

-SPORTS

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He said that under the Cong

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ED filed sheep scam case against KCR: Raghunandan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, said that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a case against former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and that ED officials came to Hyderabad to meet KCR.

He said that KCR, former Minister T. Harish Rao and MLC Venkatrami Reddy would face the music in the coming days.

Attending a felicitation meeting, Raghunandan responded to the ED's entry into the sheep scam.

The ED asked the ACB, which is probing the sheep scam, to provide details of the irregularities that took place.

Raghunandan said that he is not a person of mere words but a man who gets things done and that his opponent Venkatrami Reddy lost the election even though his party had distributed money and liquor openly.

Grace marks withdrawn...

Continued from page 1

Refusing to stall the counselling for NEET-UG, 2024, scheduled to commence from July 6, the top court made it clear that the admission of successful candidates to medical colleges and other institutions will be subject to the outcome of the petitions which have sought reliefs like cancellation of the examination held on May 5 on grounds of question paper leak and other malpractices.

A vacation bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta termed as "fairly reasonable" the decision to cancel the grace marks awarded to 1,563 candidates on the recommendation of a panel set up to look into the grievances voiced by the petitioners. The National Testing Agency (NTA) conducts the all India pre-medical entrance test.

At the outset, lawyer Kanu Agarwal, appearing for the Centre and the NTA, said the committee set up to look into the grievances decided on June 12 to "allay the fears of the students". It was of the view that the grace marks be withdrawn and replaced with an option of re-test for these candidates which will be conducted on June 23.

ED seeks details of SRDS...

Continued from page 1

This directive, issued under Section 54 of the PMLA, 2002, underscores the urgency of the matter.

In a bid to unravel financial irregularities, the ED has requested comprehensive details and documents from the TSSGD/CFL about the execution of the SRDS from its inception.

These details include district-wise particulars of beneficiaries, sellers from whom

Different political affiliations keep guru-chela apart

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Have the different political affiliations alienated the guru-chela (disciple) relationship between the two Telugu Chief Ministers? Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy considers Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu as his political guru. Revanth Reddy a few days ago personally contacted TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu to congratulate him on his victory in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. During the call, Revanth Reddy stressed on the need for good relations between the two Telugu states. Revanth Reddy had earlier said that he would attend the swearing-in ceremony of Chandrababu if he was invited. But Revanth Reddy did not attend Chandrababu's swearing-in ceremony as it



happened on Wednesday . Perhaps Chandrababu would not have invited the Telangana Chief Minister for this function due to TDP's alliance with the BJP in Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. To not hurt the feelings of BJP leaders, Chandrababu would not have invited Revanth Reddy. Chandrababu invited several leaders of other states including some BJP Chief Ministers. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several union ministers including those from Telangana attended the ceremony.

If Revanth Reddy had attended the function, he would have been the only Chief Minister who was not from the NDA. It is a known fact that the BJP and Congress are political rivals in the national politics. At this juncture, if the Congress Chief Minister

was to be invited, the BJP top leaders may have misunderstood Chandrababu. To avoid unnecessary controversy, Chandrababu would not have invited Revanth Reddy inspite of having special affection for him. If the TDP had not allied with the BJP the political situation would have been different. Revanth Reddy also did not invite Chandrababu for his swearing-in ceremony as the Telangana Chief Minister. Because by that time, Chandrababu was trying seriously for an alliance with the BJP. In fact, in 2019 Telangana Assembly elections, the TDP had an alliance with the Congress. Chandrababu shared the dias with AICC leader Rahul Gandhi in the election campaign. In the 2023 Telangana Assembly elections, the TDP did not contest and directed its cadre to support the Congress to defeat the BRS.

Thenmar Mallanna sworn in as MLC



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Thenmar Mallanna alias Chintapandu Naveen Kumar took oath as an MLC on Thursday. Legislature Council Chairman Gutha Sukhender Reddy conducted the proceedings.

AICC General Secretary in-charge Deepa Das Munshi, Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah, MLAs Jaiveer Reddy, Balu Naik, MLC Balmoor Venkat, Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and others attended the function.

It may be recalled that Theenmar Mallanna won by defeating BRS candidate A. Rakesh Reddy in the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduates MLC by-poll.



CM discusses investments with Japanese envoy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy discussed Japanese investment opportunities in the state with Japan Ambassador Suzuki Hiroshi. The Ambassador visited the Chief Minister on Thursday and they discussed

investment opportunities in Telangana, government priorities and employment generation issues.

Ambassador Suzuki Hiroshi, accompanied by his Secretaries, met TG Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari at the Secretariat.

Massive searches continue in J-K to hunt down terrorists

DGP meets top army officer in Jammu

PNS ■ JAMMU

The search operation launched in Jammu and Kashmir to track down and neutralise terrorists after the June 9 attack on a bus carrying pilgrims entered the fifth day on Thursday, officials said, as Director General of Police R R Swain met a top army officer here to discuss the ongoing action.

Over the past few days, terrorists struck at four places in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts, killing nine people, including seven pilgrims and a CRPF jawan, and leaving seven security personnel and others injured.

The DGP, along with Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Vijay Kumar and Jammu zone additional director general of police Anand Jain, visited Jammu-based White Knight Corps and interacted with General Officer Commanding (GOC) Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva, the army said.

"... They deliberated upon



the ongoing counter terror operations. They reaffirmed their commitment to ensure peace and security in the region," the white knight corps of the army wrote on X after the meeting.

Officials said security forces launched a fresh search and cordon operation in Kathua's Saida Sukhal village in Hiranagar sector late this afternoon following information about the presence of two more terrorists.

Two suspected Pakistani terrorists, part of a newly infiltrated group, and a CRPF jawan were killed in the village in an over 15-hour long operation that started Tuesday evening.

PIB's fact check unit busts fake news in 134 videos across 12 YouTube channels

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday claimed to have busted fake news carried in 134 videos across 12 YouTube channels, having cumulative subscribers running into several lakhs.

The Press Information Bureau's Fact Checking Unit said the YouTube channels in question carried videos making misleading claims such as payouts to the tune of Rs 51,000 to meet expenses of daughter's wedding, benefits totalling Rs 2.5 lakh to ration card holders and fake news regarding Covid vaccines.

The videos were hosted by YouTube channels NitiGyan4U, KLOnlineStudy, Sarkari Khabar 21, Media Tak, NewsWave_429,

onlinejobBRK among others.

"The thumbnail of a YouTube channel named "onlinejobBRK" claims that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced that Jan Dhan account owners will get Rs 10,000 post his win in the 2024 General Elections. This claim is fake. Beware of Fake News," the PIB Fact Check Unit said in a post on X.

The YouTube channel AM News YT had claimed that the Chief Justice of India had snatched the elections from Modi.

The thumbnail of a YouTube channel named "NewsWave_429" claims that the Supreme Court has declared Prime Minister Modi's defeat.

Non-bailable arrest warrant against...

Continued from page 1

The BJP veteran, who is also a member of the party's parliamentary board, is presently in Delhi, and he is likely to join the probe after he returns, sources close to him have said. According to police,

Yediyurappa has been booked under the POCSO Act and Section 354 A (Sexual harassment) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he molested her daughter during a meeting on February two this year, at his

residence in Dollars Colony here.

The victim's brother had filed a petition in the court earlier this week alleging that though the case was registered on March 14, no progress has been made in the investigation. The petitioner prayed that

Yediyurappa should be arrested and interrogated.

After the Sadashivanagar police registered the case in March, the Karnataka Director General of Police Alok Mohan had issued an order transferring it to the CID for further investigation.

Vital role for...

Continued from page 1

He said that 10 years ago agriculture, industry and the IT sector faced power cuts due to coal shortage and that even in Hyderabad industries faced power cuts. Due to power cuts crops used to wither and many farmers committed suicide. However, in the last 10 years, he said Modi made the country free of power cuts. Coal will play a vital role in eliminating power shortages and I will try my best to make India free of power cuts. India is importing some coal from abroad. In the last 10 years, Modi has freed the country from frequent power cuts.

"I work under the leadership of Modi and will do my part to make India the third largest economy," Kishan said.

Bodies of 45 Indians...

Continued from page 1

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, serving as the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defence, said that authorities have identified 48 bodies, among which 45 are of Indians and three are of Filipino nationality, English language daily Arab Times reported.

The efforts are still underway to determine the identity of one remaining body, said the first deputy prime minister. Kuwaiti authorities are conducting DNA tests on the bodies of those killed in the devastating fire incident in southern Kuwait's Mangaf area and an Indian Air Force aircraft is on standby to bring back the mortal remains of Indians killed in the incident, officials said in New Delhi on Thursday. Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan

Singh, who reached Kuwait to oversee assistance to Indians injured in the fire and to ensure early repatriation of mortal remains of those killed, met Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya who assured full support and vowed to promptly investigate the tragedy.

Singh also met some of the Indians injured in the massive fire and assured them all support from the Indian government. Later, he called on First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad, who conveyed condolences on behalf of the Emir and his instructions to ensure all necessary assistance and support. Singh conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's greetings to the Emir and thanked the deputy prime minister and the leadership of Kuwait for pro-active facilitation being provided by Kuwaiti authorities, the Indian mission said.

Support me in...

Continued from page 1

"On taking charge as Minister of State in Ministry of Home Affairs, I would like to thank you each one of you for being on my side and my support system. These doors opened only because of support from my leader Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendramodi, Hon'ble Union Home Minister Amit Shah, party chief JPNadda, BJP Telangana cadre, media, social media warriors and most importantly people of Karimnagar parliamentary constituency. I earnestly request you to continue to support me in my service for nation," he said in a post on X.

Kumar, who was elected from the Karimnagar seat in Telangana, also performed puja at his office in the presence of several priests before taking charge.

TG plans 'Mahila...

Continued from page 1

The CS directed the PR&RD Commissioner to prepare a detailed action plan regarding the functioning, management and space required for establishing the canteens.

The Chief Secretary said during the meeting that the Chief Minister intended to strengthen women's organisations in the state. Special canteens will be set up in all government offices, Collectorates, tourist spots, temples, bus stands and industrial areas with the assistance of women's organisations. A study has been done on the successful performance of similar canteens operating in Kerala and 'Didi Ka Rasoi' in West Bengal. The management of these canteens in TG will be handed over to rural women's groups and special training will be given to these groups on running them. Revenue Principal Secretary Naveen Mittal, Panchayat Raj Commissioner Anita Ramachandran, Health Department Commissioner Karnan, Endowment Commissioner Hanumantha Rao, Tourism Director Nikhila, Tourism Corporation MD Ramesh Naidu and others attended the meeting.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Ashtami: Jun 13 09:33 PM to Jun 15 12:04 AM

Navami: Jun 15 12:04 AM to Jun 16 02:32 AM

Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: Jun 14 05:08 AM to Jun 15 08:14 AM

Rahukalam: 10:38 AM to 12:16 PM

Yamagandam: 3:32 PM to 5:09 PM

Varjyam: 01:16 PM to 03:04 PM

Gulika: 7:23 AM to 9:01 AM

Amritakalam: 12:06 AM to 01:54 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:50 AM to 12:42 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms

Temp: 32°

Humidity: 70%

Sunrise: 5:42 AM

Sunset: 6:52 PM

Updated: June 13, 2024 5:00 PM



SHORTAGE IN SUPPLY

Vegetable prices hit roof in Telangana

Prices may come down when fresh crop arrives at the market

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Household budgets are taking a severe beating with vegetable prices rising by the day in Telangana. The rise in the vegetable price is attributed to shortage in supply. Vegetable crops had been hit by heatwave in the beginning and later by unseasonal rains.

The inflationary tendency of vegetables and other essential commodities hit the poor and middle classes. Very high temperatures during the summer and heavy rains lashing the Narayanapeta district led to vendors selling some vegetables at Rs 100 per kg and some others at Rs 80-90 per kg. The traders have been importing vegetables from Raichur and Yadgir in Karnataka. Therefore, they pass on the incidental costs like the cost of transportation to the consumers and hence the very high price of vegetables in the open market.



The prices of the vegetables here are more by Rs 10 to Rs 20 in the open market when compared to their prices in Rytu Bazaars.

Bitter Gourd and green chillies sell at Rs 100 per kg, while the prices of ridge gourd and beans exceeded Rs 100 by Rs 20

(Rs 120 per kg).

Capsicum is being sold at Rs 90 a kg, while long beans have been priced at Rs 80 a kg. Cauli flower is also being sold at Rs 80 a kg. Beans seeds are being sold at Rs 200-240 a kg.

The Rytu Bazaars have no variety of vegetables. They

The inflationary tendency of vegetables and other essential commodities hit the poor and middle classes. Very high temperatures during the summer and heavy rains lashing the Narayanapeta district led to vendors selling some vegetables at Rs 100 per kg and some others at Rs 80-90 per kg.

merely sell locally produced tomatoes, brinjals and spinach.

The prices will ease only when the Vanakalam vegetable crops arrives at the market. The South-West monsoon is active all over the state and farmers have been preparing the fields for cultivation of vegetables in

the district.

In Armoor of Nizamabad district, the prices of vegetables have almost doubled in a span of just one week. The high prices are attributed to shrinking of the area under cultivation of vegetable and green and leafy vegetable crops. The consumers were heard commenting that the prices of vegetables have almost been on a par with the prices of chicken and meat.

In Khammam, the traders in Rytu Bazaars have been selling vegetables at an exorbitant prices. Let alone speaking of high prices of vegetables in the open market.

The vegetable yield has gone down because of the high temperature in Khammam. The wholesale market imports 800-900 quintals of vegetables daily. Currently, the market imports only 400-500 quintals. The wholesale traders import some of them from Karnataka, AP and Maharashtra.



Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty speaking at a meeting in Hyderabad on Thursday

Officials told to facilitate smooth conduct of Civil Services exam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty on Thursday stated that the Union Public Service Commission Civil Services Preliminary Examination which will be held on June 16 should be conducted smoothly and calmly. He was speaking at a meeting held with supervisors and route officers on the conduct of UPSC Civil Services preliminary examination at the hall of Sarojini Naidu Vanita Mahavidyalaya at Nampally Exhibition Ground on Thursday.

The Collector said that 45,153 candidates registered for the Civil Services Preliminary Examination to be conducted in 99 examination centres in Hyderabad. It was ordered to conduct the examination strictly according to the UPSC regulations.

Examination for Paper 1

will be conducted from 9.30 am to 11.30 am, while Paper 2 from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm. As per the UPSC regulations, the gates of the examination center will be closed 30 minutes ahead of the examination.

Candidates should reach the examination centres 30 minutes before the morning examination at 9 am and 30 minutes before the afternoon i.e. by 2 pm. Those who come after the said timings will not be allowed. Also, they are not allowed to carry any electronic items such as calculators, cell phones, pagers, bluetooth, pen drives, smart watches, programme devices, electronic gadgets and electronic items into the centres.

The collector advised the police to allow female candidates to be checked by female police and male police to allow male candidates to enter the examination centers. No one should be allowed in the exam-

ination center (No ID No Entry) without an identity card and unauthorized persons should be kept away from the examination centers.

Cameras should be installed at each examination center, clean toilets and drinking water should be ensured, examination center supervisors should inspect and submit a report in advance to ensure that all facilities are available in each examination center. The supervisors of the examination centers should work in accordance with the UPSC guidelines.

District Revenue Officer Venkatachari explained the conduct of UPSC examination through power point presentation.

Additional Collector Patil Hemanta Keshav, UPSC Deputy Secretary Shailesh Gautam, Ashok Joshi, RDOs Mahipal, Dasharath Singh and others were present in this meeting.

NATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

OU inaugurates certificate course in fermentation tech

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Osmania University inaugurated the National Skill Development Programme's Certificate Programme in Fermentation Technology on Thursday at Prof. T Navaneeth Rao Central Facilities for Research and Development (PTNR-CFRD).

The programme is jointly run by Prof. T Navaneeth Rao Central Facilities for Research and Development (PTNR-CFRD) at Osmania University, CSIR-CSMCRI, Gujarat, and Abode Biotech India Pvt. Ltd. The CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative includes the three-day certificate programme. The curriculum attempts to teach the fundamentals and practical uses of fermentation technology to the students.

Prof. B Veeraiah, Principal, UCS, Osmania University, who served as the event's chief guest, explained to the students why they should take advantage of these tripartite collaborations.

Additionally, during the beginning of academic year 2023, the OU Department of Microbiology offered a new M.Sc. degree on Fermentation Technology. These kinds of training will help students develop their abilities and



prepare them for the future.

Dr Sourish Bhattacharya, a scientist and coordinator from CSIR-CSMCRI, Gujarat, spoke about how India was able to meet the needs of both the nation and the world for the Covid vaccine by mass producing vaccinations during the pandemic.

The directors of Abode Biotech India Pvt. Ltd., Madapati Sreenadh and Ranjith Kumar, emphasised that students had to make an effort to comprehend the industrial-level components and methodologies of fermentation technology. They talked about how they started off producing probiotics

on a modest scale and how, in less than ten years, they were able to scale up various technologies.

The programme conveners, Shalini and Dr Hameeda Bee, Chairperson Board of Studies, Dept. of Microbiology, elaborated on the significance of these certificate courses for students studying life sciences.

Furthermore, as COVID has raised public knowledge of probiotics, fermented foods, and novel medicinal biomolecules, these programmes will advance grassroots innovations to the proof of concept stage and expand their reach.

Nirmal Rural SI suspended for irregularities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Multi Zoned IGP AV. Ranganath suspended Nirmal Rural SI K Chandramohan who tried to benefit a company by committing irregularities in the investigation of the vehicle insurance money claim case on Thursday.

Based on the sources, a two-wheeler collided with a car under Nirmal rural police station limits and the person who drove the two-wheeler was seriously injured. The incident took place on February 2.

But the vehicle insurance for the car that was hit by the two-wheeler expired on that day. However, the car owner

renewed the car insurance on February 3 and concealed the fact of the incident to SI K Chandramohan that the two-wheeler hit the car on February 6 and registered the case under various Sections on February 13. The accused who was suspended has previously worked as an SI in Sarangapur police station. He was reprimanded by the top police officers after being accused of encouraging gambling houses while working as an SI. Based on the report given by the SP of Nirmal district that since there is no change in the accused and damaging the reputation of the police department, the accused has been suspended.

Seethakka to relase SHG-bank linkage plan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Rural Development Organisation's Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), SHG-bank linkage annual loan plan for 2024-25 will be released by Minister of Women and Child

Welfare, Seethakka, at Dr MCRHRD Institute in Jubilee Hills on Saturday.

Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Principal Secretary of the Rural Development Corporation and Anita Ramachandran, CEO of SERP, will be present.

Other participants will include the SLBC Coordinator, the RBI Regional Coordinator, the CGM of NABARD, and various bank officials.

According to the SERP, State-level awards will be given to branch managers

and district officers who excelled in the SHG loan sanctioning plan for 2023-24.

Later, the role of banks in the Mahila Shakti programme initiated by the State government will be discussed.

Government school teacher murdered in Telangana

PNS ■ ADILABAD

A 40-year-old government school teacher was murdered allegedly by unidentified persons in Adilabad district of Telangana, police said. The deceased was identified as Gajand.

The deceased, who was a Telugu language teacher in Narnoor mandal, was hit with boulders when he was on his way to work at a school in Gadiguda mandal on Wednesday resulting in his death, they said.

It is suspected the teacher was murdered following "disputes" with his wife, however a detailed probe was underway



to identify the persons responsible for the killing and ascertain the reasons, a police official said, based on preliminary investigation.

The father of the deceased in a complaint lodged with police suspected the role of his daughter-in-law behind the killing, police said.

A murder case was registered, the official added. Further investigation was on.

Chided by wife, man climbs high tension wires

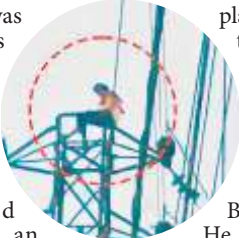
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Saidabad Police on June 12 booked a man for climbing atop high tension wires and creating a ruckus.

The accused was identified as Mohan Babu (25), a labourer. He resorted to the antics after being chided by his wife for coming home in an inebriated state. Following an argument, Babu went to a tower at Sankeshwar bazaar road and scaled it.

Passersby took note of the incident and informed the

local power department officials, who switched off the power supply. Police arrived at the spot and persuaded Babu to get down. As persuasion failed, police personnel planned to climb the tower and bring him down.



Noticing that police and power department officials were climbing the tower, Babu came down. He was taken to the police station. Babu told police that his wife was harassing him, following which he got angry and resorted to the act.

Woman protests as RTC crew denies seat to her differently-abled son

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The free ride scheme in RTC buses for women has been in the news for wrong reasons.

In a recent development, a mother on Wednesday protested in front of an RTC bus as she was not allowed to help her differently-abled son board the bus. The driver drove away the bus before the mother helped her son board the bus.

The women broke into tears for not allowing her physically-challenged son to travel in the bus.

According to reports, a woman made her two daugh-

In a recent development, a mother on Wednesday protested in front of an RTC bus as she was not allowed to help her differently-abled son board the bus. The driver drove away the bus before the mother helped her son board the bus

ters board the Nekkonda-Mahabubabad RTC bus at Warangal bus station. As the woman got down the bus to assist her differently-abled son to board the bus, the driver zoomed past as she was yet to get into the bus. However, the conductor asked her to travel by another bus as there is no room for her in the bus. The

driver who was not aware of the woman's two daughters were in the bus, he drove past the bus.

The woman chased the RTC bus in a three-wheeler and forced it to stop and later staged a sit-in in front of the bus. The passengers in the bus tried to persuade her to call off her protest, but she did not

relent. She was asked to bring her son by autorickshaw so that she and her son would be able to travel by the bus. However, she did not agree to the idea and sought to know from the passengers who would bear the auto-rickshaw fare for her. She insisted that the RTC bus should go back to the bus stand so that her son would be able to travel by the bus. Meanwhile, the traffic police reached the place and persuaded her to withdraw her protest and pacified her and took steps to dispatch the bus. The passengers heaved a sigh of relief.

Villager gets electricity bill for Rs 21.47 crore!

PNS ■ BIJINEPALLI

The Electricity Department officials have issued electricity bill for an amount exceeding Rs 21 crore to a consumer at Khanapur village Nagarkurnool district.

On one hand the state government has been providing free power for the poor up to 200 units, but on the other the Electricity Department has been accused of issuing inflated power bills. The consumers have been complaining of metre reading errors at several places.

Hitherto there were instances of hut-dwellers receiving electricity bills run-

ning into several lakhs of rupees. Here is the case of a consumer receiving the bill exceeding Rs 21 crore for the month of May.

The Electricity Department personnel on June 5 took meter reading from the house of Vema Reddy in Khanapur village and handed him over a bill for Rs 21.47 crore.

The shocked Vemareddy took the matter to the notice of the electricity department officials.

The officials have identified that the person who read the meter who apparently has no idea on how to take the reading calculated the power used by Vemareddy since 1970 and



fixed the monthly electricity charges to be collected from him as Rs 21, 47, 48,569. He took the bill with effect from

Jan 15, 1970 to June 5, 2024.

The electricity consumers attribute such a glaring clerical errors creeping into the elec-

tricity bills to the electricity department using the services of private individuals instead of using the services of government linemen.

When Assistant Engineer Mahesh was approached for his clarification, he admitted that the bill was given to Vemareddy asking him to pay a whopping amount of Rs 21.47 crore towards electricity charges. However, the official said that the error in the bill would be rectified soon.

The callousness displayed by the private individual hired by the electricity department to read the electricity meters and prepare the bills should be condemned by all.

Rs 73.4 cr sanctioned for schools, colleges in Kodangal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has sanctioned Rs 73.45 crore for the construction of junior college and additional infrastructure for a school at Kodangal. Principal Secretary Burra Venkatesham issued G.O.Rt.No. 76, G.O.Rt.No. 77 and G.O.Rt.No. 78 on Thursday. An

administrative sanction of additional amount of Rs 25,00,00,000 was given for construction of a new building for MJPTBCWR Junior



College at Kodangal for execution of the works under KADA jurisdiction.

Secondly, administrative sanction of additional amount of Rs 23,45,00,000 was given for construction of additional infrastructure for MJPTBCWR School at Kodangal for execution of the works under KADA jurisdiction.

Another administrative sanction of additional amount of Rs 25,00,00,000 was given for construction of MJPT-BCWR School/College (Girls) in Buranpur(V) of Bomraspet(M) for execution of the works under KADA jurisdiction.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Looming catastrophe

The ongoing heat and water crisis across north India is claiming lives, and there is no relief in sight

A serious heat and water catastrophe that has already claimed lives and is threatening many more is plaguing the northern parts of India, including the Capital. An unfavorable weather pattern marked by extreme heatwaves and weak rainfall is making it worse. For millions of people, the situation is getting unbearable as temperatures rise and water supply becomes scarce. North India is experiencing one of the worst heatwaves in recorded history. Many locations have regularly seen temperatures above 45 degrees Celsius, with some recording considerably greater values. Many occurrences of heatstroke, dehydration and other heat-related ailments have been reported. There is an increased danger for vulnerable groups, especially for youngsters and the elderly. The number of people enduring the heat in hospitals is overwhelming, and the availability of healthcare resources is limited. Compounding these problems, the monsoon season has started abnormally slowly. Rain, which



usually provides much-needed relief, has been irregular and delayed. There are serious ramifications for both urban and rural communities from this delay. The lack of rain in cities like Delhi makes the heat unpleasant and living conditions nearly intolerable. The delayed monsoon in rural areas is disastrous for agriculture as it greatly depends on timely rainfall. Food security and livelihoods are expected to be threatened by crop failures and lower yields. There is severe water deficiency in northern India as a result of the heatwave and delayed monsoon. The levels of major rivers and reservoirs are perilously low, and groundwater has fallen.

Delhi's water supply is significantly impacted by the historically low levels of the Yamuna river; in fact, some areas get water for only a few hours a day. Concerns over water-borne illnesses have been raised, which has led to disputes over access to water and forced many people to rely on contaminated sources. Water rationing, the establishment of cooling facilities and the distribution of drinking water to communities badly impacted by the problem are just a few of the steps the administration has taken. However, because of the situation's seriousness, these actions have not seen much success. Long-term fixes are necessary to preempt disasters. This entails making investments in infrastructure for water conservation, such as effective irrigation systems and rainwater collection, as well as encouraging the groundwater resources to be used sustainably. To counter the urban heat island effect, green spaces and cooling strategies must be included in urban planning. Furthermore, raising people's knowledge of climate change and its effects helps promote a resilient culture. Millions of people are starkly reminded of their vulnerability in the face of climate change by the heat and water crises in north India. The people of this country continue to be its greatest strength as it fights this humanitarian and environmental crisis.



A boy follows the cooling water mist released by an anti-smog gun, in New Delhi

AI's influence on India's e-commerce industry

AI reshapes Indian e-commerce with personalisation, efficiency, security and stronger customer bonds, revolutionising shopping

In the bustling landscape of Indian e-commerce, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force, reshaping the industry in profound ways. From personalised shopping experiences to efficient logistics, AI has emerged as a cornerstone of success for online retailers in India. AI has a multifaceted impact on e-commerce and has implications for businesses, consumers, and the overall economy. One of the most noticeable effects of AI in Indian e-commerce is the enhancement of the shopping experience for consumers. Through advanced algorithms and data analytics, online retailers can now offer personalised product recommendations tailored to individual preferences and purchase histories. This level of customisation not only increases customer satisfaction but also drives sales and fosters brand loyalty. Moreover, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants provide round-the-clock customer support, addressing queries and concerns in real time, thereby improving overall customer



engagement and retention. AI has also revolutionised the way products are discovered and marketed in the Indian e-commerce landscape. Sophisticated search algorithms powered by Natural Language Processing (NLP) enable users to find products more efficiently, even with vague or misspelt search queries. Additionally, image recognition technology allows consumers to search for products using images, streamlining the search process and enhancing the user experience. Furthermore, AI-driven targeted advertising helps businesses reach their target audience more effectively, maximising the return on investment for marketing campaigns. In the realm of supply chain management, AI has emerged as a game-changer

for Indian e-commerce businesses. By analysing vast amounts of data, including sales trends, inventory levels, and external factors like weather and transportation conditions, AI algorithms optimise inventory management, forecasting, and logistics operations. This results in reduced costs, minimised stockouts, and faster order fulfilment, ultimately leading to improved operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Moreover, AI plays a pivotal role in enhancing security and mitigating fraud risks in Indian e-commerce transactions. Advanced fraud detection systems leverage machine learning algorithms to identify and prevent fraudulent activities in real time, safeguarding both businesses and consumers from financial losses. Additionally, biometric authentication technologies, such as facial recognition and fingerprint scanning, provide enhanced security for online payments, bolstering consumer trust and confidence in the e-commerce ecosystem. Despite its numerous benefits, the widespread adoption

of AI in Indian e-commerce also presents certain challenges and concerns. Data privacy and security remain paramount, with the need for robust regulatory frameworks to protect consumer information from unauthorised access and misuse. Moreover, the increasing reliance on AI-powered systems raises questions about algorithmic bias and fairness, highlighting the importance of transparency and accountability in algorithm development and deployment. In conclusion, the impact of Artificial Intelligence on Indian e-commerce is undeniable, revolutionising the way businesses operate and consumers shop in the digital age. As AI continues to evolve and permeate every aspect of the industry, it is essential for businesses to embrace innovation, adapt to technological advancements, and prioritise ethical considerations to harness the full potential of AI while ensuring inclusivity, fairness, and security in the e-commerce ecosystem. (The author is BU head at Snapdeal; views expressed are personal)



AISHANI VIJ

Time for BJP to set its house in order

The party must ponder Venkaiah Naidu's advice and start working towards repairing its ties with the RSS, besides looking for a proactive president

The swearing in of Narendra Modi 3.0 is over and it is now business as usual. But there is an eerie uncertainty pervading across India as the BJP Government is dependent on the life-support system provided by the TDP's Chandrababu Naidu and the JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar. The BJP had won 282 seats on its own in the 2014 elections (31 per cent) while the party had a dream run of scoring 303 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls (37 per cent) despite Naidu's best efforts to defeat the party. This is the first time in his tenure that Modi is dependent on allies for Government survival. The old slogan "Minimum Government and Maximum Governance" has been dusted out of the cupboard. The BJP's mission to enact the Uniform Civil Code, 'One Nation, One Poll' and its dream Agniveer project too would come a cropper without the support of Naidu and Nitish. The speech delivered by M Venkaiah Naidu, former Vice-President, at the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) should be noted seriously. "There is a message in the election. I hope people understand the message. The ruling BJP failed to reach the majority mark in the Lok Sabha on its own though it emerged as the single largest party while the Opposition put up an impressive performance," Naidu said. A discernible feature of this election was the absence of RSS volunteers from the campaign. What upset the RSS was the declaration made by party president JP Nadda that the BJP has no relation with the Bhagwa Dhvaj, the saffron flag that is emblematic of Sanatana Dharma. "Our flag was apparently created by lord Indra himself. The flag carries the saffron color of the lord. We chose the flag for our kingdom. The flag represents humanity and we need to ensure that we live up to its representation," Shivaji, the great Maratha emperor, told his ministers and commanders. It is time for Nadda to move out of party presidentship. He has neither inspired nor enlightened



people through his words or actions. Nadda should read and learn about two gentlemen from south India, K Kamaraj and S Nijalingappa, both former presidents of the Congress who were rated as titans of Indian politics. Public memory is not that short as they remember the efforts undertaken by Naidu to topple Modi in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The nation saw Naidu holding hands with Sonia Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee, MK Stalin and, above all, the two most intelligent persons in the world; viz, Sitaram Yechury and D Raja as a prelude to oust Modi and Amit Shah. No political parties have absolute majority of their own to form the Government though the National Democratic Alliance (also termed as Non-Dependable Allies) has nearly 300 MPs, 27 more than the half way mark. Though the Congress, the main player in the Opposition, could not touch the three-digit mark, together with its allies, the party has emerged as a striking force. This year presents an entirely different scenario. The charismatic, uncompromising and powerful Modi is at the mercy of two satraps

THE BJP'S MISSION TO ENACT THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE, 'ONE NATION, ONE POLL' AND ITS DREAM AGNIVEER PROJECT WOULD COME A CROPPER WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF CHANDRABABU NAIDU AND NITISH KUMAR

with national ambitions. Even before the NDA held its first meeting, Kumar and Naidu have put forward a set of demands, including conducting the caste census and scrapping of Agniveer scheme. It was Jagan Mohan Reddy, leader of YSR Congress and the outgoing Chief Minister, who forced Naidu to take refuge in the BJP camp. Reddy had launched a thorough probe into the charges of corruption against Naidu, for which he was arrested and imprisoned. When it was time for the 2024 Assembly elections, Naidu felt the need to cast his lot with BJP and Modi. Having got more than what he aspired for, Naidu is eyeing bigger rewards. We cannot expect anything better from a person who backstabbed his father-in-law NT Rama Rao, the founder of the TDP, and usurped the party proprietorship. Nitish is no different from Naidu. He is a living example of the Aaya Ram, Gaya Raam politics. Naidu and Nitish are two deceiving crutches and can lead Modi to "no-man's land". The current political imbroglio is BJP's own making. How many of us remem-

ber the five-day long crisis in Maharashtra when Devendra Fadnavis, the then leader of the Opposition, was sworn in as Chief Minister in 2019 with Ajit Pawar (NCP) as his deputy, only to make an ignominious exit after two days. Fadnavis and the other senior BJP leaders had termed Ajit as the embodiment of corruption but they found no qualms in forming a coalition Government with him. Despite Ajit returning to the Pawar Parivar within two days of swearing in, Fadnavis solicited him again and the former is now back in the Hindutva fold. How come BJP, which claims from rooftops that it is always against dynasty politics, forge an alliance with a purely family-run enterprise? Fadnavis' hurry forced him to commit the political harakiri. His case reminds us of the kamikaze by Chaudhary Charan Singh in 1979, ostensibly to teach the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai a lesson. Chaudhary Saheb went down with the Janata ship and could not stage a comeback even at a later stage. (The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INADEQUATE PENALTIES FOR CRUELTY

Madam — Apropos the news story "Animal laws need more teeth say activists," published on June 12, this is my response. Reading about the brutal beating of a dog in Pune, resulting in a mere ₹50 fine, is both disheartening and infuriating. This case, alongside similar instances in Mumbai and Delhi, highlights the urgent need for stricter laws against animal cruelty in India. The proposed Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, 2022, seeks to address these issues by introducing harsher penalties, including fines up to ₹75,000 and imprisonment for severe offences. This amendment is crucial, as the current laws are woefully outdated and ineffective. Strengthening these laws is not just about protecting animals; it's about fostering a compassionate society where brutality is not tolerated. It's high time for the government to act, ensuring that offenders face appropriate consequences and that we cultivate a culture of empathy and respect. Our future generations deserve to grow up in a world where cruelty to animals is met with swift and severe justice.

Devansh Khatri | Jaipur

SURGE IN GREEN ENERGY

Madam — Apropos the news story "India's green energy rise, including 'Green Coal'," published on June 12, this is my response. Reading about the Reserve Bank of India's latest report brings a sense of optimism about India's economic future, particularly in the energy sector. With green energy projects worth Rs 700 billion set to start this year and projected investments reaching Rs 765.2 billion by 2025-26, it's clear that sustainable energy policies are paying off. India's achievement of full electrification, with significant hours of power for rural and urban areas, coupled with its position as the third-largest renewable energy producer, is commendable. The innovation of green coal, which reduces CO2 emissions significantly, exemplifies India's commitment to sustainability. NTPC's ini-

Lansdowne's rich military legacy



Apropos the news story "The Garhwal Regiment's glorious military heritage," published on June 12, this is my response. The still air of Lansdowne's Bhawani Dutt Joshi Parade Ground reverberates with the historic war cry 'Jai Badri Vishal Ki Jai' from the Agniveers of the Garhwal Regiment. Established in 1887, the regiment boasts a legacy of val-

our, earning numerous military honours, including Victoria Crosses and Ashoka Chakras. Lansdowne, named after a British Viceroy, remains a testament to colonial heritage with its scenic ridge-top cantonments and hill stations.

Colonel Mainwaring's bungalow, now MES property, and the Darwan Singh War Museum reflect the regiment's storied past. The Garhwal Officers Mess, with its Victorian charm and unique artefacts like the Sun Dial and the billiards table, epitomises the regiment's historical opulence. Despite attempts to rename Lansdowne, locals cherish its colonial past and its connection to military excellence. The Garhwal Regiment's symbols—Lord Badrinath, the Unknown Soldier, and the Royal Rassi—continue to inspire courage and pride among its soldiers.

Aadhya Chawla | Chandigarh

tiatives, especially the Varanasi Harit Koyla Pariyojna, showcase impressive advancements. The green coal project, part of the "Make in India" initiative, symbolises a major stride towards the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" mission. MBL's success in converting municipal waste into eco-friendly coal is not just a technological breakthrough but also an effective solution to waste management, marking an important milestone in India's green energy journey.

Arya Sundaram | Chennai

DREAMS OF A BETTER WORLD

Madam — Apropos the news story "Blueprint for a Better Society," published on June 12, this is my response. We all envision a world filled with peace, happiness, and harmony. Nobody desires environmental degradation, the loss of lives through violence, or the erosion of the human spirit due to crime, corruption, and poverty. Instead, we seek a life defined by health, wealth, and happiness. To achieve this, we must identify the values necessary to create a socio-politico-

economic system that fosters such a society. Most would agree that reducing wars, violence, poverty, unemployment, pollution, corruption, crime, and social injustices is crucial. Additionally, fostering freedom, reducing hunger, and promoting love and cooperation are essential. A survey would likely reveal that people expect scientists to embrace spirituality, religious leaders to adopt a scientific approach, and doctors to treat both body and soul. Education should include moral and spiritual development and societal attitudes towards women and children need to improve. Achieving these goals requires each societal segment to fulfil expectations and contribute time and talent. Global cooperation is essential, possibly through a new kind of bank where individuals and institutions can contribute towards building a better world.

Rohit Kapoor | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER MODI 3.0

Modi's G7 debut amidst global turmoil underscores diplomatic finesse



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

In less than a week of assuming office as the Prime Minister for the largest democracy in the world, Mr Modi is back where he excels. He was in Italy this week, meeting the leaders from the powerful group of nations also known as the G7. On the sidelines were several bilateral meetings with leaders of African, and Arab nations, besides several clear messages to the primarily American and European groups leaders.

This was PM Modi's first trip abroad, after assuming office for a third time (a remarkable feat in itself), where nearly 670 million voters patiently waited in queues under an extremely harsh summer sun over a period of nearly two months to choose the leader of the largest democracy. PM Modi and his party, despite setting ambitious expectations, could not manage a majority by themselves and are now dependent on a bunch of pre-poll alliance political parties to lead the National Democratic Alliance government. This assumes significance at a time when several parts of Europe, not to mention the US are going their own set of democratic churns. The US goes to poll end of the year, and voices on either side of the aisle, are getting harsher and louder. Similarly, the elections to the European Parliament have thrown a resurgence of far-right parties, which is likely to have an impact on the geopolitical dynamics for a long time. What Mr Modi may be comforted by is the fact that he may not need to look around for carefully worded diplomatic statements while explaining the state of Indian democracy to the Western nations.




In the past few years, several questions have been raised across the Western nations and in the US regarding the health of the Indian democracy, its report card on minority rights, religious freedom, the existence of the press etc. The near majority verdict, by the Indian electorate, with ample scope of checks and balances to keep the party with the highest seats under leash, a robust opposition presence in the parliament would be a clear talking point for the PM and his set of diplomats to set out a gold standard for democracy when engaging with several nations. Mr Modi, with his nearly three decades of experience as head of the state and nation, is not new to diplomacy and in several interviews, leading up to the general elections, has articulated his target of enhancing India's global image. The grand spectacle around G20 (not to forget backroom diplomatic negotiations to arrive at a joint statement), several high-level state visits, a bunch of rescue operations carried out for citizens and neighbours from war-torn areas, supply of emergency medicines during COVID are all pointers towards the focus the Prime Minister's Office attaches to global reputational management. PM's third-term visit to G7 assures continuity and explores fresh engagement strategies with current and potential allies, emphasizing continuity and innovation.

Mr Modi's visit to Italy comes at a time when the Ukraine war is unrelenting, and despite severe reluctance, there seems to be chinks in the united European approach towards the aggressor Russia. Many of them, would have, similar concerns regarding Israel's war on terror, which has refused to die down in months. It may be recalled that both Israel and Russia are close allies of India, and India has so far walked a tightrope when commenting on both of these volatile situations. The dynamics of the past relationship, while building deeper relations with recent allies such as the US are likely to be a sensitive diplomatic trope. It is no wonder, that PM Modi has picked up S Jaishankar, a seasoned diplomat as the External Affairs minister for a second term, to retain the continuity and foreign policy focus achieved during his last term. The evolving geopolitical landscape and India's role in global affairs would continue to be tested and chiselled in days to come.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Govt must reboot its 'Neighbourhood First' policy

Modi's top priorities should include strengthening of bilateral ties with neighbours and herald a new era of dialogue to counter China's influence



KS TOMAR

The Narendra Modi Government must give priority to wean away neighbours who have drifted towards China. The presence of leaders from the neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region at the inauguration of Narendra Modi's third term as Prime Minister highlights the significance New Delhi accords to these countries. Notable attendees included Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe. The swearing-in ceremony also witnessed the participation of Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Seychelles Vice

President Ahmed Afif and Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu. The inclusion of President Muizzu is being interpreted as a good diplomatic move, especially when both nations currently have strained ties. It may be recalled that Modi invited leaders from the eight member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014. For his 2019 inauguration, the guests included leaders from the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIM-STEAC), along with Mauritius and Kyrgyzstan. The Modi-led Government will have its plate full of national and international issues, which will warrant



immediate attention and formulation of strategy and action plan. Experts feel that India must resolve the US threat to impose sanctions if the Chabahar Port deal with Iran was not scrapped. Interestingly, the US did not raise any objection when India took up the construction of the port because it suited the US owing to its occupation of

Afghanistan. But now that the US has moved out, it has no interest in the port. Former Prime Minister Pt Jawaharlal Nehru's Indian National Congress achieved a remarkable victory, securing 44.7 per cent of the vote and winning 361 out of 494 seats in 1962. In contrast, the BJP, under Narendra Modi, won 238 seats out of 543, with the

NDA collectively securing 294 seats. Unlike the BJP, which relies on coalition partners like the TDP and others, the Congress under Nehru stood strong on its own. This scenario isn't unique to India. In Britain, leaders like Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair also managed to secure three terms. However, managing a coalition Government with a thin majority presents its own challenges. The reduced strength can increase the bargaining power of smaller coalition partners. The Modi Government's foreign policy has alienated neighbours like the Maldives, Nepal etc. Hence it needs a 'relook' as they have drifted towards China, which is using them to expand its influence. Regarding Pakistan,

India should respond to its initiative to have trade ties by keeping the political issues aside. The Sharif brothers may not be averse to it. China's expanding ties in the region are evident, and India needs to tread cautiously to counter its influence, as seen in the case of Nepal. The recent political shift in Nepal towards a communist Government ideologically aligned with China is concerning, especially considering China's 'Debt Trap' strategy. Pakistan serves as a stark example, with China extending a massive debt of \$23 billion, a substantial portion of which is tied to the Belt and Road Initiative. Pakistan's mounting debt to China, totalling \$67.2 billion from 2000 to 2021, underscores the risks associated with this debt dependency.

Regarding neighbours, India needs to be worried as Maldives has already moved in the lap of China, and Nepal has also shown red flag as the communist Government led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has moved closer to China. Modi will govern India for the next five years with a relatively weakened position but he has shown resolve to carry on economic reforms to make India a world power. In this backdrop, the Opposition is expected to play a constructive role in the interest of people of the country.

(The writer is a political analyst and senior journalist based in Shimla; views are personal.)

Populism cripples revival of discoms

The twin problems of AT&C losses and under-recoveries on sale to certain households or farmers in some States have existed for close to a quarter century



UTTAM GUPTA

The Centre is planning to launch 'another' scheme to enable public sector power distribution utilities (discoms) to cut technical losses via "transition financing" of the required capital expenditure. The discoms stand at the core of the power supply and distribution network in the country. Mostly owned and controlled by State Governments, they buy electricity from the generating companies (call them gencos) in the public sector such as National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) etc and gencos in the private sector commonly referred to as independent power producers (IPPs) and supply to the consumers.

Technical losses to be more precise, the aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses are a sophisticated nomenclature for leakage from the system or power theft. According to Union Power Minister RK Singh, AT&C's losses used to be high at 27 per cent. When, out of say 100 units of electricity that leaves the generating stations/power dispatch centre, 27 units are stolen and hence not paid for, this is bound to have a debilitating effect on the discoms' operations.

The discoms could charge more on sale of the balance 73 units to compensate for the 'nil' revenue on the 27 stolen units. But this is theoretical. So, the discoms would end up making a loss to the extent of revenue lost on stolen units. There is another potent factor that exacerbates their losses.



The Electricity Act (2003) and the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Power require the discoms to fix the tariff on electricity supplied to consumers in a manner such that the average revenue realisation (ARR) from its sale is equal to the average cost of purchase, transmission and distribution (ACS). Yet under dictat from the State Government, either they don't bill certain households (HHs) at all (on consumption up to 200/300 units a month in Delhi/Punjab) or a flat subsidy of ₹800 on consumption (between 201 and 400 units a month in Delhi), besides free supply to farmers as in Punjab.

The discoms seek to make up for the resulting under-recoveries by charging more from industries and businesses for which the tariff can go up to a high of ₹16 per unit (this indeed is a major reason for making Indian products and services uncompetitive in both the domestic and international markets). While the States also promise to compensate for a good portion of the under-recoveries, most of them make only partial reimbursement and that too after considerable delay. This further adds to discom losses.

The twin problems of AT&C losses and under-recoveries on sale to HHs/farmers have existed for close to a quarter century. Since the beginning of 2000, the Centre has come up with four financial restructuring packages (FRPs) to help discoms. While, the first two (2002, 2012) merely sought to condone their losses, the third namely Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) launched in November 2015 required discoms to set their house in order and achieve certain milestones in exchange for financial assistance.

Under UDAY, discoms' staggering debt of about ₹400,000 crore was condoned. Of this, while 75 per cent was taken over by the States, for the balance, they were allowed to issue bonds at a concessional rate of interest. In lieu of the FRP, discoms



WHILE STATES ALSO PROMISE TO COMPENSATE FOR A GOOD PORTION OF THE UNDER-RECOVERIES, MOST OF THEM MAKE ONLY PARTIAL REIMBURSEMENT AND THAT TOO AFTER CONSIDERABLE DELAY

were required to reduce AT&C losses from 20.7 per cent during 2015-16 to 15 per cent by 2018-19. Further, they were to reduce the ACS-ARR gap from ₹0.59 per unit of electricity during 2015-16 to 'zero' by 2018-19. But, the discoms failed to deliver.

During 2019-20, their AT&C losses were 18.9 per cent against the 15 per cent target for 2018-19. The ACS-ARR gap during 2019-20 stood at ₹0.42 per unit against target of 'zero' for 2018-19. During 2020-21, even these limited improvements were reversed as ATC losses zoomed to 22.3 per cent and ACS-ARR gap ₹0.69 paise per unit. As a consequence, discoms losses which had decreased from ₹52,000 crore during 2015-16 to ₹17,000 crore during 2017-18 (courtesy, FRP) increased to about ₹30,000 crore during 2019-20 and further to ₹58,000 crore during 2020-21.

Correspondingly, this has led to their ballooning debt which at the end of FY 2021-22, stood at ₹620,000 crore.

This prompted the Centre to come out with a fourth package called 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBS-SD). The scheme was unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech for FY 2021-22. Involving an outlay of ₹300,000 crore, it was aimed at trimming discoms AT&C losses to 12-15 per cent and gradually narrow the ACS-ARR gap to 'zero' by March 2025. This was to be achieved by upgrading the distribution infrastructure and capac-

ity building, thereby improving the reliability and quality of the power supply. It had a provision for compulsory pre-paid and smart metering component to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 220 million households.

Apart from gross budgetary support (GBS) of close to ₹100,000 crore by the Centre, implementation of the Scheme involves funding by State-run sector-specific lenders; viz, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) under irrevocable State Government guarantee. The funds release is subject to discoms meeting the pre-qualifying criteria and achieving the basic minimum benchmark in reforms.

The RLRBS-SD launched in FY 2021-22 talks of achieving the targets, which should have been achieved by 2018-19, by March 2025. This by itself is laughable. What about the progress? According to the Power Ministry, the Government has so far identified 57 discoms from 32 States and Union Territories under the scheme and has prepared detailed project reports (DPRs) for these. Further, in reply to a question in Parliament given by then Power Minister RK Singh in December 2023: "Till today, DPRs having total outlay of ₹120,000 crore has been approved for loss reduction works and ₹130,000 crore for smart metering works."

Beyond this paperwork, as of January 2024, the total loan disbursed by PFC-REC under the

scheme was ₹112,000 crore for 16 States, while sanctioned amount was ₹133,000 crore.

As for the gross budgetary support, the release of funds by the Centre during FY 2023-24 was a mere ₹6,000 crore against budget allocation of ₹12,000 crore. That things are moving at a snail's pace may be seen from the fact that 'against the sanctioned smart meters of around 220 million, only about 0.8 million have been installed so far'. One wonders whether the money is being used by discoms to merely pay back the loans taken earlier to fund their recurring losses --- as happened under UDAY.

Now that the tenure of this scheme (launched in 2021-22) will end in just about 10 months on March 31, 2025, the Government is keen to launch its second version call it RLRBS- II with similar aggregate outlay of ₹300,000 crore. Who knows, even the funds garnered under this scheme could end up being used to clear the continuous pile up of discoms' debt. The vicious cycle continues.

The problem is entirely political. In a bid to win elections (these are held round the clock), almost every political party promises sops which include, among others, power supply to farmers and poor households at throwaway price or even free; they even ignore theft happening in slums/jhuggis that promise votes en masse. They use discoms as 'guinea pigs' for achieving these populist goals.

(The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)



Aarya





Deepthi



Kanchan



Shally kumar

Food A'Fair 2024, a three-day event featuring food and beverage retail and modern trade, opened at Hall No. 1 of HITEX in Madhapur, Hyderabad. The Telangana Food Processing Society (TFPS) Director Akhil Gawar and Indian former badminton player Padma Bhushan Pullela Gopichand opened the fair on Thursday. Blitz Exhibitions Pvt Ltd, in collaboration with HITEX and Telangana Food Processing Society, is the primary organiser of the trade show.



The world was alerted to India's thriving modern art scene by renowned artist, philanthropist, and businesswoman Michelle Poonawalla, who debuted her unique digital artwork at the Non-Fungible Conference (NFC) in Lisbon. With this launch, a noteworthy partnership was established with Sedition Art. Sedition Director Rory Blain's latest digital creations by Michelle Poonawalla were showcased in a part of the conference devoted to Sedition Art. The conference took place at the Pavilhão Carlos Lopes from May 28 to May 30, 2024.

Dollar Industries Limited has revealed their vision for the South Indian markets. A significant move has been made by them, who have now appointed celebrity Mahesh Babu as their South India brand ambassador. They are aiming to increase sales from the Southern market by around 50% this year above the present level as part of their Vision South India plan.



Make this Father's Day memorable with these scrumptious treats

Father's Day is the perfect occasion to show your dad how much he means to you, and what better way to celebrate than with some delicious, indulgent treats? Whether your dad has a sweet tooth or just enjoys a good dessert now and then, these delectable options are sure to make his day extra special. Here are some mouth-watering treats that will make this Father's Day unforgettable.

Ferrero Moments mousse: Celebrate Father's Day with the ultimate indulgence, the decadent chocolate ice cream, crafted to offer a velvety smoothness that effortlessly dissolves on your palate. Enriched with lavish swirls of rich chocolate ribbon, each scoop becomes a delightful dance of flavours. But wait, it gets even better. Imagine delicate pieces of crushed chocolate treats scattered like hidden treasures, adding a delightful crunch to each bite and unveiling layers of exquisite flavour. Treat yourself to this luxurious experience and make this chocolate ice cream day unforgettable.

Brown Biscuit Boba Ice Cream: Celebrate Father's Day with the delightful combination of biscuit-flavoured ice cream and playful pearls of chewy brown sugar boba. It's a bubble of boba joy that will make this special day even sweeter!

Nutella Slab Sundae: Celebrate Father's Day with a gooey brownie topped with a generous scoop of decadent chocolate ice cream, drizzled with velvety Nutella, and sprinkled with crunchy hazelnut pralines. It's a Nutella lover's dream come true, combining rich chocolate flavours with delightful textures. Treat your best man to this luxurious dessert and make this Father's Day unforgettable!



GEAR UP FOR BINGE FEST THIS JUNE WITH JIOCINEMA PREMIUM

Missing the IPL season already? JioCinema Premium has you covered with its entertainment line-up for June. The roster promises a spectacular mix across genres, from unscripted reality and international content to original series, movies, and kids' entertainment, offering something for everyone.

The 'baap' of all reality shows is back with its third season! *Bigg Boss OTT 3* is all set to take the entertainment quotient a notch higher with a new host, a new theme, and a new set of contestants!

The month gets more exciting with the latest season of the international cult phenomenon, *House of the Dragon Season 2*, set to premiere on June 17. Staying true to its promise of providing holistic entertainment for all, JioCinema Premium gives the audience a chance to watch the latest episodes of the new season every Monday, along with the US, in six local languages, namely, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and Marathi,

alongside English. Additionally, with new episodes of *Demon Slayer S4*, anime lovers can also look forward to series premieres like *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* (4th June), *Black Butler* (11th June), *The 100* (11th June), *Girlfriends Who Really, Really, Really, Really Love You* (18th June), and *Seven Deadly Sins* (28th June).

Crime aficionados are in for another thrilling ride with the headlining original of the month, *Gaanth*. Starring the talented cast of Manav Vij, Monika Panwar and Saloni Batra, the original series explores the bone-chilling investigation of a mass suicide that rocks the nation and a police officer's quest for self-discovery and truth.

The sweltering summer also calls for light-hearted entertainment, with a perfect blend of mystery and *Blackout*. The crime thriller comedy features a promising ensemble cast of Vikrant Massey, Mouni Roy, and Sunil Grover, amongst others.

In addition, Vijay Deverakonda and Mrunal Thakur starrer action-drama film *Family Star* will premiere on June 28th and will exclusively be available in Hindi on JioCinema Premium.

That's not all; the line-up for the month also ensures to bring smiles all around with exciting premieres for kids and family. Look forward to the new episodes of *Abhimanyu Ki Alien Family* from June 13th onwards and the exciting mini-movie *Chikoo Bunty: In the Haunted House* on June 9th, promising endless entertainment for the whole family.

Photos by- SV Chary

Curtain Raiser

Join RNC Hospital's life-saving initiative World Blood Donor Day camp

RNC Hospital is proud to announce the commencement of a two-day World Blood Donor Day camp from 14.06.2024 & 15.06.2024, aimed at fostering a culture of blood donation to everyone and making a significant impact on society. World Blood Donor Day, celebrated annually on June 14, highlights the critical role that voluntary blood donors play in saving lives and enhancing public health. This year, RNC Hospital is dedicated to amplifying this message through a comprehensive blood donation camp, encouraging young people to actively participate in this vital cause.

Event Details:

Dates : 14.06.2024 & 15.06.2024

Time : 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Location : RNC Hospital, Plot-6, Manikyia Nagar, Near ChintalBus Stop, Chintal, Outhubullapur.

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6		7		8
9		10	11	
12			13	14
15				
16	17		18	
				19

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- These cover birds
- Small animals that followed the Pied Piper
- Ride on these animals
- Opposite of best
- Not as many
- Circular in shape
- Below
- A story in episodes
- A planet
- Gave jobs to

DOWN

- Entertaining explosives watched at night
- Change
- Sound coming back again
- A person who does operations in hospital
- Stuff for colouring cloth
- Startled
- A day's beginning
- A book written in daily
- Strike with an open hand
- A long type of fish

SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

‘Music Shop Murthy is anchored by familial bonds’

K. RAMYA SREE

Director Siva Paladugu's latest venture, *Music Shop Murthy*, promises to be a cinematic delight, a tale that transcends generations and resonates with audiences of all ages. As the film hit theaters today, the director took a moment to share insights and reflections on his journey and the making of this heartfelt project.

Hailing from the vibrant city of Vijayawada, Siva Paladugu's trajectory into the world of film-making was nothing short of serendipitous. "I worked in USA, where I had the fortune of meeting Harsha, who later became a good friend and collaborator," he reminisces, adding, "My passion for storytelling led me to pursue a diploma in direction, and soon after, the opportunity to helm my first film presented itself, thanks to the unwavering support of my friends-turned-producers."

Delving into the casting choices for *Music Shop Murthy*, Paladugu reveals his rationale behind selecting Ajay Ghosh for the titular role: "To infuse a sense of novelty into the narrative, I crafted the character of Murthy as a mature individual. Ajay Ghosh's prowess in emoting raw, heartfelt emotions made him the perfect fit for this role. Despite the project being conceptualised before his breakout performance in *Pushpa*, I had unwavering confidence in his ability to bring depth and authenticity to the character."

When questioned about the significance of Chandini Chowdary's role, Paladugu emphasises



AHEAD OF THE RELEASE OF HIS LATEST VENTURE, *MUSIC SHOP MUTHY*, DIRECTOR SIVA PALADUGU SHARED INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS ON HIS JOURNEY AND THE MAKING OF THIS MUCH-ANTICIPATED PROJECT.

es the pivotal role played by her character in shaping the trajectory of the film. "Chandini Chowdary's portrayal of Anjana exudes grace and charisma, making the stage for a transformative journey. Her character serves as the catalyst for

Murthy's evolution, infusing the narrative with a sense of vitality and purpose," he asserts.

Addressing the simultaneous release of Chandini Chowdary's other film, *Yevam*, Paladugu emphasises the distinctiveness of

Music Shop Murthy and its appeal to family audiences. "While both films may share the same release date, their thematic and tonal differences cater to disparate audience demographics," he clarifies. "Our film is anchored by themes of familial bonds and personal resilience, offering an enriching viewing experience for audiences of all ages."

Transitioning to creative process behind the film's musical elements, Paladugu underscores the meticulous research and attention to detail that went into crafting the soundtrack. "We delved deep into the rich tapestry of musical traditions, from yesteryear classics to contemporary trends," he reveals. "Pawan's sublime compositions add depth and resonance to each scene, enhancing the immersive experience for the audience."

He also shared a glimpse into the underlying ethos of *Music Shop Murthy* and hints at future endeavours. "Beyond the confines of storytelling, this film serves as a testament to the indomitable spirit of human resilience. The journey of Murthy embodies themes of perseverance and self-discovery, resonating with audiences on a deeply emotional level," he shared.



Shruti Haasan joins *Dacoit* shoot with Adivi Sesh

Shruti Haasan has joined the action-packed shoot of Adivi Sesh's ambitious pan-India action drama, *Dacoit*, currently underway in Hyderabad. Portraying the female lead, Haasan's inclusion in this pivotal phase of filming adds a new dimension to the project. The ongoing schedule is dedicated to capturing crucial scenes and adrenaline-pumping action sequences involving the lead cast. Sharing a candid selfie with Sesh, Haasan offered a glimpse into the camaraderie on set, hinting at the fun-filled atmosphere amidst the intense filming sessions.

Dacoit unfolds a gripping narrative centered around two former lovers compelled to join forces for a series of daring robberies, each with the hope of transforming their lives. Marking his directorial debut in feature films, Shaneil Deo, acclaimed for his work as director of photography in Telugu blockbusters like *Kshanam* and *Goodachari*, collaborates with Adivi Sesh to bring this compelling story to life. Notably, this venture serves as the first collaboration between Sesh and Haasan, promising audiences a fresh and dynamic on-screen pairing.

Backed by Supriya Yariagadda as producer, with co-production support from Suniel Narang and presented by Annapurna Studios, *Dacoit* unfolds its narrative simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu, catering to a diverse audience base. Additionally, Adivi Sesh and Shaneil Deo showcase their prowess as storytellers by also penning the film's captivating narrative.

For Adivi Sesh, *Dacoit* marks his second venture into Hindi cinema following the critical acclaim received by his 2022 release, *Major*. As filming progresses, audiences eagerly await further updates and insights into this ambitious cinematic venture, poised to captivate viewers with its high-octane action and gripping storyline.

Vennela Kishore's *OMG* releasing on June 21



The horror-comedy flick, *OMG (O Manchi Ghost)*, gears up for its theatrical release on June 21. Starring the dynamic duo Vennela Kishore and Nandita Swetha in lead roles, the film is poised to tickle funny bones and send shivers down spines, catering to the ever-growing demand for entertainment in the genre.

Renowned for his impeccable comic timing, Vennela Kishore promises to deliver laughs galore, while Nandita Swetha brings her trademark intensity to the table, embodying atypical characters with finesse. Directed by Shankar Marthand and produced by Dr. Abinika Inabathuni under Mark Set Networks, *OMG (O Manchi Ghost)* boasts a stellar ensemble cast, including Shakalaka Shankar, Navami Gayak, Naveen Neni, Rajath Raghav, and the comedic genius Raghu Babu. Adding to the anticipation is the

musical genius of Anup Rubens, who lends his magic to the film with foot-tapping tunes and spine-chilling background scores. With glimpses, song lyrics, and teasers already garnering a positive response, *OMG (O Manchi Ghost)* promises to captivate audiences with its blend of humour and horror.

Anup Rubens' remarkable music serves as a cornerstone of the film, complementing the narrative and enhancing the overall viewing experience. As anticipation mounts for the film's release, audiences can expect a rollercoaster ride of entertainment, replete with laughter and spine-tingling moments.

With a winning combination of stellar performances, gripping storytelling, and infectious music, *OMG (O Manchi Ghost)* is poised to leave a lasting impression on audiences, reaffirming the enduring popularity of horror-comedy flicks.



DEVARA PART 1 Release preponed to Sept 27

The visual spectacle *Devara Part 1*, starring the Man of Masses, NTR Jr, is set to hit theatres earlier than expected. Initially scheduled for release on October 10, the makers unveiled a new poster featuring NTR Jr on Thursday evening, announcing that the film will now premiere on September 27, 2024.

Talking further about the same, the producers added, "We are glad to announce that *Devara Part 1* directed by Koratala Siva will now release on September 27. We have planned this move keeping in mind how the film is coming together and we don't wish to keep the fans waiting any-

more."

Devara is already making waves in the market with its recently released *Fear* song, which debuted on the actor's birthday and was composed by none other than Anirudh Ravichander.

Directed by Koratala Siva, *Devara* will unfold in two parts. The magnum opus is produced by Yuvasudha Arts and NTR Arts, and presented by Nandamuri Kalyan Ram. Alongside NTR Jr, the film also stars Janhvi Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan in lead roles. The film's music is orchestrated by Anirudh Ravichander, and the cinematography is handled by R Rathnavelu.

'I believe *The GOAT* will soar to unprecedented heights'

Actor Thalapathy Vijay's *The GOAT* is making a lot of noise across the south Indian film industry. Amidst the fervent anticipation surrounding the project, a new development sent waves of exhilaration through the industry recently as actress Sneha, was chosen to play opposite Thalapathy.

Speaking at an event in Chennai, Sneha expressed her excitement about being part of this project and shared, "It's truly delightful to collaborate with actor Vijay once more. His charm remains as captivating as ever."

Sneha disclosed that the majority of her scenes are alongside Vijay, with one more day of shooting left to wrap up her role. Offering a glimpse into the film's potential, she added, "I believe *The GOAT* will soar to unprecedented heights." As the production gears shifted into motion, meticulous planning and preparation became the order of the day. Every detail, from casting decisions to shooting schedules, was carefully orchestrated to ensure a seamless cinematic experience. With shooting schedules nearing completion, the filmmakers found themselves in need of an additional day to capture the essence of Sneha's character.



New poster of Disha Patani from *Kalki 2898 AD* is here



Excitement soared as the makers of the highly anticipated sci-fi epic *Kalki 2898 AD* dropped its action-packed trailer, captivating audiences worldwide. Amidst the fervour, actress Disha Patani, who celebrated her birthday on Thursday, left a lasting impression with her dynamic presence and electrifying action sequences showcased in the trailer. In celebration of her special day, the creators of the cinematic marvel have unveiled a mesmerizing new poster, officially introducing Disha as 'Roxie' in this futuristic saga. Dressed in sleek black cargo, boots, and a bomber leather jacket, Disha exudes confidence as she stands amidst a futuristic, awe-inspiring backdrop, poised to deliver powerhouse performances as 'Roxie' in the film. Sharing her captivating look on social media, the production team conveyed their birthday wishes to Disha with the caption, "Wishing our Roxie, Disha Patani, a very Happy Birthday. #Kalki2898AD."

Boasting an ensemble star cast featuring Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Disha Patani in pivotal roles, *Kalki 2898 AD* is helmed by director Nag Ashwin and produced by Vyjayanthi Movies. Set against a backdrop of futuristic mythology, this multilingual sci-fi extravaganza promises a visual spectacle like never before. Mark your calendars as *Kalki 2898 AD* is slated to hit theaters on June 27th, 2024, inviting audiences to embark on an exhilarating journey into the unknown realms of the future.

Mammootty, Samantha, GVM project to go on floors from June 20

In what promises to be an exciting venture for cinema aficionados, the much-awaited project starring Malayalam megastar Mammootty and acclaimed director Gautham Vasudev Menon is all set to kick off its shooting schedule. With cameras set to roll starting this Saturday, the anticipation surrounding the film is very high. Mammootty, the legendary actor renowned for his versatile performances, is slated to join the shoot on June 20, adding to the excitement surrounding the project.

Adding to the buzz is the revelation that leading actress Samantha is set to make her debut in Malayalam cinema as the female lead in this yet-to-be-titled film.

NEE DHAAREY NEE KATHA REVIEW:

Exploring emotional bond between father and son

STORY:

Arjun (played by Priyatham Manthini) leads a music band with his friends, aiming to establish a successful orchestra. Supported by his father (played by Suresh), Arjun confronts the challenges of pursuing his musical ambitions. When faced with a setback within his team, Shruti (played by Anjana Balaji) steps in to offer her support. Tragedy strikes as Arjun's father passes away, leaving behind unfulfilled dreams. The film delves into the complexities of the father-son relationship and whether Arjun can fulfill his father's aspirations.

PERFORMANCES:

Suresh delivers a poignant portrayal of a supportive father, anchoring the emotional core of the film. Priyatham impresses with his nuanced performance, while Vijay Vikrant adds depth with his character's blend of humor and emotion. Anjana Balaji effectively conveys the required emotions, complementing the



ensemble cast. Posani Krishna Murali and Ajay contribute significantly to their respective roles, enhancing the film's impact.

ANALYSIS:

Vamsi Jonnalagadda's storytelling resonates well with family audiences, providing a cohesive narrative experience. The technical team exhibits commendable teamwork, maintaining high production standards throughout the film. Notably, the music by the *Budapest Orchestra* elevates the viewing experience, enhancing emotional resonance. The seamless integration of background music adds to the film's immersive quality, keeping audiences engaged.

Nee Dhaarey Nee Katha shines with its remarkable highlights, notably the captivating performances of Suresh and Priyatham Manthini, who breathe life into their respective characters with depth and authenticity. The film's mesmerizing musical score, composed by Alberto Gurioli, and the stunning cinematography by

Cast: Suresh, Priyatham Manthini, Vijaya Vikrant, Anantha Padmashala, Anjana Balaji, Ved.
Director: Vamsi Jonnalagadda
Producers: Vamsi Jonnalagadda, Tejesh Veera, Shailaja Jonnalagadda
Writers: Murali Kant, Vamsi Jonnalagadda
Music: Alberto Gurioli
Cinematography: Alex Kavu

Alex Kavu add layers of beauty and emotion to the narrative, enriching the viewing experience. Moreover, the exploration of the father-son relationship brings a poignant depth to the story, resonating with audiences on a profound level. However, despite its strengths, the film grapples with pacing issues in the first half, where certain scenes may feel drawn-out, and a somewhat predictable climax, which may dampen the impact of the otherwise compelling storyline.

CONCLUSION:

Nee Dhaarey Nee Katha offers a heartwarming portrayal of family dynamics, focusing on the bond between father and son. With its engaging narrative and memorable performances, the film delivers a poignant cinematic experience, making it a worthwhile watch for audiences seeking meaningful entertainment.

Rating: 2.75/5

