for the establishment of more medical colleges, addresses both – the healthcare professional shortage and the surging demand for medical education. This builds on the initiative from April 2023, when the government approved the establishment of 157 nursing colleges, allocating INR 1,570 crore, with the central government contributing INR 1,016 crore. The budget also provides a concrete pathway to achieving a net-zero economy by 2070. Key measures include funding for offshore wind energy, coal gasification projects to lessen reliance on fossil fuels, support for the electric vehicle ecosystem, and incentives for bio-mass collection. The budget also promotes bio-manufacturing for eco-friendly materials and climate resilience in the blue economy.

(The author is a prominent voice on social issues; views are personal)

Nawaz Sharif's strategic move or military script?



KS TOMAR

Nawaz's decision to step aside from the race for premiership in Pakistan and nominate his brother Shehbaz instead has sparked intense debate

Alively and geo-political issue is being debated worldwide, especially in Pakistan which pertains to the 'mysterious' decision of three-time prime minister, Nawaz Sharif to Suo moto opt out of the race for premiership and subsequently nominate his younger brother, Shehbaz Sharif for the top slot though he was a favourite of powerful military, obviously current army chief, Asim Munir, who had scripted the entire episode to enthrone him. Foreign policy experts say that it was on the analogy of former PM, Imran Khan who was saddled in the chair due to the open patronage of Ex-Army chief, Qamar Javed Bajwa but both fell apart owing to fighting for supremacy. It was a paradox and a typical case of a "servant" challenging the authority of the "Master" which may happen in this dispensation also but Nawaz as a "shadow PM" may not permit it as he has had the bitter experience of being ousted by the army from the post in 2018. Analysts are convinced that owing to compelling circumstances, Ex PM, Nawaz played his cards well hence the choice fell on his brother which will also ensure the continuity of "Family Rule" in Pakistan. Yet, another addition will be Maryam Nawaz who is poised to become chief minister of the most important province of Punjab. 2nd, the army had meticulously planned to keep Imran Khan out of the political process hence more than 150 cases were registered against him by the previous regime and courts handed him the punishment in three cases which exceeded 24 years. 3rd, due to Imran's tirade against the army, Nawaz was brought to Pakistan last year from self-exile in London which preceded the Supreme Court's decision in 2018 to sentence him to ten -years

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NAWAZ'S CRITICS ALLEGE THAT THE STAGE WAS SET FOR 'MASS SCALE RIGGING' TO HELP HIM BECOME PM, BUT THE GAME PLAN WENT HAYWIRE AS INDEPENDENTS SUPPORTED BY IMRAN FROM JAIL WON A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS AND NAWAZ'S PARTY PML-N COULD NOT GET EVEN A SIMPLE MAJORITY, WHICH SHATTERED THE DREAM OF NAWAZ

imprisonment and a fine of \$10.6 million in a corruption case related to Panama papers of illegal properties abroad. He was disqualified and hence fled to London to fight his battle. Nawaz's brother Shehbaz headed the government in Pakistan which ensured the adoption of a bill in parliament on June 25, 2023, which limited the lifetime disqualification of lawmakers to 5 years. It was meant to pave the way for the return of his elder brother to resume his political activities in Pakistan. 4th, Nawaz's critics allege that the stage was set for "mass scale rigging" to help him to become PM but the game plan went haywire as independents supported by Imran from jail won a majority of the seats and Nawaz's party PML-N could not get even simple majority which shattered the dream of Nawaz who was averse to heading a minority government. 5th, Nawaz nominated Shehbaz because he had experience in heading coalition governments and was a flexible politician who could take partners along. 6th, Nawaz would have found it difficult in parliament as Imran's loyalists were ready with a lot of ammunition to put him on the mat on corruption whereas Shehbaz is better placed so far. Finally, Nawaz and the army chief are on the same page which may help the new government to appease the sentiments and fulfil the aspirations of the people who are facing the problem of survival. It will be the most difficult task

of the Shehbaz government to implement the harsh preconditions of IMF which had released USD 710 million second tranche of a USD 3 billion loan to the cash-strapped country to stabilize its debt-ridden economy. Shehbaz's previous government had successfully negotiated with the IMF to procure the "bailout Package" which needs to be clinched. The IMF had saved Pakistan from economic collapse as Pakistan's reserves stood at \$7.8 billion as of Nov. 18, 2023, barely enough to cover imports for a month. The people are reeling under inflation which has touched to the level of 30% and prices of essential commodities are beyond the capacity of consumers. The floods had caused losses of billions and thousands of lives were lost hence the new PM will have to take care of rehabilitation tasks which are in disarray. The floods had caused tremendous losses of USD 3.3. trillion in June-October, 2022 besides killing 1839 people which must be uppermost in the priorities of the new government as victims are still craving relief and rehabilitation tasks which seem to be in disarray. China has treaded cautiously and did not touch the sensitive issue of rigging whereas the United States and EU demanded an investigation into the allegations. China has come to the rescue of Pakistan several times but the cost has been beyond the imagination of this poor country. China's debt policy has entrapped Pakistan which has procured a heavy loan and the Chinese

investment has risen \$65 billion in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by 2022. China has already acquired control of Gwadar Port on 16 May 2013 which may be retained instead of a lease guarantee in future. Originally valued at \$46 billion, the value of China Pakistan Economic Corridor had been worth \$62 billion as of 2020. India and the US are opposed to BRI hence Nawaz will have to tread cautiously to keep China in check to save his country from the debt trap policy. China will be looking for the security protection of its projects in Pakistan hence it may develop cordial relations with the Shehbaz government. Experts say that the United States wanted to see the back of Imran who had accused it of conspiring with the army to oust him from power. It has got history of having direct ties with army generals hence it may find it easy to deal with the new government. India can expect Nawaz to influence Shehbaz to take the initiative to start dialogue with India which has already created its space in the world arena and economic ties can help the beleaguered people of this poor country. The new coalition government is bound to be weak hence delivery expectations on domestic and international fronts must be based on logical conclusions and limitations of new dispensation in Pakistan.

(The writer is a journalist and political analyst, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold prices decline Rs 50; Silver falls Rs 300

Gold prices declined Rs 50 to Rs 62,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid weak trends in international markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 62,950 per 10 grams on Tuesday. Silver prices also fell Rs 300 to Rs 73,900 per kilogram. In the previous trade, silver had ended at Rs 74,200 per kilogram. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 62,900 per 10 grams, down by Rs 50 from the previous close," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities, HDFC Securities. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading down at US\$ 2,029 per ounce from US\$ 2,034 per ounce in the previous trade. Going forward, traders now keep an eye on today's US GDP data, which may provide further direction for gold prices, he said. "In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,029 per ounce, down by US\$ 5 from the previous close," Gandhi added.



Joshi to launch Coal Logistics Plan & Policy today

Union Coal and Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi will on Thursday launch the 'Coal Logistics Plan & Policy', which focusses on technologically advanced, cost-effective and integrated logistics ecosystem for coal evacuation. The Indian National Committee World Mining Congress under the Ministry of Coal is organising the event at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, the coal ministry said in a statement. "Union Coal and Mines, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi will grace the occasion as the chief guest and unveil the Coal Logistics Plan & Policy. "Senior officials from NITI Aayog and various Ministries, including Coal, Railways, Power, Steel, Mines, Shipping Port & Waterways along with industry representatives of Coal, Steel, Power and other sectors will participate in the event," it said. The Ministry of Coal is aiming to produce 1.5 Billion Tonne (BT) of coal by the 2029-30 financial year, as per the statement.



'Elderly bizman loses Rs 3.61 cr in cyber investment fraud; 1 held'

A garment unit owner has been arrested after a 73-year-old businessman from Mumbai fell prey to an online investment fraud and ended up losing Rs 3.61 crore, police said on Wednesday. The Cyber Police have so far frozen an amount of Rs 2.20 crore and 330 bank accounts, an official said. The alleged transactions took place between May 20 and October 7 last year after the businessman was contacted by three persons, including two women, online who lured him into investing in a scheme by promising hefty returns, the official said. "They also created a WhatsApp group, made an online agreement with the businessman, and sent it to his email ID. The agreement mentioning the returns on the investments was shared in the group to gain the trust of the businessman," he said. The victim invested Rs 3.61 crore. As he didn't get any returns on his investment, he approached the West Region Cyber Police Station in Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) and lodged a complaint.



Restoration of WTO dispute settlement system priority

PNS ■ ABU DHABI

India on Wednesday said that restoration of the fully functional dispute settlement system of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is the "top-most" priority. The appellate body of the system had been non-functional since December 2019 due to the blocking of the appointment of its members or judges by the US and this had called into question the WTO's overall credibility and the rules-based trade order it upholds.

This was flagged by India during the working session on Dispute Settlement (DS) Reforms, at the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 13th Ministerial Conference here.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal along with a high-level official team is attending the four-day conference which started on February 26.

"India emphatically called for the restoration of the appel-

"India reiterated its long-standing position that a credible and reliable WTO DS system is the bedrock of an equitable, effective, secure and predictable multilateral trading system. As a way forward, India sought the immediate and effective formalization and multilateralization of the informal DS reform process by rectifying the procedural and substantive defects."



late body as the top-most priority of any reform process, along for effective formalisation of the ongoing informal dispute settlement reform discussions among some members at the WTO," an official statement said. The WTO is discussing to undertake reforms in the dispute settlement system, which is described as a "Crown jewel" of the Geneva-based 166-member global trade watchdog. India also wants formalisa-

tion of the ongoing "informal" dispute settlement reform discussions.

The informal deliberations are creating hindrance for several nations to participate in the talks and such discussions made it extremely difficult for developing countries to participate effectively.

"India reiterated its long-standing position that a credible and reliable WTO DS system is the bedrock of an equitable, effective, secure and pre-

dictable multilateral trading system," it said.

India emphasized that the outcome of any reform process should provide for the restoration of the appellate body, which remains a "top-most" priority for India.

"As a way forward, India sought the immediate and effective formalization and multilateralization of the informal DS reform process by rectifying the procedural and substantive defects," it added.

Torrent Power raises Rs 700 cr via NCDs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Torrent Power on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 700 crore through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) issued on a private placement basis.

The NCDs are proposed to be listed on wholesale debt market segment of the NSE, a regulatory filing said.

According to the statement, the company has issued and allotted Series 13 -- 70,000 secured, rated, listed, taxable, non-cumulative, redeemable NCDs of Rs 700 crore at a coupon rate of 8.32 per cent per annum on a private placement basis.

The first coupon will be paid on February 28, 2025 and subsequent coupon payments will be made on an annual basis, the statement added.

Q3 GDP may slide to 6.7-6.9% on poor farm sector show

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Indian economy is likely to grow at 6.7-6.9 per cent in December quarter FY24 as compared to 7.6 per cent growth in the second quarter on poor performance in the farm sector, a report by SBI Research said on Wednesday.

The report comes a day ahead of the release of official GDP data for the third quarter of 2023-24 financial year. India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6 per cent in September quarter on booster shots from government spending and manufacturing.

The 6.7-6.9 per cent growth forecast by SBI Research is lower than the Reserve Bank's 7 per cent growth projection for the quarter. SBI Research has projected Q4 GDP at 6.8 per cent.

SBI Research said the biggest reason for the lower



growth forecast is the very poor show by the farm sector as, barring fisheries, the whole sector is badly affected.

As per the first advance estimates, the production of major kharif crops in 2023-24 is pegged at 148.5 million tonne, which is 4.6 per cent lower than that in the year-ago period.

While the sowing season for rabi crops indicates a slight increase in overall acreage compared to the previous year, there are concerns over the sown area under cereals, which saw a decline of 6.5 per cent from the previous year, the report said.

FACING A LOW BIRTH RATE AND MANPOWER SHORTAGE

Singapore to stay open to foreign talent

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Manpower-short Singapore has to stay open to foreign talent due to slower population growth and resident workforce growth slowing and insufficient to meet the demands of the economy, Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said on Wednesday.

At the upper end, this means

workers can take on jobs in new growth areas such as the digital economy, where there is a global shortage of skilled talent, said Wong.

Speaking in parliament on Wednesday, he said the manpower includes work-permit holders, which comprise about two-thirds of the total foreign workforce, mostly doing jobs that Singaporeans do not want

to do. Prosperous Singapore needs to keep its economy growing so that it can make a living and take care of its people, at a time when the world is becoming more dangerous and unpredictable, he told parliament on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Indraneel Rajah told Parliament that Singapore has

seen its resident total fertility rate (TFR) drop to an estimated 0.97 per cent in 2023, the first time it has dropped below one per cent in the country's history.

Wong also said Singapore has a comprehensive system of controls to regulate the quality and number of work-pass holders across every level of the workforce.

As he laid out the Government's plans to achieve between 2 and 3 per cent growth annually over the next decade, Wong said, "The reality is that Singapore will always be a little red dot (a teaser for being small) we have no hinterland, we have no natural resources, unlike resource-rich countries like Qatar or the UAE.

'Domestic manufacturing of semiconductors next big space'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Domestic manufacturing of semiconductors is the next big space and many companies are expected to venture into this segment, a senior MeitY official said on Wednesday adding that a USD 2 billion digital economy is what India seriously needs.

S Krishnan, Secretary of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), while speaking virtually at the India Digital Summit (IDS) 2024 said the digital economy is expected to grow at a faster pace in the next few years.

"Semiconductors is the other big space. More compa-



nies are likely to come into the space...Our interest in semiconductors is open," he said adding that in the next 5-10 years semiconductor manufacturing in the country is expected to come up in a big way.

About 20 lakh people are employed in the electronics manufacturing sector in the country and the government

would like these jobs to go up to about 45 lakh, he added.

"We expect the digital economy to really grow at an increasing pace in the next few years. A USD 2 billion digital economy is what India seriously needs," Krishnan said.

When asked about governance, hygiene and compliance with law for digital economies, Krishnan pointed out that regulators, much like the public, recognized the necessity of regulation.

While balancing consumer protection and diverse requirements, regulations are thoroughly examined to ensure safeguarding of user information, he said.

India's retail sector to more than double in next decade

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's retail sector is expected to grow at 9-10 per cent to reach USD 2 trillion in the next decade with the country's consumption story continuing to remain strong with steady growth, according to a report.

Yet, organised retailers would need to sustain performance and continue to grow shares as the sector is going through key shifts impacting the pace and shape of growth, said the report by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Retailers Association of India (RAI).

While income growth remains steady, and consumers are optimistic about personal income outlook, consumers are increasingly look-



ing to spend on "experiences" or save more through newer or nascent vehicles, it said.

"The Indian retail sector will more than double in size to USD 2 trillion in the next decade - across categories and formats - and the successful retailers are the ones who continue to challenge the perceived growth profitability trade-off," BCG Managing Director and Senior Partner Abheek Singhi said.

Bengaluru taxpayers are giving us buoyancy: Nirmala Sitharaman

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday hailed Bengaluru tax payers for their contributions in building a strong and 'Viksit Bharat', and said the Department of Revenue is running its entire national faceless income tax assessment scheme from Karnataka's capital city.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone for the upcoming complex 'HONGIRANA' for Income Tax officers and staff here, she said the tax payers of Bengaluru have been absolutely giving us the buoyancy, and thanked all individual and corporate taxpayers in this region for making sure for building a strong and 'Viksit Bharat'.

"Your contribution is relentless. There has never been a dip. So



thank you very much Bengaluru for keeping that momentum up", she said.

Sitharaman also emphasised the investments that the Central government is making in Bengaluru.

She noted that the Government has brought about the entire faceless system for income tax assessment and ease of doing business to ensure that tax assesses are not harassed and do not have the perception that discretion of

the officer who they have to go to and sit and talk to will make their tax payment difficult.

She said the Department's entire central processing centre - the digital processing unit which governs the entire country -- is located in Bengaluru, driving the income tax system for the whole nation. The faceless system was a big step forward in ease of doing business.

"So money doesn't go away from Karnataka. It comes back as well and comes back not just like that Yes it comes back for roads, it comes back for connectivity, it comes back for metro, it comes back for rail, it comes back for the suburban railway system, it comes back for Mangaluru port, it comes back for the Kalyana Karnataka (region) and so on", Sitharaman said.

Equity investors become poorer by Rs 6L cr as markets crash

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 6 lakh crore in a single day on Wednesday as the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 790 points.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 790.34 points or 1.08

per cent to settle at 72,304.88. During the day, it slumped 872.93 points or 1.19 per cent to 72,222.29.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 6,02,338.56 crore to Rs 3,85,97,298.49 crore (USD 4.71 trillion).

32% of India's super rich wealth in housing properties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's super rich have allocated 32 per cent of their wealth in residential properties in the country and overseas, Knight Frank said in a report on Wednesday.

As per real estate consultant Knight Frank's The Wealth Report 2024, 32 per cent of India's Ultra-High-Net-Worth Individuals' (UHNWIs) wealth is allocated towards residential real estate asset class. Nearly 14 per cent of their residential portfolio is allocated outside India. UHNWIs are individuals with a net worth of USD 30 million and above.

On an average, an Indian

UHNWI owns 2.57 homes while a sizable 28 per cent have rented out their second homes during 2023, the report said.

According to Knight Frank, about 12 per cent of the country's UHNWIs plan to buy a new home in 2024. A similar percentage of wealthy individuals in India purchased a new home last year.

Globally, 22 per cent of the ultra-wealthy are expected to purchase a home in 2024.

Knight Frank India Chairman and Managing Director Shishir Bajjal said, "The prime residential assets continue to be the mainstream investment avenue for ultra-wealthy individuals in the



country."

Separately, the report noted that Mumbai ranked 8th on Knight Frank's Prime International Residential Index

(PIRI) index in 2023 as compared to the 37th rank in 2022, driven by 10 per cent year-on-year growth in terms of annual luxury residential price rise.

This jump has marked a place for Mumbai in the top 10 leading luxury residential markets.

Manila (26 per cent growth) leads the rankings while last year's frontrunner Dubai (16 per cent) slipped one spot.

The Bahamas (15 per cent) comes in the third place with Algarve and Cape Town (both 12.3 per cent) completing the top five. Among other Indian cities, Delhi ranked 37th and showcased a rise of 4.2 per cent year-on-year in 2023 as compared to the 77th rank in 2022.

Bengaluru stands at the 59th rank compared to 63rd in 2022 recording a 2.2 per cent year-on-year increase in 2023.

"The outlook for 2024 remains bright as Mumbai with a 5.5 per cent prime price growth forecast, ranks second among the 25 cities globally. As we navigate the complexities of the global market, India's emergence as a prime destination for luxury real estate investment is undeniable," Bajjal said. Of the 100 luxury residential markets tracked, 80 recorded positive to neutral annual price growth.

Asia-Pacific (3.8 per cent) pipped the Americas (3.6 per cent) to the title of the strongest-performing world region, with Europe, the Middle East, and Africa trailing (2.6 per cent).



The Lakeman of India, **Anand Malligavad**, who was announced as Sony BBC Earth's second Earth Champion, speaks to **The Pioneer** about his motivation, challenges, and more, over an exclusive chat.

Dared to be a bold ‘water baby’

K. RAMYA SREE

We are in a time and age where we have to preserve our water bodies; otherwise, the coming generations are going to face a severe water shortage. Many parts of the country are facing a water shortage. Not just that, the lakes are being encroached on, and skyscrapers or big towers are being built there, leading to many issues of late. And to curb this, there is a champion in India who is popularly known across the country, and even worldwide as the ‘Lakeman of India’.

Anand Malligavad is rightly called the Lakeman of India because this water conservationist and environmentalist has contributed to the revitalisation of over 23 lakes in India.

Doesn't it sound amazing? Of course yes, and which is why Sony BBC Earth announced Anand as their second Earth Champion, their testament to a commitment to showcasing and honouring real-life heroes making a significant impact on our planet.

He has been driving a positive change towards a greener and more sustainable world, and he stands as an inspiration to the coming generations. Hence, without further delay, **The Pioneer** quickly got in touch with the nature enthusiast who began by sharing his journey from engineering to environment protection. He said, “I was motivated by a variety of personal and professional reasons, one of which is my association with water and lakes from my childhood, fear of the city going zero water, and selfless desire to protect the planet and its ecosystem. Water stress seems to be a pressing issue across the country, and someone has to think about it and act as if that is an urgent issue.”

He dares to be bold, influence,

and impact society, which is what he says about the work he is doing now.

It wasn't as easy for him to reach this place and build the contacts as we speak now. He had his share of struggles but for good. Speaking about a significant lake rejuvenation project and discussing the challenges faced during its restoration, Anand said, “We faced numerous challenges, including fundraising, gaining senior management support, and acquiring knowledge on lake rejuvenation. We had to engage and educate local communities, address land encroachment issues, and obtain approval from local leaders. Each lake required innovative approaches within budget and time constraints, with the individual primarily working alone. Managing waste and sewage dumping was difficult. Despite these challenges, We built a strong network of supporters, enabling us to reset our goals to rejuvenate lakes across India.”

He continued, “I have now built a big network of people interested in nature conservation through my projects.”

While his initial mission was to rejuvenate 45 lakes by 2025, now, with the support he has been getting from all corners of the world, he says he is aiming to rejuvenate over 100 lakes by 2025 across India.

During the conversation, he also stressed community engagement, which led to the success of water conservation. What else is ‘community wise’ all about? Let us hear from him: “Community engagement has been instrumental in raising awareness, mobilising action, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for water conservation. We actively involve residents in various aspects of water management and conservation. Communities have made significant strides towards ensuring the sustainable use and protection of water resources. They join our volunteer activities and help maintain the ecosystem.



Through various campaigns, we have amplified our efforts and brought in behavioural changes to reduce water usage in their daily lives.”

Collaborating with local businesses, schools, non-profits, and other organisations can broaden our reach in water conservation, he added.

In his overall journey, the Sansera Foundation and Malligavad Foundation have played a significant role, and his first restoration project, Kyalasanhalli Lake, was



started when he was in the Sansera Foundation heading the CSR team. He feels that without community support and encouragement, that would not have been possible. “Adaptation, acceptance, and support for each project need to come from the community, as it is also benefiting them immensely in various ways. Be it while I was in Sansera or with the Malligavad Foundation, the community was an important stakeholder for us throughout the process,” added the environmentalist.

At the latest, he has clinched another height in his life by being recognised as the Earth Champion by Sony BBC Earth. He feels it is a positive acknowledgment of the importance of environmental stewardship and the dissemination of knowledge about our planet.

“We need to promote awareness and action towards protecting the Earth's ecosystems and biodiversity, which is crucial for the well-being of all living beings on this planet, and such recognition plays an important role in the effort we are making through our work and for the country. Initiatives like Earth Champions serve as important tools for engaging and mobilising audiences in the global effort to protect the planet and its ecosystems. It helps with positive messaging amidst concerns about climate change. It demonstrates that meaningful change is possible through individual and collective action, which can be uplifting for audiences seeking solutions to environmental problems,” he shared, adding, “I try to make my messages interactive and visually appealing with videos and images and make the topic more relatable. I keep it simple and share real-life examples of the entire process of lake restoration and the challenges faced in the process. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among the students towards protecting their environment.”

‘The show doesn’t include any futuristic elements,’ utters *Kaala Paani* director Sameer Saxena

PNS| HYDERABAD

Kaala Paani, a gripping narrative of an epidemic and the heartbreaking tale of separation, aims to transfer the viewer to the claustrophobic yet tranquil ambience of the sadly underappreciated Andaman Islands. *Kaala Paani*, which was written by Biswapati Sarkar and directed by Sameer Saxena along with Amit Golani, is a series full of action, painful side trips, and people who are plagued by their past.

Basically, Biswapati Sarkar, the show's writer, came up with the original concept. He had visited the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in his early years. And one of the tour guides informed him that Kaal signifies ‘mrityu’, or death, which is why this site is called *Kaala Paani*. That comment kind of stuck with him, and it appears in the episode as well. After that, he returned, and even the director went there as well. “Our visits made us realise how breathtakingly beautiful the location is. Furthermore, you are essentially cut off from the mainland if you are stuck there. Since no one has ever been able to leave this place, we thought it might make for a

great drama.”

The purpose of establishing it for 2027, director Sameer Saxena says, is to convey to people that nature is not superior to humans. “We have a constant tendency to move on from our experiences and forget the past. We considered scheduling *Kaala Paani* three to four years in advance because, in my opinion, most people have since forgotten about COVID-19. Although most people believe that nothing bad will happen, nature will always remind us that we should not take Mother Nature for granted. Therefore, the show doesn't include any futuristic elements. To sort of get those correct, though, we had to conduct a lot of research on the scientific and medical aspects of it and consult with other physicians. It is critical that we conduct high-quality research, particularly in the fields of science and medicine. We should not underestimate the intelligence of today's audience. Maintaining the story's authenticity and plausibility was difficult.”

A harsh story where a mother and a young sixteen-year-old boy were killed. If you wondered what the reason was, then that was the approach the makers took in telling the tale of how some folks make it and others don't. “That wasn't meant to be harsh; it just happened to fit the plot naturally. Additionally, if you keep telling stories of a particular kind, you eventually learn the clichés, and as a creator, you have nothing else to explore. You give it your all as soon as you discover a new genre because it fascinates you.”

Certainly, he says there is no formula to make a clutter-breaking show. “You can't pay attention to what other people do. All you have to do is choose the story that most excites you, as you will dedicate the next two to three years of your life to it. Not every decision you make will be successful, but you can grow from your failures as well. It all comes down to

following your gut and then giving it your all,” signs off the director.

DIRECTOR SAMEER SAXENA, WHO HAS BEEN RECEIVING IMMENSE LOVE FOR HIS RECENTLY RELEASED PROJECT, *KAALA PAANI*, SHARES SOME INTERESTING INSIGHTS FROM THE BTS OF THE STORY.



Making the right choice between NATURAL BIRTH vs C-SECTION

Bringing a new life into the world is a momentous occasion filled with anticipation and excitement. As expectant parents prepare for the arrival of their little one, one of the most significant decisions they face is choosing between natural birth and Cesarean section (C-section). Both methods of delivery have their own set of considerations, and making an informed decision is paramount for the health and well-being of both the mother and the baby.

In general, the majority of childbirths worldwide occur through natural vaginal delivery, accounting for approximately 75 to 90% of deliveries. However, the rate of C-sections has been steadily rising globally, reaching around 20 to 25% of all births. Understanding these factors is essential for expectant parents to make an informed decision that aligns with their unique circumstances and preferences.

MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the primary factors to consider when choosing between a natural birth and a C-section is the medical condition of both the mother and the baby. Maternal health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, or heart disease may influence the suitability of vaginal delivery. Similarly, obstetric complications such as Placenta Previa, contracted pelvis, fetal distress, or a breech presentation may necessitate a C-section. Consulting with healthcare providers, including obstetricians and midwives, is essential. They carefully evaluate the individual's health condition and determine the safest delivery method for both the mother and the baby, aiming to minimize risks and complications.

PREVIOUS DELIVERY EXPERIENCE

A woman with a previous childbirth experience can significantly impact her decision regarding the method of delivery. Positive experiences with natural birth may lead to a preference for a vaginal delivery, while traumatic or complicated deliveries may prompt consideration of a C-section. Women who have undergone a C-section in the past may consider vaginal birth after Cesarean (VBAC) after discussion with their healthcare providers and careful assessment of their suitability for VBAC. It's essential for expectant parents to reflect on their past experiences and discuss them with their healthcare providers to make an informed decision.

DELIVERY PROCESS

Understanding the details and implications of the delivery process for both natural birth and C-section is crucial. Natural birth typically involves the onset of labour, progression through different stages of labour, and ultimately, the delivery of the baby through the birth canal. It often results in a shorter recovery time for the mother and promotes early bonding and breastfeeding initiation. On the other hand, a C-section is an surgical procedure that requires anaesthesia and involves incisions on the abdomen and uterus to deliver the baby. While C-sections may be necessary in cases of medical emergencies or complications, they generally involve a longer recovery period and a higher risk of infection compared to vaginal delivery.

PERSONAL PREFERENCES AND BIRTH PLANS

In the realm of childbirth, personal preferences and birth plans serve as guiding beacons for expectant parents navigating the intricate journey of bringing new life into the world. Some expectant parents may have strong preferences for one method of delivery over the other based on cultural or emotional factors. It's essential for them to openly communicate with their healthcare providers about their preferences and concerns to ensure that their birth plan aligns with their wishes while prioritizing the health and well-being of both mother and baby. These preferences encompass a spectrum of desires, intentions, and expectations unique to each individual, shaping the trajectory of labour, delivery, and postpartum care.

SUPPORT SYSTEM AND RESOURCES

Having a supportive birth team and access to resources such as childbirth education classes and prenatal support services can facilitate the decision-making process. Childbirth education classes provide expectant parents with valuable information about the childbirth process, pain management techniques, and strategies for labour and delivery. Facilities for the provision of epidural, having a supportive partner or support person can provide emotional and practical support throughout labour and childbirth.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS




The psychological and emotional readiness of expectant parents is another critical factor to consider when choosing between natural birth and C-section. Pregnancy and childbirth can evoke a range of emotions, including excitement, anxiety, and fear. It's essential for expectant parents to explore their feelings and seek emotional support from their healthcare providers, family members, or support groups as needed.

In conclusion, choosing between a natural birth and a C-section involves careful consideration of medical, obstetric, personal, and emotional factors. Expectant parents should work closely with their healthcare providers to weigh the risks and benefits of each delivery method and make an informed decision that aligns with their preferences and circumstances. Addressing issues such as anxiety and alleviating fears helps in making positive choices. By prioritizing safety, well-being, and open communication, expectant parents can embark on their childbirth journey with confidence and peace of mind.

(The author, Dr. Chandana Galidevara, is a Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, of High-risk Pregnancy, Foetal Medicine Specialist and Laparoscopic Surgeon, at Ankura Hospital for Women and Children.)



Safari Kid Preschool and Daycare announced its entry into the vibrant city of Hyderabad. Located at Financial district, this is Safari Kid's first center in a tech park in India. The Hyderabad center was inaugurated by Mamidala Yashaswini Reddy, Member of the Telangana Legislative Assembly (MLA).



Mohammed Ali Shabbir, advisor to govt, and Syed Omer Jaleel, IAS, Secretary to Minority Welfare department, along with Aisha Masrath Khanam, IAS, Secretary TMREI Society, inaugurated the paintings exhibition by Telangana Minority Welfare school students. The expo which will end today, saw over 2000 artworks of students from over 204 schools.



Ohri's announced the grand launch of Mings&Mee, a culinary haven bringing the vibrant flavours of Pan Asian cuisine. With decades of culinary excellence under its belt, the decision to evolve into a Pan Asian paradise is a testament to Ohri's commitment to catering to the diverse taste palettes of Hyderabad. Mings&Mee promises an immersive dining experience that seamlessly blends tradition with innovation. Mings&Mee unveils a menu that reads like a Pan Asian passport, offering signature dishes that promise to be the talk of the town.

LISTINGS

On Rare Diseases Day, Hyd doctors urge action on comprehensive policy and enhanced patient care

With Rare Diseases Day on 29 February, healthcare experts are calling for a comprehensive Rare Disease Policy as the need of the hour. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), rare diseases typically affect fewer than 1 in 1,000 individuals, and in India, around 70 million people grapple with 450 rare diseases, including the particularly debilitating Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). Despite the introduction of the National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD) in 2021, specific challenges posed by SMA persist. In Hyderabad, the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) is a designated centre for rare disease treatment. However, there are challenges in navigating the registration process for patients, particularly those from remote villages who face illiteracy and financial constraints. They say that the policy implementation faces additional hurdles, concerning the cost-effectiveness of interventions for rare diseases in comparison to other healthcare priorities. Challenges arise in determining how expenditures should be divided between the central and state governments. These factors contribute to the complexities surrounding policy execution.

Samsung's PC lineup Galaxy Book4 Series goes on sale

Samsung Galaxy Book4 series, the most intelligent PC lineup with Galaxy Book4 Pro 360, Galaxy Book4 Pro and Galaxy Book4 360, has gone on sale in India from Tuesday. Galaxy Book4 series comes with an intelligent new processor, a more vivid and interactive display and a robust security system — beginning a new era of AI PCs that offer ultimate productivity, mobility and connectivity. These enhancements not only improve the device but also elevate the entire Samsung Galaxy ecosystem, advancing the PC category and accelerating Samsung's vision of AI innovation — for today and tomorrow. Bringing next level connectivity, mobility and productivity, the Galaxy Book4 series redefines how users interact with their PCs, smartphones, tablets, and other devices, delivering truly connected and intelligent experiences. Price starting from Rs 114990.

Center fresh introduces lemon honey flavor in mints

Center Fresh, the flagship gum and mints brand of Perfetti Van Melle India introduced its latest innovation — the Center Fresh Mints Clean Breath Lemon Honey flavor. This new addition provides a delightful blend of intense mint and citrusy freshness offering 60 minutes of clean breath. The sweet and citrusy taste is like a refreshing dip in a lively, zesty pool, leaving a delightful aftertaste. The new Lemon Honey Lemon flavor is set to make a splash in the mint market, catering to both affordability and indulgence. The mint is priced at just Rs. 1.



IEEMA, Indian Electrical & Electronics Manufacturers' Association, formally announced the 16th edition of ELECRAMA, the world's largest electrical show. The show is scheduled from 22nd to 26th February 2025 and the theme is 'Reimagining Energy for Sustainable Future'. The event aims to foster dialogue and collaboration towards achieving a greener, more resilient energy ecosystem. The show will host industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to explore cutting-edge innovations, trends, and solutions driving the sector's growth.





In a bid to provide a strong sporting infrastructure and professional training, Gamepoint, the launched its new sports centre, Gamepoint Banjara at the prestigious Meridian School, Banjara Hills in Hyderabad. It will be the ninth centre of Gamepoint in Hyderabad and first in the Banjara Hills area which will also aim to promote sports among individuals apart from orchestrating a wide array of sports activities tailored to cater to all age groups including school kids. The students can now engage in sports activities at the facility after finishing school in order to enhance their skills.

Kamini Hospitals, has announced its strategic collaboration with QurHealth to revolutionize post-operative care for its patients. This partnership represents a significant milestone in the field of healthcare technology as both organizations combine their expertise to redefine the patient care and recovery experience. Leveraging AI-based innovations, Kamini Hospitals and QurHealth are poised to transform post-operative care, ensuring optimal patient outcomes and reducing complications.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS






GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Quiet and calm
- A large bird of prey
- A narrow shelf
- Thin soft paper
- Opposite of false
- Look after for someone
- Captured
- Foe
- This travels on rails
- Checked the size of

DOWN

- Sheets in a book
- A road with trees along both sides
- Long slippery fishes

SOLUTION

V	A	L	I	A	B
A	I	A	N	E	
N	O	T	E	B	I
I	R	I	S	H	E
S	T	E	A	M	
H	N	E	C	R	A
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N	O	T	E		
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‘AIR FORCE OFFICERS WANTED US TO SHOW THE CHARACTERS THE RIGHT WAY & NOT COMMERCIALISE’

K. RAMYA SREE

Just yesterday, we informed you that *Operation Valentine* is a return gift to India and that ‘Valentine’ in this movie is the love for our country, as mentioned by the lead actor of the movie, Varun Tej. Today we have the producers of the movie, Siddhu Mudda and Nandkumar Abbineni, talk about the finances and other aspects of the movie.

What makes this interview special is that *Operation Valentine* was made on a budget of about Rs 47 crore, including VFX, which is an extremely tight budget for a movie like this, and we were curious how the producers made it.

Beginning with how this movie has started, Siddhu said, “We saw a short film by the director, and I told him that we will take things forward if he has a good story. At the same time, I met Varun, who also watched this short film and liked it. I told him that he was planning a full-length movie on this story and asked if we should listen to it. Since we decided to make it in Hindi and Telugu, we partnered with Sony, which was already planning to make a film with Varun. They liked the script, too. That’s how it all started.”

The producer says he and Nandkumar want to make good films that are rich in content. And for them, this is a very good film, and their confidence in the director’s VFX background

Ahead of the much-anticipated film’s release, *Operation Valentine*, producers Siddhu Mudda and Nandkumar Abbineni talk about the finances and other aspects of the movie.

made them feel even more confident about the movie’s output. He shared, “The director has a VFX background. This movie has a lot of aerial sequences, which need a lot of VFX to be done. Given the director’s background, we felt like he would do it. The rest we got were all senior technicians.”

Finally speaking about the budget and how they were able to

make the movie within the said amount, Siddhu informed, “Our movie’s budget was Rs 42 crore and the VFX’s budget was Rs 5 crore. As we said, we got a lot of support from the Air Force. They have given us a lot of freehand in using their airbase. We shot for 25–40 days in Gwalior. Because of the Airbase help they gave me, I could save a lot of money. Since the director was technically sound.”



“When the Air Force officers watched the movie, they were very happy. They had only one request from us: to bring the script to light as it is and show their characters in the right way, not cinematise or commercialise them. They apparently had a bad experience previously with a Hindi movie, so they put in this request of theirs,” he added.

While this movie is made in both Hindi and Telugu, the producers say that there is just a half-minute scene difference between Hindi and Telugu, except that everything has been the same.

They feel that this genre has national appeal; hence, they decided to make it in Hindi as well.

On the other hand, Nandkumar shared, “It was tough shooting in the airbase where the temperatures were very high. On top of that, every crew had to be background cleared. All the crew members must get in and out at the same time. It was a tedious process.”

Wedding bells ringing for Taapsee Pannu

Actress Taapsee Pannu’s wedding news has always been a hot topic both in Bollywood and the south film industry given her extensive career in cinema across many languages. The actress has always kept her personal life very private.

But now reports that we can rely on suggest that the *Pink* star is set to tie the knot with her longtime partner Mathias Boe in March in an intimate ceremony.

The couple is said to exchange vows in a lavish ceremony that is expected to combine Christian and Sikhism customs.

People expressed confidence in their relationship when Mathias showed up for Taapsee’s birthday roast the previous year.

Mathias and Taapsee have been dating for more than ten years.

For those who are unaware, Mathias is a native of Denmark who played badminton before switching to coaching. He made his debut for his country in 1998. He became the world’s best doubles player and is now the Indian team’s doubles coach. At the 2012 London Olympics, he took home the silver medal in men’s doubles. He also won a silver in the 2013 World Championship.



Raju Gari Ammayi Naidu Gari Abbayi trailer has all mirchi masala

Raju Gari Ammayi Naidu Gari Abbayi, a rural entertainer, directed by Satya Raj is all set to hit big screens on March 9. Starring debutante Ravi Teja Nunna as the hero alongside Neha Jurel, the movie has its trailer released on Wednesday.

Based on the trailer, *Raju Gari Ammayi Naidu Gari Abbayi* revolves around a carefree, optimistic young man who falls in love with a strong woman in a picturesque village. But rivalries in the countryside threaten their future together. All hands seem to be pointing at the protagonist suddenly for the woman’s murder. The movie looks to be a vibrant mash-up of humour, action, romance, and thrills. The crew promised that the *Raju Gari Ammayi Naidu Gari Abbayi* would serve audiences nothing less than a hearty dinner with enough ingredients to satisfy both young and family audiences.



Dr Gangadhara Shastri wins India’s prestigious ‘KENDRA SANGEET NATAK ACADEMY’ AWARD

Renowned Bhagavad Gita singer, prophet, propagandist, and founder of ‘Bhagavadgita Foundation’ Dr. LV Gangadhara Shastri has been conferred with India’s prestigious ‘Kendra Sangeet Natak Academy’ award for the year 2023 in other major traditional music category.

Along with the classical Carnatic music, he studied 108 of the 700 shlokas of the Bhagavad Gita, the spiritual essence of India, composed and sung by

Ghantasala in his honor; the remaining 594 shlokas were sung in his own music, accompanied by Telugu interpretation, and recorded with the highest technical values and created the ‘Bharita Sampurna Bhagavad Gita’ which was released by Viswesha Tirtha Swamy, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. For his selfless efforts, he was given the award for dedicating his life to the Gita Pracharan.

Vishnu Manchu’s Kannappa 2nd schedule commences in New Zealand

Actor Vishnu Manchu has commenced the second schedule of his dream project *Kannappa*.

After arriving in New Zealand, Vishnu Manchu posted a video of himself and Mohan Babu together. It appears that this second schedule will have some absolutely stunning scenes. With its captivating first look poster, the film that promises a never-before-seen experience is generating a lot of attention not only nationally but internationally as well.

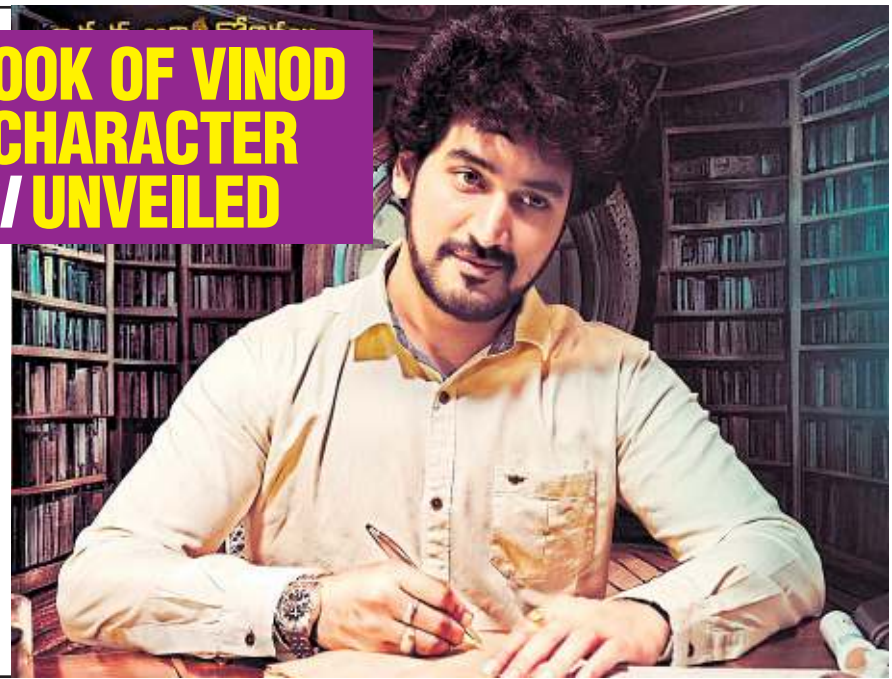
This movie is directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, who created the Maha Bharatham television series. Sheldon Chau, a Hollywood cinematographer, is directing this film. This movie is being produced nationwide by Mohan Babu under the auspices of 24 Frames Factory and AVA Entertainment.



THE FIRST LOOK OF VINOD VARMA’S CHARACTER FROM ARI UNVEILED

Presented by RV Reddy, the film *Ari* is produced by Srinivas Ramireddy, Thimmappa Naidu Purimetla, and Seshu Maram Reddy under the banner of ARVY Cinemas.

The taglines is *My Name is No Buddy*. Vinod Varma, Surya Purimetla, Anasuya Bharadwaj, Sai Kumar, and Srikanth Iyengar are playing key roles in the movie, helmed by Jaya Shankar, recognised for the film *Paper Boy*. On Wednesday, the first look poster of Vinod Varma’s character from the movie was unveiled.



RGV’s Vyuham to be hit screens on March 2

Director Ram Gopal Verma has helmed two films *Vyuham* and *Sapadham*, based on some events that happened in the political life of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan. These movies are produced by Dasari Kiran Kumar under the banner of Ramadootha Creations.

The movie *Vyuham* has completed its censor formalities and is heading for a theatrical release on March 2, announced its makers on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the producer of the film Dasari Kiran Kumar said, “God has made everything come together for us regarding the release of the movies *Vyuham* and *Sapadham*. These two movies are going to be released in around 500 theaters in Telugu states. We believe that these movies will become hits. The Censor Board has given permission for the release of *Vyuham* despite the hurdles created by many.”

RAHUL STILL FEELING SORE WHILE BATTING IN NETS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior India batter K L Rahul is unlikely to feature in the fifth and final Test against England in Dharamsala as he continues to feel sore in his right quadriceps. Rahul became unavailable after the series-opener in Hyderabad in January but as per BCCI, he was 90 per cent fit before the third Test in Rajkot earlier this month. Rahul has now travelled to London to get an expert opinion on his injury and with the series in the bag, the Indian team management will not take the risk of playing him in the Dharamsala Test beginning March 7. He needs to be fully fit before the IPL where he will lead Lucknow Super Giants and is expected to bat in the middle order to bolster his chances of making the India squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean. "It is more to get an expert opinion (travel to London). He experiences a bit of pain (right quadriceps) while batting. It is to ensure that he recovers fully as he is a player that team needs long-term. "There is so much competition coming his way -- IPL, he could also be in the T20 World Cup mix. Then we have some important Test series against New Zealand, and Australia later in the year.



UNLIKELY FOR DHARAMSALA TEST

So, it is better to give him time to recover properly than rushing him," an IPL source told PTI. It is the same quadriceps injury that had sidelined Rahul for almost four months last year. Having got injured during the IPL, Rahul returned to action with the Asia Cup in September and made instant impact. In the more recent Test tour of South Africa, Rahul was the only century maker from India in the drawn series. His absence from the final Test means Rajat Patidar will remain with the squad but the MP batter can't be sure of his place in the playing eleven, having aggregated only 63 runs in six innings. There is a possibility that Patidar will make away for Devdutt Padikkal in Dharamsala. **BUMRAH SET TO RETURN:** India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who was rested for the Ranchi Test, is expected to lead the attack at the HPCA Stadium. The series is sealed but every Test match offers crucial World Test Championship points and Bumrah can play a big part in the cooler climes of Dharamsala. India are second in the standings with five wins, two losses and a draw. New Zealand lead the table with a winning percentage of 75 but they have only played four Tests.



Jaiswal rises to 12th in ICC Test rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's latest batting sensation Yashasvi Jaiswal advanced towards a top-10 spot in the ICC rankings for Test batters by climbing three spots to 12th while his compatriot Dhruv Jurel leapfrogged 31 places to 69th on Wednesday. Jaiswal, who started the series in 69th position, continues his ascent to the top after scores of 73 and 37 in the fourth match of India's ICC World Test Championship series against England in Ranchi. Player of the Match Jurel's scores of 90 and 39 has jumped a whopping 31 places while former England captain Joe Root is back in the top three. Root, a formerly top-ranked batter, struck an unbeaten 122 in the first innings in Ranchi to move up two places to third position. He also moved up three spots to fourth among all-rounders. Senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's five-wicket haul in the second innings has helped him narrow the gap with top-ranked Jasprit Bumrah to 21 rating points at 846 after the fast bowler was rested for the Ranchi Test. Wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav moved up 10 places to the 32nd spot and England's

Shoaib Bashir, who climbed 38 places to 80th, have also attained career bests. Opener Zak Crawley entered the top 20 for the first time after scores of 42 and 60, while a bunch of spinners have also prospered in the latest weekly update. The T20I Rankings see Australia batter Travis Head move into the top 20 for the first time after scores of 24, 45 and 33 in the series against New Zealand. Tim David's quickfire 31 off just 10 balls in the first match see him move up six places to 22nd and past the 600-point barrier for the first time in his career. The top six bowlers are unchanged, with Josh Hazlewood the only new one in the top 10 after finishing with figures of 4-1-12-1 in Auckland. In the ODI rankings, the biggest mover has been Namibia's Bernard Scholtz, whose hauls of four for 31 against Nepal and two for 15 against the Netherlands in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 Tri-Series in Kirtipur have lifted him to 11th position and 642 ratings points, the highest position and points tally ever achieved by a Namibia player in ODI cricket.

Muzumdar looks to create fast bowlers pool from WPL

PTI ■ BENGALURU

With just seven months left for the Women's T20 World Cup to begin in Bangladesh, India head coach Amol Muzumdar is keen to identify and build a pool of fast bowlers from the on-going Women's Premier League. The Indian pace unit looks a bit thin after the retirement of legendary Jhulan Goswami and moving on from veteran Shikha Pandey. Currently, the Indian pace bowling is marshalled by Renuka Singh, Pooja Vastrakar, Titas Sadhu and Amanjot Kaur. "Four fast bowlers played the last series (against Australia). I want to create a pool of fast bowlers (from the WPL). It makes a lot of difference if you strengthen the bowling attack," Muzumdar was quoted as saying ESPNcricinfo. "I would want another pool of 20-25 players to create a bench



strength for the Indian team," he added. The ninth edition of the Women's T20 World Cup will be held in September-October in Bangladesh.

Muzumdar had taken over as India coach last year ahead of home series against England and Australia. While India won the Tests against the visitors, they lost the T20I and ODI series. Muzumdar was also delighted to see front-line Indian batters such as Shafali Verma, S Meghana and Richa Ghosh among runs ahead of the marquee event later this year. "There is an upscale movement in India's batters. The confidence from those two series against England and Australia is on display (here) because of how they performed there." The former Mumbai batsman was also chuffed to see the presence of mind Sajana Sajeevan showed while carrying Mumbai Indians to a victory over Delhi Capitals with a last-ball six. "Sajana's six gives you an idea of the depth in Indian cricket," said Muzumdar.



Renuka set tone for RCB by controlling Powerplay: Molineux

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Renuka Singh has managed Rto control the Powerplay period by providing early breakthroughs and stopping run-flow with her swing bowling which played a significant role in RCB winning both its games, says team spin all-rounder Sophie Molineux. Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) are sitting on top of the table with four points. Mumbai Indians (+0.488) also have four points but they are placed second behind RCB who have better NRR of +1.665. RCB had restricted Gujarat Giants to 107 for seven on Tuesday night with Renuka returning impressive figures of 4-0-14-2. RCB then overhauled the target in 12.3 overs to log their second win on the trot. "Renuka has been incredible in both games and playing against her for India, she's just so reliable and it's great to be on the same team as her. She swings the ball beautifully at the front and I think she's really set the tone for us in both games," Molineux said. In their opening game against UP Warriorz, Renuka did not dismiss any batter but conceded only 14 runs in her 3 overs. RCB had edged UPW by just two runs to begin the tournament with a thrilling win.

"To be able to control the powerplay is a big thing in T20 cricket and she's done that twice now and I can see her continuing to do that," the Australian cricketer said. Role clarity for every player and adaptability is part of the RCB approach under coach Luke Williams. In their opening match against UPW, the RCB opted for swing from one end and spin from the other, while against GG, Renuka Singh and her pace colleague Sophie Devine bowled in tandem up front. Molineux, who took three wickets herself after Renuka's new-ball burst, said her team has flexibility. "In T20 cricket as a bowler you need to be really clear on what your strengths are and what you can bring to the team. And I think Luke and all the staff have been really clear with each bowler with what their roles are going to be and also at the same time be willing to adapt like we did today. "We had a completely different look to our powerplay where we were really pace-heavy. So yeah, I think that's all a part of T20 cricket, especially just being really clear on your own individual plans and where that fits in with the team and being able to change on the fly," Molineux said. RCB will take on third-placed Delhi Capitals in their next match on Thursday.

Conway out, Ravindra in for New Zealand ahead of 1st test against Australia

AP ■ WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND)

Devon Conway has been ruled out but Rachin Ravindra has been cleared to play for New Zealand in the first cricket test against Australia starting at the Basin Reserve on Thursday. Conway suffered a thumb injury while keeping wicket in the second Twenty20 international between the teams on Friday last week. While initial scans suggested there was no fracture, additional tests in Wellington in recent days have found there is damage to Conway's left thumb. Conway will have further tests later in the week. Meantime, Will Young open the batting with Tom Latham in Conway's place. Henry Nicholls, who was dropped from the New Zealand team ahead of its two recent tests against South Africa - both victories - has been recalled to provide reinforcement for the batting lineup. "It's disappointing for Devon to be ruled out on the eve of an important match," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said. "He's a class player batting at the top of the order for us and I know he was really looking forward to this series."



Ravindra missed the second and third Twenty20s against Australia with a slight knee injury but is fit to play from Thursday. He scored a maiden double century in the first innings of the first test against South Africa. Daryl Mitchell is also available after missing the South Africa series with a foot injury. Captain Tim Southee said New Zealand will settle on its match lineup after assessing conditions at the Basin Reserve where the pitch usually is green at first but good for batting. New Zealand will decide whether to go into the match with four

seamers or to include spin-bowling allrounder Mitchell Santner. New Zealand left Santner out of its lineup for the second test against South Africa at Hamilton, using four seamers. "I think in hindsight, we probably got that wrong the way that the pitch did behave," Stead said. "We've certainly got Mitch Santner here as that option and we'll certainly consider him as well." Australia captain Pat Cummins has named an unchanged starting XI for the test. Cummins confirmed Wednesday there would be "no surprises" in the starting XI, with Australia picking the same team that lost to the West Indies in the second test in Brisbane last month. "It's always nice to have a full contingent to pick from," Cummins said. "I doesn't feel like we need to reinvent the wheel." The two-test series against Australia will be one of the few occasions New Zealand has a full-strength Australia lineup. New Zealand and Australia only rarely meet in test series and Australia at times has not fielded its best team. New Zealand currently is first and Australia third in World Test Championship standings.

Zaheer was someone I used to watch a lot: Anderson

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

James Anderson, England's greatest fast bowler with an unparalleled longevity and nearly 1000 international wickets, says he has learned a few elements of pace bowling, including reverse swing, from Indian great Zaheer Khan. At 41, Anderson continues to lead the England attack and is two short of becoming the first fast bowler in the history of the sport to breach the 700-wicket mark. Spin legends Muttiah Muralitharan and the late Shane Warne are the only bowlers with 700 plus wickets in Test cricket. "For me, Zaheer Khan was someone I used to watch a lot to try and learn from. How he used the reverse swing, how he covered the ball when he ran into bowl, that's something I tried to sort of develop on the back of playing against him quite a few times here," Anderson told JioCinema. Zaheer, one of India's finest seamers, played his last Test

in 2014 when Anderson was at the top of his game. Among the current lot of Indian pacers, Anderson is most impressed by Jasprit Bumrah's ability, calling him a "great exponent" of reverse swing. Asked about Bumrah's match-winning performance in the second Test against England, Anderson said, "With someone of his quality you expect that standard from him. You know that reverse swing can play a big part in India and he's a great exponent of it. He's got good pace and is very accurate, very consistent. "That yorker we saw to Ollie Pope, he's got that up his sleeve as well. It's not a fluke that he's got to number one in the world. He's a world-class bowler and from our point of view we weren't surprised that he put up a performance like that." The seasoned Englishman added, "There are not many better bowlers than Bumrah, Shami and Siraj. They're world-class bowlers. You put Ishant Sharma in there as



well, and that's a really strong bowling attack." Anderson's longevity in the game can be ascertained by the fact that his current England teammates such as Shoaib Bashir and Rehan Ahmed were not even born when he made his Test debut way back in 2002. Having played 186 Tests and 194 ODIs over the last 22 years, Anderson's desire to be competitive remains intact. On comparing his longevity to other sporting legends, Anderson said, "Yeah, I guess you do look at things like that, but to be honest, I just go with the feel of me and my body. I don't feel like I'm 41 years and 200 days old. You know, I still feel young. "I can keep up with the young guys in training. I can still bowl the speeds that I want to, I can still deliver the skills that I want to. So, for me that's the most important thing. Age is just a number and it's pretty irrelevant from my thought process." When the discussion turned to reverse swing, Anderson said the art remains relevant

even in an age dominated by T20 cricket. "I don't think it's dying. Because of the growth of white-ball cricket in recent times, the focus has moved to change of pace and different deliveries like yorkers, and things like that. "But for me, in Test cricket, we've seen throughout this series already that swing can play a big part. "The way Bumrah's bowled, I think, has been amazing to watch. That reverse swing spell in the second Test was one of the best you'll see. For me, I think there's still people out there wanting to learn the skills and it's not easy to do." With star batter Virat Kohli skipping the ongoing Test series due to personal reasons, Anderson said he missed bowling to the Indian maestro with he had had some fascinating duels. "You always want to play against the best players. And it's been a shame that he's not been a part of the series. We have had some great battles over the years."