



Raut claimed Modi was elected leader in the NDA parliamentary meeting and not in the BJP parliamentary party meet.

Monday Mirchi

REVANTH ONE UP ON NAIDU IN HANDLING 'PARTISAN' BABUS

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's *kundali*-watchers may find it too easy to exalt him as '*guruvunu minchina sishyudu*'; yet, they will concede that he is already one up on AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in handling babus deemed 'partisan'. Revanth Reddy, after taking over as the Chief Minister, was surprisingly polite even towards bureaucrats known to be in his bad books. He was on cordial terms with all those whom he had previously panned (in his capacity as opposition Congress leader) including Jayesh Ranjan, Arvind Kumar, Amita Sabharwal, and Anjana Kumar. He accepted bouquets from them and deigned to smile with them for photo-ops, but then transferred them. But Chandrababu Naidu had no qualms about bluntly ignoring babus deemed to have played a partisan role. He did not take bouquet from Sri Lakshmi; he did not give appointment to IPS Sitaramanjanevalu, who, incidentally could not even gain entry.

BUREAUCRATS CUT UP WITH RECENT TRANSFERS

Punitive transfers, say like that of the GHMC official who was moved for razing 'illegal' structures in front of former AP CM and YSRCP chief's Lotus Pond residence in Hyderabad, are self-evident. But people and bureaucratic circles read between the lines in the case of en masse transfers. No wonder, most of the babus are upset with the recent transfer of 20 District Collectors. Some attribute it to prejudice, while for others it was on expected lines. Overall, the rejig has hurt the jigar of many bureaucrats, going by their emotional outbursts, which their undisturbed peers see as "sad and upsetting". However, for some, recognition came from unexpected quarters. Union Minister Bandi Sanjay has thanked Pamela Satpathy for her dedication and impactful contributions to Karimnagar during her tenure as DM & Collector. He was appreciative also of Anurag Jayanthi, newly appointed Collector, who "did commendable work in Sircilla and has been highly appreciated by the public".

REJIG IN CMO TOO?

The cat is out of the bag that transfers are imminent in Telangana. Until recently, only long-standing officers were presumed to be in the crosshairs. The situation has become topsy-turvy of late. People are now talking about the prospects of officers with the 'shortest stint' in view of the trend. For, in little over six months of the Congress gov-

ernment, several officers have been moved out just like that. The unstated reason could have been demolishing an encroachment or letting typos creep into Telugu text books or whatever. Even as babus are being moved at the drop of a hat, a little bird told us that there is a chance of rejig in CMO too. The whispers in the corridors of power are about which the CMO officials, including those with 'short stints', could be on the block.

WALKING THE RAZOR'S EDGE

In administration, compliance with 'orders from above' is appreciated and rewarded over time, while defiance is never tolerated. So, it is natural for senior babus to stick to the rules. However, they have to walk the razor's edge if they don't want leaders of opposition parties to see them as stooges of the ruling party. Otherwise, a regime change can upset the apple-cart of all loyal officials who may have appeared to opposition parties as 'overacting' ones. After taking over as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu rubbed senior bureaucrats on the wrong side by refusing to meet certain IAS and IPS officers who had come to congratulate him on his victory. The view in TDP circles is that these officials had 'overacted' during the previous YS Jaganmohan Reddy regime and behaved like ruling party workers. Bureaucrats who have been apolitical at heart say they need to follow 'instructions from above', regardless of the party in power. So, upon regime change, they expect politicians to change their attitude, instead of settling political scores by using babus as pawns. A senior retired IAS officer commented: "In fact, both politicians and bureaucrats should change. Even if politicians do not change; bureaucrats should change, instead of falling prey to controversies".

A HEALTHY CHOICE

Muddada Ravichandra, 1996 batch IAS officer who has been appointed as Principal Secretary to AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, is considered a 'healthy' choice in official circles because of his track record. The man who will head the CMO henceforth has vast experience in administration and has risen to the occasion in the past. The coalition government needs honest and efficient officials to deliver on its promises. Ravichandra, who has served as Collector of East Godavari and Nellore districts, oversaw the crucial procurement of medicines and their distribution during the Covid-19 pandemic as then health secretary.

--Yours truly

Narasimha Commission not judicial panel: Jagdish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Pointing out that the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy inquiry commission on the power sector is not a judicial commission former Power Minister G. Jagdish Reddy asked Justice Narasimha Reddy to explain how he will give a verdict before the inquiry is over.

Jagdish said that many commissions were cancelled in the erstwhile United AP state. However, the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy commission will work fairly, he added.

Speaking to the media at the Telangana Bhavan on Sunday, Jagdish said the ERC is an independent commission and its verdict is final. He asked whether Justice L. Narasimha Reddy didn't know whether a commission can be appointed after a verdict is delivered by the ERC.

Jagdish asked Justice Narasimha to explain why he



had conducted a press conference on June 11 after giving time to KCR till June 15 to submit an explanation. He said that KCR sent a letter to Justice Narasimha to explain the facts to the people of Telangana. "We are expecting that Justice Narasimha would quit. The commission's inquiry is irrelevant. We signed agreements with only PSUs for constructing the Bhadradi and Yadadri Thermal Power Plants and the power purchase agree-

ment was signed with Chhattisgarh," he said.

He demanded that BJP leaders should tell whether KCR gave bribes to former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh regarding the PPA.

He said that the setting up of the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy commission is a conspiracy and that they had agreements only with Central PSUs. The Centre should reveal whether there is any corruption in it, he said.

Jagdish said that Karnataka and Tamil Nadu purchased electricity at high prices. However, Telangana purchased power for only Rs 3.90 per unit.

The Commission should have called Chhattisgarh representatives after hearing KCR's explanation. He said that so far no inquiry commission had given leaks to the media in the middle of an inquiry.

Jagdish said that they had set

up the 800 MW Bhadradi Thermal Power Plant with supercritical technology and that Ramagundam, Bhupalpally, Kothagudem, Vijayawada and RTPC are running on sub-critical technology.

The KCR government handed over the construction of the Bhadradi and Yadadri thermal power plants to BHEL. However, the Congress admin is trying to throw mud at KCR, he said.

Declaring that thieves who were working against the Telangana movement have now joined hands, Jagdish demanded that the Commission should summon the former Chhattisgarh CM and the BHEL Chairman.

He said that some people are trying to blame KCR and that it seems that the commission is behaving partially. So the Chairman should quit, he added.

Name RRR after Sardar Patel, urges Gudur

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya Janata Party State executive committee member Gudur Narayana Reddy on Sunday urged the State and Union governments to name the Regional Ring Road (RRR) after Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

In a media statement, he said, "As the Sardar has played a pivotal role in liberating Telangana from the clutches of Razakars and ensuring freedom to the people of Hyderabad State, it would be apt to name the RRR after him."

He said that it would be a real tribute to the Iron Man of India to name the RRR after him as Hyderabad has developed in leaps and bounds in the past 76 years due to the freedom it has enjoyed with the heroic efforts of Patel.

The RRR would be helpful in the all-round development of Hyderabad and Telangana as well.

KALESHWARAM SCAM

KCR trying to derail probe: Niranjan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Chief Minister KCR's letter to Justice Narasimha Reddy is part of his move to prevent an investigation by Justice PC Ghosh who is investigating the alleged Kaleshwaram Project scam, senior TPCC Vice-President G. Niranjan said.

He said it is unforgivable to write a letter containing contemptuous, offensive remarks like "You are disqualified, lacks



impartiality and there is no use saying anything before you." Strong action should be taken against KCR, Niranjan said.

'KCR must prove...

Continued from page 1

and added that KCR had endorsed the power purchase agreement with the Chhattisgarh government and the construction of the Yadadri and Bhadradi power plants during his.

Due to the possibility of buying electricity at a lower price from the open market, there was criticism for entering into an agreement with Chhattisgarh.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has warned of strict action against its employees for tardiness and said that habitual late attendance and early leaving from office should be viewed seriously by the authorities concerned.

The move comes after it noticed that several employees were not registering their attendance in an Aadhaar Enabled Biometric Attendance System (AEBAS) and "some of the employees have been coming late on a regular basis".

In an order, the Personnel Ministry suggested use of a mobile phone-based face authentication system that provides 'live location detection and geo-tagging' among others as well.

The matter of strict implementation of AEBAS has recently been reviewed and taking a serious note of the laxity in its implementation, it is "reiterated that all MDOs (ministry/department/organisation) will regularly monitor the attendance reports",



according to the order.

"Habitual late attendance and early leaving of office should be viewed seriously and be essentially discouraged. Strict action against the defaulters may be initiated under the extant rules," it said.

All central government departments have been asked to ensure that employees mark their attendance using AEBAS without fail.

"This will ensure that there will be no discrepancy between 'registered' and 'active' employees on AEBAS," said the order issued to all secretaries of Central government departments.

commission regarding the construction of the Yadadri and Bhadradi power stations and purchase of electricity from Chhattisgarh," Niranjan said.

He said that it is notable that when the Justice Narasimha Reddy Commission demanded explanations from around 25 people, KCR was the only one to react offensively. This reflects KCR's state of mind.

He said the High Court should take a suo moto action against KCR's offensive remarks against a Judge.

Centre warns of strict action against its employees for tardiness

EVMs in India are 'black box', nobody allowed to scrutinize them: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said EVMs in India are a "black box" which nobody is allowed to scrutinise, and asserted that "serious concerns" are being raised about transparency in India's electoral process.

"Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability," Gandhi said and tagged a media report which claimed that a relative of Shiv Sena's candidate, who won the polls from Mumbai's north west by 48 votes, had a phone that unlocks an EVM.

The former Congress president also tagged the post on X by Elon Musk in which he talked about eliminating EVMs.

"We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk had said in his post.

The opposition parties have been raising concerns over EVMs for some time now and had demanded a 100 per cent count of the VVPAT slips which was not allowed.



EVM 'UNLOCKING' Cops, poll officials deny report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A poll official on Sunday said an EVM was a standalone system with "robust administrative safeguards" to protect it from any kind of manipulation and that there was no need of an OTP to unlock it. Vandana Suryavanshi, returning officer of Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency, was reacting to a report in newspapers about a kin of Ravindra Waikar, the Shiv

Sena candidate who emerged victorious there by a wafer thin margin of 48 votes, using a mobile phone connected to an EVM during vote counting on June 4. Suryavanshi said notices had been issued to Mid-day and Marathi daily Lokmat for allegedly publishing false news, adding they have been asked to respond within 24 hours as to why criminal proceedings under section 499 and 505 should not be initiated.

Tension grips...

Continued from page 1

At least seven people belonging to both communities were injured during the clashes, police said, adding that additional personnel were being deployed and the situation is now under control in the town.

Police said trouble began when cow vigilantes claimed that cattle were being ferried to a place in Medak. When police arrived at the spot they found the cattle, including oxen, "unfit" for slaughter and moved them to an animal shelter.

Later, the police dispersed the group from the spot. Subsequently, the group reached the outskirts of Medak after being tipped off about the transportation of

cows which led to an altercation between them and members of another community.

After a day of clashes in Medak, the police arrested nine people belonging to the two groups on Sunday. Multi-zone IG Ranganath said that some people wilfully sparked clashes in Medak. The situation has been brought under control and is now peaceful, he said.

Ranganath said that police have taken steps to prevent any clashes on Bakrid day.

"We will file cases after monitoring CCTVs. Department action will be taken against police officials who have not done their duty properly on Saturday," he said.

He requested people not

to post fake news on social media. "Two groups overreacted. We have arranged security to prevent untoward incidents," he added.

The BJP's Goshanmahal MLA, Raja Singh, was detained on Sunday at the RGI Airport while heading to Medak. He was taken into custody and placed under house arrest.

On Sunday, Raja Singh posted on X (former Twitter) that around 120 calves and cows were saved on Saturday in Medak.

He said the animals were tied up near the TTD office in Medak and that karyakarthis came to know about that and informed the police. The police put up barricades and closed that place. But a case was registered against the people.

'TG should...

Continued from page 1

The issue of handing over components of the Srisailem and NSP came up for discussion and the Minister reiterated the admin stand and the resolution passed in the TG Assembly on February 2 that the government is not going to hand over any components of Srisailem and NSP to the KRMBS.

He asserted that the admin will take action to protect the water rights and the interests of Telangana in the Krishna basin.

Regarding the KWDT-II Award pending before the Supreme Court, Vaidyanathan suggested consulting Maharashtra and Karnataka to resolve issues amicably through dialogue to which the Minister agreed and directed to take steps in that direction.

Govt ordered judicial...

Continued from page 1

Members spoke on electricity issues and some Members said the government suffered losses during BRS rule. Former Power Minister Jagdish asked the government to order a judicial inquiry into the matter. Responding, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced that the government will order a judicial inquiry. There were records in the Assembly regarding this and anyone can check it. The Deputy CM said it is pure ignorance to say that the judicial investigation is being conducted in a biased manner.

Bhatti said that Jagdish had sought a judicial inquiry into the corruption in PPAs, however, the BRS is now alleging that the appointment of an inquiry commission is a conspiracy. Bhatti reminded that

leaders like Indira Gandhi have appeared before inquiry commissions.

He said that Justice L. Narasimha Reddy is an experienced judge and pointed out that one can assume that KCR may not have faith in the judicial system as he had said that he would not appear before the commission.

He said the government's responsibility is only to order an inquiry and that it has nothing to do with the inquiry.

He said there has been no Jamabandi in the last 10 years to solve revenue problems.

KCR introduced the Dharani Portal to help bigwigs and provided a facility in Dharani to grab lands kept in Part B.

He said they appointed the Dharani Committee to cleanse the revenue system and ensure that it is transparent.

Peace...

Continued from page 1

It is shameful that even a peaceful town like Medak which had never seen any communal tension is now riddled with violence," he said.

Amzadullah tweeted saying, "Communal tension in Medak. Medak Police failed totally. The RSS and BJP attacked Muslims and their properties in Medak town injuring seven Muslim youths while the police remained mute spectators. The RSS and BJP sparked communal tension at around 3 pm when some bulls kept in a madrasa were bought for sacrifice." Amzadullah strongly condemned the inaction of the Medak Police against the BJP and the RSS and for giving them a free hand to attack Muslims and their institutions.

He said that after Revanth Reddy took charge as Chief Minister communal elements were given a free hand to attack Muslims and damage their properties with the police remaining mute spectators.

He asked why the Medak Police was silent when the BJP and the RSS assembled near the madrasa and staged a dharna. Why were they not arrested immediately, he asked.

‘24 UPSC exam easier compared to those of previous years’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Aspirants expressed joy as the question paper of the Civil Services exam came easier compared to previous years. The Union Public Service Commission conducted the UPSC preliminary exam 2024 on Sunday. The exam witnessed over 16 lakh candidates across the country.

The exam was conducted in two shifts - first shift was held from 9:30 am to 11:30 am while the second shift began from 2.30 pm and concluded at 4:30 pm. As per the commission guidelines, security personnel had been deployed outside exam centres, who thoroughly checked candidates before they entered the exam



halls during both the shifts. Additionally, in Telangana, the government has allotted special buses for the examination in order to aid candidates to reach their centres on time. The exam was conducted peacefully and both the offi-

cials and candidates strictly adhered to the UPSC guidelines.

Following the exam, a majority of aspirants have expressed joy as the question paper came easy, especially those who have attempted the

exam multiple times.

Swaroopa, a candidate, said, “This is my third attempt and I am very happy that I have got an easy paper. I hope I can crack the prelims this time.”

Teja, another candidate, said, “This is my first attempt and the exam is fine. I feel troubled with the questions related to International Relations, History, Economics and Polity. I hope I can secure good marks as I have given my best shot.”

Rashmi, an aspirant said, “This is my second attempt and the exam is moderate. I felt the paper one was quite easy except for questions related to history and polity while I struggled a bit in the CSAT paper. I hope I secure decent marks this time.”

Additional Commissioner transferred

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A day after illegal structures were removed at YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's residence at Lotus Pond in Hyderabad, GHMC Khairatabad zone Additional Commissioner Bhorkhade Hemant Sahdeoarao was transferred on Sunday.

The official order was released on Sunday by GHMC incharge Commissioner Amrapali Kata. The order stated that Sahdeoarao was relieved from GHMC with immediate effect and he is directed to report before the General Administration Department (GAD), Government of Telangana. Hemant Sahdeoarao was transferred because he reportedly did not take permission from higher authorities to demolish the structures at Jagan's residence.

The GHMC of Khairatabad zone demolished the structures near Jagan residence, which were allegedly constructed for security personnel. The demolition was carried out 10 days after Jagan lost power in recent Assembly elections.

KTR slams Centre over NEET UG exam issues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president KT Rama Rao criticised the Centre for its poor handling of the National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test (NEET) exam, through a letter on Sunday.

He stated that the confusion surrounding the examination has dashed the hopes of students and parents who dream of seeing their children become doctors. He condemned the Union government for its inaction despite reports stating that NEET question papers were being sold in Bihar for Rs 30 lakh each, with several arrests already made. The Centre is neglecting its responsibility towards the NEET exam, he added.

KTR pointed out that despite numerous allegations



and suspicions surrounding the exam, PM Modi has remained silent on the critical issue. He demanded that the Central government conduct a thorough investigation into the entire matter and implement strict action against those found responsible. He questioned how so many students from one cen-

tre could score such high marks and criticised the announcement of results 10 days early, coinciding with the election results day, which added to the suspicions. He also criticised Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for attempting to cover up the issue by claiming that everything was in order.

Additionally, KTR questioned NTA for awarding grace marks in the exam to 1,563 students and pointed out that the practice of grace marks is not applied in exams like NEET. He demanded clarity on the criteria used for awarding these marks. He urged the MPs from Telangana to take steps to ensure that the state's students do not suffer due to the irregularities in NEET. He called for reassurance to be given to students and their parents.

Two-day workshop on neuro rehabilitation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A two-day workshop on neuro rehabilitation was organised at the KIMS Hospital where techniques to assess the chances of falling and preventing it were discussed.

Dr Ajay Kumar Midde, HoD, Neuro Rehabilitation wing of KIMS Hospital said, “It is essential to know which

type of physiotherapy treatment should be given to the patients who come to the hospital. Some people should be given only certain types of treatments and some should not undergo them at all. Physiotherapists must be aware of all these things. In addition, new technologies are coming up in treatments. Some easy tests have also been made

available to predict future problems. We often see people who are a little older. In the future, if the chances of falling are very high, we will tell them to walk with the walker and if they are moderate, they should take the help of a stick. If they are too low, the precautions they need to take, the way they walk, the way they sit and how to get up from the chair will be

told to them. As a result, they will have no problem in future. It can also be explained what causes knee wear and tear, why disc problems occur and take precautions in advance to avoid them. All of these are very useful for the people.”

Dr Midde was addressing the conference attended by 200 physiotherapists from five states.

Three drug peddlers nabbed; 100 kg ganja seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Commissioner's Task Force South West Zone, in coordination with Humayun Nagar Police, on Sunday arrested three persons and seized 100 kg of ganja along with property worth Rs 51 lakh.

The accused were identified as Dharavath Ravi (40) of Kamareddy district; Syed Bahadur (28) of Maharashtra and Ananada Ramji Kadam of Nanded. Ravi was previously arrested under the NDPS Act in Maharashtra in 2019. In 2020, he was arrested by the Kamareddy Police.

The police also seized a car and four mobile phones from the accused. Recently, Ravi traveled to Odisha and purchased 32 packets of ganja from a cultivator identified as Govind. The three accused were travelling to Hyderabad along with the 100 kg drug. The Task Force apprehended the accused at Paramount Colony and handed them to Humayun Nagar Police for further investigation.



In another case, the Task Force, in coordination with Bhavni Nagar Police, arrested three persons and seized 64 kg ganja from them. The accused were identified as Shaik Parwez (42), a driver and resident of Asifnagar Jhirra; Abdul Rawoof (30), an Ola driver and resident of Vattapally and Mohammed Anwar (33), a cab driver and resident of Kishan Bagh.

Parwez was arrested in 2021 by the Ravulapuram Police in Andhra Pradesh under the NDPS Act. In 2023 he was arrested by the Langar Houz Police under the NDPS Act. Rawoof was previously arrested under NDPS Act by Rachakonda, Nirmal and Hyderabad Police while Anwar was arrested under NDPS Act

by Nirmal Police. Apart from ganja, police seized two cars, a bike and three mobile phones from the accused.

While in Rajahmundry jail, Parwez befriended Deepak, a ganja cultivator and peddler from Odisha. After being released from jail in April, Parwez faced a financial crunch and took to ganja peddling in order to make money.

Parwez contacted Deepak, who transported ganja to Hyderabad through his associates in RTC buses. The Task Force nabbed the accused near Samina Hospital in Bhavaninagar police station limits. The three accused were handed over to Bhavani Nagar Police for further investigation.

Drug addicts in city want new ‘highs’

CHITHALURI REVANTH
■ HYDERABAD

As a person cannot eat the same food every day, drug addicts are also trying to find new drugs to consume. It was found that they are taking drugs which are not even thought of by normal people.

Psychiatrists at a government drug treatment centre and the Telangana Police in Hyderabad said that some of the drug addicts in the city are crushing opium and Tapentadol tablets into powder, mixing them with distilled water in order to inject them into the body.

“Along with other drugs, some of them are also trying out snake venom drugs. I am not sure that the venom drug is available in the city or not. But one of the patients told me that they want to experience that also,” a psychiatrist mentioned.

Some people are using ganja, MDMA, Alphazolam, hash oil, ecstasy pills, heroin, charas, ganja chocolate, LSD, e-cigarettes (vapes) and other kinds of drugs. Drug addicts go for other tastes or experience is not because other substance abuses are not available. It is

because they just want to taste new kinds of drugs.

After taking those drugs, people want to get more pleasure from it. “To get more pleasure after



taking some of those drugs some of them want to get sadistic pleasure. One of the patients told me that to get more pleasure, a group of people hit an unknown person.”

Some of the drug addicts allegedly killed people, some are beating people. On Friday night, a person was attacked by alleged drug abusers in Kothapet. Around two months back a person named Suresh, while he was searching for a cab at Kothapet, was beaten by a few people. But due to various reasons he did not go to the police.

A psychiatrist said that some addicts are getting Ketamine injections from somewhere. These are anesthetic drugs, which are not available in shops. But some of the addicts are using it.

“As to how they harm other people, some drug addicts are abusing themselves to get pleasure. Some of the addicts are inflicting wounds on themselves,” the psychiatrist added.

Even school children in the age of 15 are becoming addicted to drugs.

A psychiatrist said one of the victims told her that the addict's friends bought drugs for him at Rs 200 to Rs 300. “We do not know how they are getting the drugs at cheap rates, though the police are arresting drug peddlers and consumers,” the psychiatrist added.

Task Force seizes 96.5 liters of liquor from belt shops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force on Sunday seized 96.5 liters of liquor worth Rs1.12 lakh from belt shops under Kulsumpura, Chatrinaka and Kachiguda police station limits and arrested five persons.

The accused were identified as Vineeth Singh (21) of Karwan; Kuradi Sachin (24), an event organiser from Aliyabad; Durgam Chandrashekar (18) of Aliabad; A Ravi Kumar (28), a paint shop owner and resident of Phool Bagh and Ratnala Raja Rao, a resident of Secunderabad. The accused revealed that they purchased liquor from local stores and sold it at high prices at night to make profits. The accused were handed over to concerned police stations for further investigation.

Advancements in cyber security, privacy discussed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre of Excellence for Cyber Security and Data Security Council of India (CCoE-DSCI) concluded its chapter meet, an event that brought together partners, government officials and industry experts to discuss the latest advancements in cyber security and privacy on Sunday. The event was graced by Jayesh Ranjan, IAS, Special Chief Secretary, ITE&C Department and Department of Industries & Commerce, Government of Telangana as Chief Guest.

Dr Sriram Birudavolu, CEO, CCoE, emphasised, “The CCoE-DSCI chapter meet at Hyderabad brought together industry leaders and professionals from the cyber security and privacy domain to discuss and learn about the upcoming field of privacy engineering, which is vital for implementing privacy in organisations.”

Jayesh Ranjan said, “Privacy engineering is a cornerstone of trust in our digital society. The pivotal role played by the CCoE in fostering innovation and collaboration in cyber security and privacy is crucial for building a secure, resilient and privacy-compliant digital landscape for the future.”

The event was enriched by the insights of esteemed



Jayesh Ranjan with Sriram Birudavolu

speakers GT Venkateshwar Rao, MD, Posidex, who delivered an engaging session on “Privacy engineering and cyber security strategies” and Abhilash, Founder, and CEO, Privasapien, spoke on “Building privacy-preserving & responsible AI solutions for India & the world”. This was followed by keynote addresses by Niti Paul, Regional DOP, Capgemini, and Soumick Bhattacharya, a renowned cyber security & data privacy leader and technology evangelist.

Following the speakers, the event organised insightful sessions on various topics such as Privacy Engineering by Sai Krishna, a technical consultant, CCoE, Business Development and

Community Engagement, CCoE, presented on CCoE's upcoming programmes, including PrivSec, Hackathon and Recruitment Opportunity by Mitalee Agarwal and apprenticeships in cyber security by S Celestine, senior manager, Sector Skill Council (SSC), NASSCOM. The inclusion of yoga session provided a refreshing break for attendees, enhancing focus and well-being, while the Kahoot quiz event fostered an engaging and interactive learning environment.

Finally, the chapter meet concluded with a networking session offering intensive learning, networking opportunities and a platform for innovative partnerships.

1.65 kgs of ganja chocolates seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Shamshabad Excise Police, along with District Task Force (DTF) seized 1.65 kgs of ganja chocolates worth Rs 7 lakh on Sunday while the accused were illegally transporting it from Uttar Pradesh to Hyderabad.

In another raid, State Task Force (STF) Police raided a house at Hayathnagar and seized 5.070 kg of cannabis. R

Tirupati, R Sai Kiran, C Ganesh and Veera Murali were arrested in this connection and a case has been registered against them.

The STF Police conducted raids at Balranganly in Upper Dhoolpet and arrested two women who were selling ganja. In this raid, 1.4 kgs of ganja was seized from the two women. Cases have been registered against Shalini and Rishi Singh in this case.

TGCSB restores Rs 31.29 cr to cyber crime victims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) has refunded Rs 31.29 crore to the victims of cyber fraud from February 20 to June 8, including two Mega Lok Adalat periods.

TGCSB director Shikha Goel said that this remarkable accomplishment was the result of comprehensive deliberations between TGCSB and the Telangana State Legal Services Authority (TSLSA). To provide relief to cyber victims, it was decided to issue the refund orders through pre-litigation cases (PLCs) in Lok Adalats.

To streamline the process of filing petitions under Section 457 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), a Standard Operating

Procedure (SOP) was prepared and circulated to all legal services authorities in the State on February 20, 2024.

Since the implementation of this decision and the issuance of instructions, a total of 5,142 petitions have been filed in courts. Refund orders have been issued for a total amount of Rs 31.29 crore to cyber fraud victims.

Shikha Goel said that this collaboration between the judiciary and the police, makes a robust legal framework aimed at addressing the financial impacts of cyber crimes on citizens. Through such measures, TGCSB continues to demonstrate its commitment to protecting citizens from cyber threats and ensuring justice and financial restitution for victims.

TG financial condition worsened under BRS govt: Speaker

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Legislative Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar said that the financial situation of the State has deteriorated due to the debts incurred by the previous BRS government. He handed over cheques of Rs 10,000 to the meritorious students belonging to tenth, inter and degree under the auspices of MSR Charitable Trust

at Lakdikapul, Hyderabad on Sunday.

The Speaker expressed hope that the students will excel in higher studies due to this support. During the previous government, both the students and their parents faced a lot of difficulties due to non-payment of fee reimbursement dues. The Congress government will implement the fee reimburse-



ment scheme in full. It is also providing many welfare schemes for the students such as Badi Bata programme wherein they were providing books, uniforms and better facilities in schools.

TGSRTC condemns BRS allegations over AFCS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A day after the BRS party made allegations about Automatic Fare collection system (AFCS) tenders, Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) said that the allegations were false.

On Sunday TGSRTC released a press note, where it mentioned that a tender notice was issued on January 11, 2024 with the intention of implementing AFCS as soon as possible. Digital ticketing software and online reservation have been combined in that tender. It had issued the tender to specify the prices separately for purchase of items, software development and maintenance. Three companies participated in this tender.

The committee of TGSRTC examined the documents of the respective companies as

well as the presentations on technical management capability. Since none of the companies have the capacity to satisfactorily provide all the services mentioned in the tender, the tender was cancelled by the company on February 29, 2024 without opening the commercial bid.

TGSRTC management has appointed a high-level committee to implement AFCS as soon as the Ticket Issuing Machines (TIMs), online ticket reservation service provider date is expiring. As the Central funds are not being used for anything, the committee once examined the experience and performance of the companies that participated in the previous tenders.

A team of TGSRTC officials visited many states to conduct a comprehensive study of the performance of the AFCS and other services.

The press note said that the team proposed to hand over the responsibilities to providing these services to the Chalo Mobility company. The Chalo Mobility company has good experience in issuing QR based mobile ticketing, closed loop smart cards, mobile passes and NCMC cards. This company is effectively providing the services in 3,500 buses of Brihan Mumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking (BEST). This company provides quality services through more than 10,000 items in Indore and Jabalpur cities along with Bihar, Assam and other transport companies. Letter of Intent (LOI) was issued to Chalo Mobility on March 15, 2024 with the approval of the Board based on the report of a High-Level Committee.

‘Cong government will usher in a new era of growth’

Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy offers silk clothes to Renuka Yellamma deity in Nalgonda district

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy presented silk clothes to Goddess Renuka Yellamma on behalf of the Government of Telangana at Dharvesipuram village in Nalgonda district in connection with the Kalyanotsavam of the deity on Sunday.

He prayed to the deity bestow divine blessing on people in the State. He sought the blessing of deity to ensure that the people lead a prosperous life.

In connection with the visit of the Minister, the temple priests and Kalyanotsavam celebration committee members offered traditional welcome to the Minister and his spouse with PurnaKumbham.



Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy participating in Renuka Yellamma Brahmotsavam in Nalgonda district on Sunday

As part of the festivities, the couple performed the Kalyanam of the deity and offered free food too all the

devotees who attended the celebrations.

Later, addressing the gathering, he said that he prayed to

the deity to bestow its divine blessing on the State and ensure that the State receive bountiful rains.

He said that he would strive for all-round development of Nalgonda district in all spheres of activity to take it to the number one position in Telangana. The Congress government is committed to usher in a new era of growth and build a prosperous State.

Temple Executive Officer Jaya Ramaiah, Brahmotsavam celebrations committee chairman Nagesh, main priest of the temple NagojuMallachary and Chilakamarri Sravan Kumar, endowments assistant commissioner Mahendra Kumar, endowments inspector Venkata Lakshmi and others were present on the occasion.

Over 25,000 devotees visit Komuravelli Mallanna temple

PNS ■ CHERYALA

There was a huge turn out of devotees at the Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy temple at Komuravelli on Sunday. At least 25,000 devotees turned out at the temple on Sunday and fulfilled their vows to the deity.

In spite of the reopening of the school, large number of devotees visited the temple from various parts of the state, according to temple Executive Officer A Balaji Sarma.

The devotees started visiting the temple from Saturday evening onwards. Besides having darshan, they performed Abhishekams, special pujas, got their heads tonsured and fulfilled their obsequies.

They also had the darshan of Goddess Yellamma atop the hill here and offered bonams to Her.

AFRAID OF POTENTIAL HEALTH ISSUES...

Husband throws out woman for she has her heart on right side

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A shocking incident of a husband throwing his wife out of the home because she has her heart on the right side came to light.

When she had approached the court, the court ruled in her favour stating that it does not make any difference. However, the husband was in no mood to honour the court verdict.

When the housewife took initiative and approached her husband along with her parents, the in-laws asked her parents to wait outside and beat her up black and blue.

According to the facts of the case, Bhavani married Bhaskar six years ago. Her parents gave lavish gifts to Bhaskar at the time of mar-

riage. According to Bhavani, some unidentified persons



prevailed on Bhaskar stating that his wife's heart is located on her right side and hence she would have health problems in future, leading to Bhaskar evicting her from of his house. Bhavani lamented that Bhaskar did not come to accept her as his wife even after a court ruling in her

favour.

When she took initiative and went to the in-laws house to live with her husband, her in-laws made her parents wait outside and thrashed her like anything. At the time of the assault, she said, her father-in-law was wearing the police uniform. She quoted him as saying, "None will be able to talk to her father-in-law him since he is a policeman." She said that the in-laws kicked her in the stomach. She alleged that the in-laws have been threatening to kill her if she ever attempted to return to the family.

Since her father-in-law was a head constable, the police are not doing justice to her. Currently, she is receiving treatment for injuries inflicted on her at her in-law's house.

SI puts her son in govt school

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

The Badi Bata programme of the Education Department has been yielding positive results. The objective of the programme is to enroll students in government schools especially the dropped out students.

K Rani, who is working as a sub-inspector with District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB), and her husband

Tirumalesh who works as an Excise constable got her son K Virat Nandan admitted to the government school at Ramaiahbowli. The school is located in front of the all-women police station here.

The couple took admission for the boy in class 3.

Explaining why they took admission in government school, they said that they have observed that the private

school managements have been subjecting the students to a lot of mental tension. Government schools have skilled teachers. Therefore, they took a decision to get their son admitted to the government school believing in the skills of the teachers there.

Head mistress Vijaya and her team of teachers were lauded by several government officials.

Coca-Cola bottling plant at Mandhani likely

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

The Coca-Cola bottling plant is likely to be set up in Peddapalli district at a cost of Rs 700 crore. Thanks to the initiative of Minister for Information Technology and Industries D Sridhar Babu.

Sridhar Babu said that the company representatives are keen to set up the plant in Mandhani Assembly constituency.

Recently, a delegation led by the Minister visited the USA recently and persuaded the Coca-Cola company there that

Telangana is conducive for investments and invited it to invest in the state. The company assured the delegation to set up bottling plant in Peddapalli district. The people of Mandhani constituency have been jubilant over the Coca-Cola company is coming forward to set up its unit in the industrially-backward Mandhani region.

Mandhani is located centrally to the undivided Karimnagar, Adilabad and Warangal districts. Moreover, there are two barrages like Annaram and Sundilla to provide water needed by the plant.

Further, a national green highway is being developed linking Maharashtra with Mancherla, Godavari, Muttaram, Mandhani and Bhupalapalli, providing easy transportation facilities for the products.

At least 3,000 acres of land is needed to set up the plant. The government is likely to allot the government land near the forest area close to river Godavari. Sridhar Babu who returned to the state winding up his foreign tour is likely to make a statement on the proposed industries after taking it to the notice of CM A Revanth Reddy.

Tribal farmer electrocuted

PNS ■ VARDHANAPETA

A farmer was electrocuted in Ramdhan Thanda of Warangal district on Sunday. A pall of gloom has descended on the tribal hamlet following the death. He was identified as Guguloth Devender, 30. He is survived by wife and son.

According to the locals, Devender on Sunday morning went to his agriculture well to switch on the pump set but received electric shock and lost consciousness. He was rushed to the nearest hospital but died en route. A complaint was lodged with the police by the widow of Devender.

Woman assaulted for ‘practising black magic’

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

In a tragic incident at Raviryal village under Chaudarguda Mandal in Rangareddy district, a woman, identified as Padamma, was assaulted by nine persons of the same village. The attackers tied Padamma to a tree and beat her, accusing her of practicing black magic.

The police registered a case against suspects allegedly involved in the assault. Authorities made it clear that the suspects will be produced

before the court.

Police officials emphasised that individuals should not take the law into their own hands. They urged the public to report any illegal activity, such as black magic, to the authorities instead of resorting to violence or vigilantism. The police reiterated the importance of adhering to the rule of law and warned against believing in or acting on such accusations without evidence. The incident sparked outrage among people.

10th unit of KTPS taken out of service

PNS ■ KOTHAGUDEM

A 250 MW 10th unit of Kothagudem Thermal Power Station was taken out of service from Saturday for overhauling the unit and to replace the current air pre-heater which is causing a production loss of 50 MW.

As a result, the unit would not be able to provide power supply to agriculture sector for 45 days. Therefore, the TS Genco is going to depend on hydel power generation to meet agriculture power needs.

After overhauling the unit, it would be linked to the power grid after 45 days only.

For the last time, the unit

was overhauled in 2021 at a cost of Rs 36 crore. The TS Genco reviewed the situation and allocated Rs10 lakh for undertaking repairs to the unit.

Prior to undertaking repairs by the contracted BHEL experts and engineers of the KTPS switched off the power generation in the unit.

The KTPS authorities exude confidence that the unit will go on full stream once the overhauling exercise is through.

First the authorities will focus on undertaking repairs to turbine, boiler and generator. Acting according to a plan, the whole exercise will be completed in 45 days.

Ministers condemn sexual assault, murder of six-year-old girl

PNS ■ SULTANABAD

Ministers D Sridhar Babu and D Anasuya on Sunday condemned the sexual assault on a six-year-old and brutal murder of her and visited the rice mill in Katnapalli in Sultanabad mandal of Peddapalli district, the scene of offence.

They said that a person belonging to Bihar kidnapped the girl, sleeping near her mother, and committed the

offence. The society would never pardon such persons, they said expressing concern over the incident. On learning about the incident, the police immediately swung into action and took the criminal into custody within a hour of committing the crime. It was unfortunate to note that the girl was put to death by that time.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy responded immediately and ordered probe into the case

by a fast-track court and asked the police to take steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future. They assured the state government's full support to the victim's family.

MP of Peddapalli Vamsi Krishna, MLA of Ramagundam Makkan Singh Raj Thakur, MLA of Peddapalli Vijaya Ramana Rao, district vice president Thota Chandraiah and other leaders were present on the occasion.

Betting loss drives youth to end life

PNS ■ MEDAK

A 24-year-old youth who lost heavily to the online betting attempted suicide by consuming pesticide five days ago in Pragati Dharmaram village of Ramayampetamandal of Medak district but succumbed to death while undergoing

treatment in NIMS at Hyderabad on Sunday.

He was identified as Dommata Bhanu Prasad of Pragati Dharmaram village.

He lost at least Rs 1.50 lakh betting online. A peeved Bhanu Prasad five days ago consumed pesticide near the agriculture well in his farm in the village

to commit suicide. His family members rushed him to NIMS in Hyderabad where he succumbed on Sunday.

The family has been weeping inconsolably due to the death of the only son.

The body was sent to Ramayampeta Government Hospital for post-mortem.

Traffic restrictions announced for Bakrid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad traffic police issued an advisory to be followed on Monday on the occasion of Bakrid.

The restrictions have been imposed as prayers will be offered at Mir Alam Tank Eidgah and at Hockey Ground, Masab Tank. The restrictions will remain in place from 8 am to 11:30 am.

The traffic will be either stopped or diverted at the following places/routes.

Vehicles of namazees coming from Puranapul, Kamathipura, Kishanbagh towards the Eidgah, Mir Alam Tank for prayers will be allowed through Bahadurpura X Roads.

Parking arrangements have been made at Zoo Park, Open space opposite Masjid Allah-Akbar. General vehicular traffic will not be allowed towards Eidgah, Tadban. It will be diverted at Bahadurpura X Roads towards Kishanbagh, Kamathipura and Puranapul.

Vehicles of namazees coming from Shivarampally and Danamma Huts towards the Eidgah, Mir Alam Tank, for

prayers will be allowed through Dannama Huts X Roads. Besides Modern Saw Mill parking in front of Eidgah main road, Mir Alam filter bed; open space beside the Mir



Alam filter bed, opposite Sufi Cars (for four-wheelers) and Yadav parking (for four-wheelers).

Vehicles of namazees coming from Kalapather towards the Eidgah, Mir Alam Tank, for prayers will be allowed through Kalapather L&O police station. General vehicular traffic will not be allowed towards Eidgah. It will be diverted at Kalapather L&O PS towards Mochi

Colony, Bhadurpura, Shamsheergunj and Nawab Saheb Kunta.

From 8 am to 11:30 am, the heavy vehicles including RTC Buses coming from Puranapul

congregation disperses.

No vehicular traffic will be allowed under the Masab Tank flyover.

Traffic coming from Mehdiapatnam and from Lakdikapul will be allowed for commuting only on the flyover. The following traffic diversions will be imposed till the completion of prayers, from 7 am to 10 am.

The general traffic coming from Mehdiapatnam towards Road No.1, Banjara Hills via Masab Tank will be diverted through Masab Tank flyover, via Ayodhya Junction (left turn), Khairatabad, RTA Office, Khairatabad (left turn), Taj Krishna Hotel and so on.

The vehicular traffic coming from Lakdikapul towards Masab Tank intending to go towards Road No.1/12 Banjara Hills via Masab Tank will be diverted at Ayodhya Junction towards Nirankari, Khairatabad, VV Statue, Khairatabad RTA Office (left turn) and Taj Krishna Hotel.

Traffic will not be allowed from below the Masab Tank flyover towards Road No.1, Banjara Hills till the completion of prayers.

The vehicular traffic coming from Road No. 12, Banjara Hills will not be allowed towards Masab Tank and will be diverted at Road No. 1/12 Junction towards Taj Krishna Hotel – right turn – RTA Khairatabad. Vehicular traffic coming from NFCL Junction, Panjagutta will not be allowed towards Masab Tank and will be diverted at Taj Krishna Hotel towards Erramajil Colony, RTA Khairatabad, Nirankari, Lakdikapul, Masab Tank flyover, Mehdiapatnam.

In Langar Houz prayers will be offered at the following places. General traffic coming from Nana Nagar towards Andhra Floor Mill will be diverted at Balika Bhavan Jn towards Laxminagar; Vehicles coming from MD Lines and Balika Bhavan will not be allowed towards Military Hospital. It will be diverted at Andhra Floor Mill towards Balika Bhavan or MD Lines; General traffic coming from Langar House will not be allowed towards Military Hospital. It will be diverted at Eidgah U Turn at Military Hospital towards Moghal Ka Nala.

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Home Minister Anita Vangalapudi underscored her administration's commitment to maintaining law and order in the State.

Addressing concerns over the state's law and order situation with the media here on Sunday, Minister Anitha issued a stern warning to troublemakers, emphasising that any breaches of the law would be met with severe consequences. "If they cross the line, they will be slapped," she declared unequivocally.

Highlighting the contrast with previous administra-



tions, Minister Anitha pointed out the deterioration in law and order under the former government. She assured the public that under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu, the government has implemented effective measures to restore order and discipline, ensuring the

safety of all citizens.

In a significant move aimed at combating illegal activities, particularly ganja smuggling, Minister Anitha announced a forthcoming crackdown.

Speaking to the media here on Sunday, she disclosed plans for a specialised operation in collaboration with law enforcement agencies to tackle this persistent issue. This initiative, she emphasized, reflects the government's steadfast resolve to curb illegal activities and enhance the overall safety and well-being of the people of Andhra Pradesh.

Govt withdraws security for Swaroopananda

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The TDP government has decided to withdraw security for Swamy Swaroopananda, the seer of Sarada Peetham. The move signifies a major shift in the

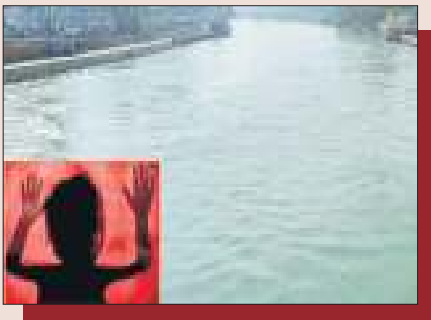
government's approach towards Swaroopananda, who held considerable influence during the tenure of former CM YS Jagan. Swaroopananda, venerated as the court guru by Jagan, was afforded extensive secu-

rity under the YCP government's rule. However, the current coalition government is poised to investigate alleged irregularities and injustices linked to him, beginning with the withdrawal of his security detail.

INDIA CORNER

Man throws two-year-old daughter into canal

A man allegedly threw his two-year-old daughter into a canal and later claimed that he did it because she and her brother would fight with each other, police said on Sunday. The accused, Suleman, a resident of Madhiyal village under Sardhana police station area here, has been detained as the search for the missing girl continues, the police said. They said the villagers told them that two more daughters of Suleman had disappeared under suspicious circumstances in the past. Superintendent of Police (Rural) Kamlesh Bahadur said that the Sardhana police station received an information on Friday that the two-year-old daughter of Suleman was missing since 8 am. On receiving the information, Station House Officer (SHO) of Sardhana police station Pratap Singh reached Suleman's house but he was not at home.



Assam secretariat becomes India's first eco-friendly

The Assam Secretariat on Sunday became the country's first green state government headquarters with the inauguration of a 2.5 MW solar power project on its campus, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. Installed at a cost of Rs 12.5 crore, the grid-connected rooftop solar power plant will save Rs 30 lakh in electricity bills every month, he said while addressing the official programme here. "Today, we took a giant leap forward in our goal to become a Net-Zero Govt, as I inaugurated a 2.5 MW Solar Project in Janata Bhawan, making #AssamGreenSecretariat, India's first Green Secretariat," Sarma said in a post on X after the function. From now onwards, the secretariat complex will run entirely on solar power, resulting in savings of Rs 30 lakh every month on electricity bills, he added. The Chief Minister also said the government has decided that all official complexes will be fitted with solar panels.



Odisha CM holds meet to review Puri Rath Yatra preparedness

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday convened a crucial meeting with senior government officials for the smooth conduct of the upcoming Shana Purnima and Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath in Puri. Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena, DGP Arun Sarangi, Director of Intelligence Soumendra Priyadarshi, and other senior officials were present at the meeting held at the state guest house, acting as the temporary office of the new Chief Minister. Briefing reporters, Harichandan said the Chief Minister was briefed about the ongoing preparations for Shana Yatra and Rath Yatra by the chief secretary, DGP and director, intelligence. He emphasised that further consultations would be held with temple servitors and all stakeholders to ensure the smooth conduct of the Rath Yatra and associated.



Terror in J-K has shrunk to mere proxy war: Amit Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is in its decisive phase and recent incidents show that terrorism has been forced to shrink from highly organised acts of violence to a mere proxy war, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

During a high-level meeting at the North Block here to review the security situation in the Union Territory in the wake of recent terrorist attacks there, he also directed security agencies to implement area domination and zero-terror plans in the Jammu division like they did in Kashmir to achieve success.

The government is determined to root out terrorism, Shah asserted. The meeting with top security officials was convened to review the situation in the wake of the attacks in the Union Territory's Jammu region, officials said. Home Minister Shah directed the security agencies to work on a mission mode



The meeting with top security officials was convened to review the situation in the wake of the attacks in the Union Territory's Jammu region, officials said

and ensure quick response in a coordinated manner.

He also stressed on seamless coordination among security agencies, identifying vulnerable areas and addressing security concerns in these areas.

Reiterating the government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said the government will leave no stone unturned to root out terrorism from Jammu

and Kashmir. The efforts of the government of India have yielded great positive results in the Kashmir Valley with significant reduction in terror-related incidents, he said. Shah noted that the improvement in the law and order situation is reflected in the record flow of tourists in the Kashmir Valley.

The home minister appreciated the security agencies and the Jammu and Kashmir administration for the successful conduct of the Lok Sabha elections, which witnessed record voter turnout in the Union Territory.

He directed the agencies to replicate in the Jammu division the successes achieved in the Kashmir Valley through the area domination plan and the zero-terror plan, the officials said. The fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is in its decisive phase and the recent incidents show that terrorism has been forced to shrink from highly organised acts of violence to a mere proxy war, the minister said.



BJP had ignored indigenous people Jharkhand: CM

Seraikela (Jharkhand), Jun 16 (PTI) Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren on Sunday alleged that the BJP had ignored indigenous people even though the party was in power in the state for a long time after it was created around two-and-a-half decades ago.

People voted the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance to power in the state in 2019 but the saffron party did not allow the government to function and tried to destabilise it, Soren said, while addressing a programme in Matkambada village in Seraikela-Kharsawan district.

On the occasion, he inaugurated 22 development projects worth Rs 71 crore and laid the foundation.

'No need to teach about riots, demolition in schools'

No attempts to saffronise textbooks: NCERT chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rejecting accusations of saffronisation of the school curriculum, NCERT's director has said that references to Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition were modified in school textbooks because teaching about riots "can create violent and depressed citizens."

In an interaction here on Saturday, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said the textbook tweaks are part of the annual revision and should not be a subject of hue and cry.

Asked about references to Gujarat riots or Babri Masjid demolition being tweaked in NCERT textbooks, Saklani said, "Why should we teach about riots in school textbooks? We want to create positive citizens not violent and depressed individuals."

"Should we teach our students in a manner that they become offensive, create hatred in society or become



In an interaction here on Saturday, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said the textbook tweaks are part of the annual revision and should not be a subject of hue and cry.

victim of hatred? Is that education's purpose? Should we teach about riots to such young children ... when they grow up, they can learn about it but why school textbooks? Let them understand what happened and why it happened when they grow up. The hue and cry about the changes is irrelevant," he said.

The comments by Saklani come at a time when new textbooks have hit the market with several deletions and changes. The revised Class 12 political science textbook does not mention the Babri

masjid but refers to it as a "three-domed structure". It has pruned the Ayodhya section from four to two pages and deleted details from the earlier version.

"We want to create positive citizens and that's what is the purpose of our textbooks. We cannot have everything in them. The purpose of our education is not to create violent citizens ... depressed citizens. Hatred and violence are not subjects of teaching, they should not be the focus of our textbooks," added Saklani.



Serious questions on integrity of NTA: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday said there are "serious questions" on the integrity of the National Testing Agency and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered.

The opposition party hoped that when the new Standing Committees of Parliament gets constituted, it would take up an in-depth review of the NEET, NTA and NCERT.

"I was a member of Parliament's Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare between 2014 and 2019 and recall broad support for NEET. But there were MPs, especially from Tamil Nadu, who had raised concerns that NEET would privilege CBSE

students and would disadvantage youth coming from non-CBSE schools," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"I do think now that this CBSE issue needs proper analysis. Is NEET discriminatory? Are students from poorer backgrounds being denied opportunities? Other states like Maharashtra also have expressed grave doubts on NEET," he said.

There are also serious questions on the integrity of the National Testing Agency itself and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered, he said. The NCERT itself has lost all professionalism in the last decade, Ramesh claimed.

Sibal demands probe by SC-appointed officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the raging row over medical entrance exam NEET, former HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Sunday demanded a probe by Supreme Court-appointed officials into allegations of irregularities and called on the government to have a thorough consultation with all states as to how this examination is to be held in future.

In an interview, the Rajya Sabha MP also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue, saying if the testing system in any examination becomes corrupt then it is "not really neat for the PM to remain silent".

Sibal urged all political parties to raise the matter strongly in the upcoming session of Parliament but was not optimistic about it being taken up for discussion, predicting that the government will not allow it citing that the matter is sub-judice.

"The present National Testing Agency (NTA) has really bungled and corruption has been brought to light on media platforms, such as providing solutions for question papers for something like



In an interview, the Rajya Sabha MP also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue, saying if the testing system in any examination becomes corrupt then it is "not really neat for the PM to remain silent"

becoming a doctor," Sibal, who was the Human Resource Development (now the portfolio is Education) minister from May 29, 2009 to October 29, 2012, said.

"Some of these incidents in Gujarat have perplexed me and are a matter of great national concern. I think NTA should answer some of these very serious questions," he said. Sibal said what is even more surprising and disappointing is that whenever something like this happens and there is corruption under the aegis of the present government, the "andh bhaktis" start blaming the UPA for it and that is most unfortunate because they don't seem to be fully educated before making

statements of this nature.

He pointed out that the NEET regulation was introduced in 2010 by the Medical Council of India (MCI) through its board of directors. The MCI was under the ministry of health and not under the ministry of education.

Sibal alleged there is rampant corruption in the manner in which examinations are being held not just in one state but throughout the country.

"If 67 students have maxed and some of them belong to same centre I think the minister should be worried about it instead of saying there is nothing wrong.

In this government, there would not be any minister who will admit that something wrong has been done."

'India to become sixth country to have deep sea mission'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Earth Sciences Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said India is set to become the sixth country to have its own deep-sea mission.

Chairing a meeting to discuss the ministry's 100-day action plan, Singh expressed pride and happiness on the progress of the deep-sea mission and India being among the very few nations to achieve this feat.

He asked institutes to focus on achieving a resilient blue economy to empower people dependent on the ocean and its energy for livelihood.



Singh said the deep-sea mission is not limited to mineral exploration but development of ocean sciences and exploration of flora and fauna and conservation of marine biodiversity.

He lauded the National Institute of Ocean Technology's (NIOT) efforts for the development of Matsyaayan 6000, which can dive 6,000 metres deep into the ocean.

Taking stock of the progress, he directed officials to complete the first stage of the vessel's harbour trial by September and finish the subsequent ones by 2026.

Singh appreciated the ministry for working in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop a "titanium hull" for the vessel that can bear extreme pressure.

Extortion rackets thriving in Bengal, says Union Minister

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar on Sunday alleged that extortion rackets were thriving in West Bengal, drawing parallels to the notorious activities of Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Rajan gangs in Mumbai during the 1990s.

He claimed that instances of shootouts and dacoities in jewellery shops over the last couple of months prove that the "law and order situation in the state is not good."



Similar rackets seem to have started in West Bengal," Majumdar said.

Majumdar, also the state BJP president, alleged that these developments are reminiscent of past criminal activities in Mumbai, suggesting a worrying trend in West Bengal.

"I am reminded of the way Dawood Ibrahim, Chhota Shakil, Chhota Rajan gangs used to operate extortion rackets in Mumbai in the 1990's.

'Sweeping generalisation': BJP counters Elon Musk over EVM remark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday accused billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk of making a "huge sweeping generalisation" by calling for eliminating EVMs, saying his views may apply to the US but not to India.

In a recent post on X, Musk had said, "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high."

Countering the Tesla CEO's criticism of EVMs, BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "This is a huge sweeping generalization statement that implies no one can build secure digital hardware.

Wrong. Elon Musk's view may apply to the US and other places - where they use regular compute platforms to build Internet connected Voting machines."

"But Indian EVMs are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media - No connectivity, no bluetooth, wifi, Internet. ie there is no way in. Factory programmed controllers that cannot be reprogrammed," the former minister of state for information technology said on X.

Chandrasekhar also said EVMs can be architected and built right as India has done. "We would be happy to run a tutorial Elon," he added.

BJP's IT department head

Amit Malviya said Musk or whoever else thinks they can hack the EVM should approach the Election Commission of India and take a shot at it.

He also took a swipe at Rahul Gandhi after the Congress leader raised Musk's comments to flag "concerns" about electoral process.

Malviya said, "But why is Rahul Gandhi complaining about Indian democracy to Musk? What can Musk do? Or is crying before the world and demeaning India part of Congress's DNA? We just had an election and people of India rejected this dynast for a third time in row. But he still does not get it."

Rafale jets participate in Red Flag exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force's Rafale fighter jets carried out complex missions along with F-16 and F-15 combat aircraft at a multinational mega military exercise in Alaska in the US.

The key takeaways from participating in the Red Flag exercise for the IAF included insight on interoperability with international partners and a collaborative understanding of missions in a multinational environment, the defence ministry said on Sunday.

The IAF contingent participated in the exercise from June 4 to 14.

Besides the Indian Air Force (IAF), the exercise witnessed the participation of the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), the UK's Royal



Air Force (RAF), the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf), the German Luftwaffe, and the US Air Force (USAF).

"The transatlantic ferry of Rafale fighter aircraft was enabled by the IL-78 air-to-air refuellers while the transporta-

tion of personnel and equipment was undertaken by C-17 Globemaster aircraft," the ministry said.

Red Flag is an air exercise conducted with multiple scenarios designed to provide realistic combat settings.

This was the first time the

IAF Rafale aircraft participated in this exercise. The Rafale jets operated alongside F-16 and F-15 aircraft of the RSAF and the USAF respectively.

The missions included Beyond Visual Range (BVR) combat exercises as a part of large force engagements (LFE) in offensive counter air-and-air defence roles, the defence ministry said in a statement.

It said the IAF crew members were actively involved in mission planning and also assumed the role of mission leaders for designated missions during the exercise.

"In spite of the challenging weather and almost sub-zero temperatures, the IAF maintenance crew worked diligently to ensure serviceability of all the aircraft throughout the duration of the exercise and all

assigned missions could be undertaken with more than 100 sorties being flown during the exercise," the ministry said.

"Key takeaways from the exercise included insight on interoperability with international partners and a collaborative understanding of employment philosophy in a multinational environment," it said.

"Experience of ferrying long distances, while undertaking air-to-air refuelling enroute, was both an enriching and thrilling takeaway, especially for the younger crew," it said.

The ministry said undertaking its return journey, the contingent split enroute along with their mutual support elements to participate in exercises with air force elements of Greece and Egypt.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Heatwave crisis

To mitigate the health impacts of extreme heat, urgent Govt action is essential

This summer has been unlike any other. The relentless heat intensifies with each passing day, and there is no relief in sight. India is currently grappling with one of the most intense heat waves in recent history, with temperatures soaring above 45 degrees Celsius in many regions. This extreme heat is taking a significant toll on the health of the people, straining healthcare systems, and prompting urgent government action to mitigate the crisis. The immediate health impacts of the heatwave are severe and widespread. Hospitals across the country are reporting a surge in cases of heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Heat exhaustion, characterised by symptoms like heavy sweating, muscle cramps, and fatigue, can escalate into heatstroke. Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition that occurs when the body's temperature regulation fails, leading to confusion, unconsciousness, and potentially fatal organ damage. Chronic health conditions are also being exacerbated by the extreme heat.



Individuals with cardiovascular diseases are at increased risk of heart attacks and strokes as the body struggles to cool itself, leading to higher heart rates and blood pressure. Respiratory issues are worsening too, with higher levels of air pollutants combining with the heat to create a hazardous environment for those with asthma and other lung conditions. It is time the Indian Govt declared a health emergency and implemented measures aimed at protecting public health and alleviating the impact of the heatwave. The government must actively disseminate information through various media channels, advising people to stay indoors during peak heat hours and drink plenty of water. The office timings must be changed. Some states like Rajasthan are doing good jo. External coolers have been installed on public buses to mitigate the soaring temperatures. In response to the extreme heat, the Jaipur administration has initiated the use of artificial rain. Large water tankers have been stationed along the roads to spray water on pedestrians, adopting this method to combat the sweltering conditions. The rest of the country could take a cue from Rajasthan. Indeed, healthcare systems are under significant pressure, with hospitals and clinics witnessing a sharp increase in heat-related medical emergencies. To cope with the surge, additional medical staff must be deployed, and temporary medical facilities must be set up in some areas to handle the overflow of patients. What we are witnessing can be attributed to climate change. Urban areas must have more green spaces which help lower temperatures. Climate experts warn that such events are likely to become more frequent and severe in the coming years due to climate change, necessitating comprehensive plans to protect public health. By investing in sustainable infrastructure, enhancing healthcare system capacities, and promoting public awareness, India can build resilience against future heatwaves and safeguard the health of its population in an increasingly warming world.

PICTALK



Ashy prinia bird feeds its babies, in Chikmagalur, Sunday

PTI

Reimagining success in long-term relationships

By fostering mutual support, effective communication, and shared goals, couples can build a resilient bond that withstands the test of time

Fairytales and romantic comedies have long shaped our dreams of love, painting idyllic pictures of happily ever after. However, reality tells a different story. Long-term relationships in the real world are far messier and more dynamic than their cinematic counterparts. It is essential to understand that the happily ever after narrative may not be practically achievable. Instead, we must delve into a more nuanced perspective on what constitutes success and fulfillment in lasting partnerships. As we reimagine and reinvent the path to success in long-term relationships, we must remember that unrealistic expectations and ideals can only lead to disillusionment. Facing real-life challenges, including conflict, growth, and change, is an inevitable part of any enduring partnership. In this rapidly changing world, it is prudent to navigate these complexities, offering a more realistic and ultimately more satisfying vision of long-term relationship success. Healthy relationships are dynamic ecosystems, not static stalemates. They thrive on creating an environment



where personal exploration and growth enhance the partnership's foundation. In such relationships, partners continuously evolve as individuals, with their passions, priorities, and goals shifting over time. Strong, lasting relationships develop on the foundation of good communication, creating a safe space for vulnerability where feelings, needs, and desires can be openly expressed. This openness enhances trust and emotional intimacy, leading to a deeper bond between partners. Acceptance is also crucial for lasting fulfillment. People, like relationships, are a beautiful mosaic of strengths and quirks. While individual growth is important, strong relationships benefit from a shared compass. Whether it's a passion for travel or a dream of building a family together, having common core values provides a sense of purpose

and unity. It is also vital to develop skills for healthy conflict resolution, as disagreements are inevitable in a long-term relationship. Maintaining the spark in a deeply satisfying relationship involves creating space for individual pursuits outside of the partnership. This fosters a sense of self and helps in developing a personal identity, which can reignite the spark and reduce co-dependency. For long-term fulfillment, intimacy must go beyond the intense passion of the initial stages. Prioritizing quality time, focusing on physical affection, and creating shared experiences play essential roles in nurturing intimacy. Social media can put intense pressure on couples to maintain a 'Perfect Couple' image, but real life cannot be perfect 365 days a year. The ability to weather storms together as a team is what demonstrates the strength of love. Prioritizing self-love is the foundation for a fulfilling relationship, as partners content with themselves can contribute positively to the partnership. If couples encounter endless challenges, seeking professional

support from a counselor can be invaluable. A successful long-term relationship is not about achieving an unattainable state of bliss but about embracing the journey with its inevitable twists and turns. By focusing on communication, shared goals, and individual interests, partners can build a connection that evolves and deepens over time. The happily ever after may not be a permanent destination, but the journey of building a satisfying partnership can definitely be a deeply enriching experience. The essence of a successful long-term relationship lies in embracing the journey with all its complexities and imperfections. By appreciating each other's unique qualities and navigating conflicts with grace, couples can build a resilient and dynamic partnership. Real love is all about supporting each other through life's challenges and celebrating the moments of joy.

(Author is Dubai-based award-winning Poet, Novelist, Writing Retreat Curator and Founder of TheWriteScene.com. Views expressed are personal)



DEEBA SALIM IRFAN

Biblical rhetoric stirs controversy

As Netanyahu faces mounting pressure, his future leadership hangs in the balance amidst growing calls for a more humane approach to the conflict

In politics, symbolism matters. In the biblical-civilisational land of Palestine or Ha'aretz Hamuvtakhah ('Promised Land') which birthed Abrahamic faiths, symbolism is even more significant. Therefore, Israel's most extreme-right Prime Minister ever i.e., Benjamin Netanyahu, upped the incendiary rhetoric by invoking the 'Amalek' narrative to appeal to the basest of instincts. Netanyahu provoked, "You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible" – referencing the Biblical Amalekites who were seen as the archetypal enemies of the Jews. It was suggestive of not sparing any of the so-called modern 'Amaleks' (read, Palestinians). Many were horrified at the attempt to seek justification in holy scriptures, to defend the indefensible. Similarly, many are deeply concerned at the import and usage of the Palestinian expression "From the river to the sea" as the same finds mention in the terror group Hamas's charter, which is construed as the complete extermination of the Israeli State and the Jews. The polemics are deeply symbolic. Israel is today conducting a brazen and no-holds barred retaliation (already accounted for over 35,000 Palestinian deaths) that remains unheeding and unconcerned to global calls for restraint. In some ways, the horrific 7th Oct attack by the terror group Hamas was serendipitously timed for the already unpopular, dictatorial, and tainted Benjamin Netanyahu. Expectedly, after the attack the opposition parties put their differences aside and joined the National Unity Government to stand together in the face of national crisis. It also distracted the attention from Netanyahu's misgovernance till then and offered a much-needed distraction. Netanyahu grabbed the opportunity of the wounded moment to launch an unprecedented revenge that has now got his initial allies like the USA to rethink. After many supportive vetoes in the Security Council, the US was forced to agree with motions that called out the disproportionality of Israeli revenge.



Netanyahu cared two-hoots and persisted with his onslaught, as he gambled that it allowed him time and space to do even more fear mongering, 'othering', and manufactured outrage that could somehow justify his continuation. Already, Israel (especially under Netanyahu) has regularly cocked a snook at the United Nations by becoming the most 'sanctioned' nation in the world. It also cares little about international condemnation. But perhaps it has overplayed its trademark belligerence for now, as the reactions from countries that were once clearly pro-Israel (e.g., the USA) or cautiously guarded (e.g. Western European nations) are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their stand, as the global outcry over Israeli excess becomes louder. While typically it wouldn't have mattered to Israel under Netanyahu – but perhaps now it does, given that it could backfire on the public mood in Israel which in any case is tiring of the bloodshed and even more wary of Netanyahu's ability to lead the nation, hereinafter. Three Western countries i.e., Spain, Ireland and Norway have announced that they will now recognise a Palestinian State (with borders that existed prior to the 1967 war, with Jerusalem as the joint capital). It is a wholly symbolic move



ISRAEL IS TODAY CONDUCTING A BRAZEN AND NO-HOLDS BARRED RETALIATION THAT REMAINS UNHEEDING AND UNCONCERNED TO GLOBAL CALLS FOR RESTRAINT

that comes with the rider that they are willing to change the contours of the sovereign borders after the final negotiated settlement of the 'two-nation' formula, something Netanyahu has opposed tooth-and-nail. It is an attempt to defame Netanyahu's stand and propel the national mood towards ceasefire and rapprochement. Given that these three countries are 'Western' and have ostensibly no axe to grind with Israel (unlike any of the Arab Sheikdoms or Iran) and hence their action is only rooted in genuine concern and morality. A country like Norway, is in any case the beacon of ethics and humanity, in the global comity of nations – hence that bears its own significance with such an action. It could therefore impact and galvanise public opinion within Israel to put internal pressure on Netanyahu. Such a development, if it were to accrue, is possibly Netanyahu's worst nightmare come true. His survival and legitimacy are predicated on the still popular notions of extracting 'justifiable' revenge, and the sudden siding of Western powers (once pro-Israel) towards his nemesis i.e., Palestine, deligitimises those notions. Even its staunchest ally, the United States of America, is facing consequences of affording an initial 'blank cheque' onto Israel with rising protests across its campuses, some-

thing Joe Biden can ill-afford in the election year. Americans have now become mealy-mouthed and wishy-washy in their support towards Netanyahu and have started talking about ceasefire, reiterating the 'two-state' formula as the way forward and talking about direct dialogue with the Palestinians. Whereas the United Kingdom, Malta, Australia, and Slovenia have gone one step further and threatened to follow suit with Norway, Spain, and Ireland in recognising the Palestine State. While all of this is still in the realm of symbolism without any concrete interference in the expanding Israeli footprint and flattening of the Gaza Strip – it will be significant in checking Netanyahu's amoral politics and untenable approach in Gaza Strip. Even Netanyahu's instinctive reaction that such moves by one-time allies tantamount to 'rewarding' Hamas will not have too many takers as truly neutral countries like Norway are not known to take sides in conflict one way or the other, or even to 'derecognize' Israel, but only to drive peace with the insistence of the 'two-nation' formula of Oslo Agreement and peace, as the only way forward. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEMOCRATIC MATURITY

Madam — Apropos the news story "The robustness of India's political system," published on June 15, this is my response. Civil society thrives on a shared acceptance of rules and practices, whether documented or not. The UK's unwritten constitution exemplifies this, demonstrating that selfregulation and mutual respect can maintain order even amid disagreements. This contrasts with countries with written constitutions that struggle with orderly conduct, often resorting to courts for conflict resolution.

Recent Indian parliamentary elections highlight the maturity and fairness of the electoral process. The electorate's peace-fulexercise of political choices reflects their thoughtful judgment. However, cabinet appointments based on the Prime Minister's prerogative, including nonelected members, have sparked debate. While some see this as a deviation from norms, it's crucial to recognise the inherent flexibility in political decision-making. The formation of a 70+ ministerial house underlines the complexity and balance required in such decisions, showcasing the artistry and maturity of the Indian political system. Despite negative press, these decisions should be accepted as part of the evolving political landscape.

Saanvi Jain | Jamshedpur

COMBATING HEALTH MISINFORMATION

Madam — Apropos the news story "Addressing misinformation about health supplements," published on June 15, this is my response. In today's digital age, people often trust online resources more than fellow human beings. It's common during travel to follow Google Maps rather than ask a local for directions. Even when a local provides correct guidance, we view them with scepticism. For the present generation, Google and WhatsApp have become libraries and teachers. This trend extends to healthcare, where many rely on internet sources rather than visiting a physical doctor. While the internet offers easy access to information, it

'Ghar Wapsi' remains a distant dream



Apropos the news story "Kashmiri Pandits see 'return of spring'," published on June 15, this is my response. Reading about the Mela Kheer Bhawani fills me with mixed emotions. The return of spring in Kashmir, symbolised by the

gathering of Kashmiri Pandits at the Ragnya Devi temple, is a poignant reminder of their longing for home. Ashok Kumar's words, "Spring has come back again," capture the bittersweet nature of their visit—celebrating their heritage while yearning for a permanent return. Despite the recent surge in violence, the steadfast faith of these devotees is admirable.

The image of local Muslim families setting up shops and offering support during the festival underscores a spirit of communal harmony that Kashmir desperately needs. However, the reality remains harsh. Successive Governments have failed to secure a lasting solution for the displaced Pandits. The construction of a Yatri Niwas for pilgrims is a small step, but it falls short of addressing the broader issue of resettlement. True 'ghar wapsi' remains a distant dream, overshadowed by security concerns and political inertia.

Aarush Kapoor | Vijayawada

also harbours a significant amount of misinformation, especially concerning health supplements. Misleading advertisements and exaggerated claims about vitamins and dietary supplements can lead to serious health risks. Profit-driven motives overshadow consumer safety, causing individuals to potentially forgo evidence-based treatments. To combat this, promoting scientific literacy and critical thinking among consumers is crucial. Social media platforms must enhance content moderation and regulatory bodies need to enforce strict penalties on manufacturers spreading misinformation. Education and stringent regulations are vital to ensure public health and consumer safety.

Vihaan Sharma | Udaipur

GOD EMPOWERS GOODNESS

Madam — Apropos the news story "God's varied interest in humanity," published on June 15, this is my response. The BhagavadGeeta suggests that God is deeply invested in us, especially those who seek to live righteously. According to its teachings humans can be categorised

based on their relationship with God and their actions. Devotees, who worship with devotion, are closest to God and achieve liberation. They embody God's teachings and inspire others. Next are God's instruments, like Arjuna, who carry out divine instructions and are rewarded in heaven but must return to earth after their merits are exhausted. Social workers, like King Janaka, perform welfare acts, benefiting humanity and earning God's favour. Good people, characterised by their inherent goodness and philanthropists, who selflessly help others, are also recognised by God. Common people, primarily driven by passion and survival, form the society's backbone. The Geeta emphasises that God empowers those with virtuous intentions, guiding them and ensuring they receive His support, ultimately highlighting the importance of living a life aligned with divine principles

Meera Rao | Raipur

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FIRST COLUMN

IMPORTANCE OF BREAKS IN WORK LIFE

Enhancing productivity through strategic break management



SAKSHI SETHI

Are you someone who is making yourself available 24/7? Or the one who prefers clearing all work mails every now and then over a family get together? Well, if yes, then folks it may be the time to set healthy boundaries at work. Pausing amidst busy days allows the mind and body to recharge and refocus. According to various studies and research, it has been found that the most productive employees have worked for 52 minutes followed by a 17-minute break. Furthermore the studies also suggest that the mind of an individual is not made for nonstop work. It becomes essential to take regular breaks for sustaining high performance and avoiding mental fatigue. Regardless of individual's job profile, taking regular breaks is a simple yet effective strategy to enhance the overall work performance and well-being. Continuous work without breaks can lead to burnout, which is characterized by exhaustion and decreased productivity. Breaks help to recharge mentally and physically. Regular breaks improve focus and concentration. Stepping away from tasks periodically helps individuals return with a clearer mind and renewed energy. By integrating breaks into the work routine, an individual can maintain high productivity, reduce stress and improve their physical as well as mental health. In short, prioritizing breaks is an investment in their long-term career success and personal happiness for it can foster creativity and innovation. It is often believed that when an individual takes a pause from work, the brains become free to wander and explore new ideas and can lead to unexpected solutions



The importance of taking breaks from work has become even more pronounced after the COVID-19 pandemic due to several factors that have altered the way people work and live. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for regular breaks from work to manage increased stress, digital fatigue and blurred work-life boundaries. These breaks are essential for maintaining productivity, creativity, physical health and overall well-being in a rapidly changing work environment. Incorporating regular breaks such as a short family vacation or if not a vacation, just incorporating microbreaks into the workday or midday exercise breaks can lead to numerous compounding benefits, thereby making it a simple yet effective strategy for maintaining both productivity and well-being. When an individual will take all forms of breaks, they will seek positive emotions of excitement, joy, happiness, inspiration, pride and much more which will ultimately supercharge the cognitive restoration. There is no denying the fact that any individual can get too wrapped up in work stress when work is the only source of identity, validation and confidence they have but it becomes crucial at times for individuals to get in contact with activities that are completely unrelated to their professional life such as an unrelated hobby or a casual conversations about non work topics with friend groups that could often generate laughter, encouragement and much more. As is often said, contentment isn't the same as complacency. All of us should urge ourselves to be content, swim in gratitude and radical acceptance of now in a world that is never going to be happy. Remember, whether you're a high-powered executive, a teacher, a creative artist, a healthcare worker, a customer service representative or any other employee working, the benefits of taking breaks are universal and can significantly enhance your productivity, mental health and the overall job satisfaction. So try to grant yourself full permission to punctuate work hours with rejuvenating pauses.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

The healing symphony of yoga and music



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Yoga and music intertwine to foster physical wellbeing and mental relaxation, offering a holistic approach to health and harmony

June 21 holds a special place in the hearts of millions around the world. It is a day when the ancient science of yoga and the universal language of music unite, creating a symphony of wellness and harmony. "International Yoga Day (IYD)" and "World Music Day (WMD)", both celebrated on this date, offer a unique opportunity to explore the interconnections between physical, mental and emotional well-being. Yoga, with its deep roots in Indian culture and music — an intrinsic element of human expression — converge to create a holistic approach to health and happiness. Originating in India over 5,000 years ago, Yoga integrates physical postures, breath control, meditation and ethical principles to achieve harmony between mind, body and spirit. The earliest references to yoga are found in the Rigveda and it was further elaborated in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita which defines Yoga as "The journey of the self, through the self, to the self". Further, Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutras', written around 400 CE, systematically outlined the eight limbs of yoga, providing a framework for physical, mental and spiritual practices. Over the centuries, yoga evolved with contributions from various yogis and saints, adapting to cultural changes and diversifying into numerous styles such as Hatha, Ashtanga, Kundalini and so on. Yoga has transcended cultural and geographic boundaries in contemporary society, gaining global recognition for its myriad health benefits. Scientific research confirms its effectiveness in improving physical fitness, mental clarity and emotional resilience. For instance, studies published in reputable journals like the 'European Journal of Preventive Cardiology' highlights yoga's ability to enhance cardiovascular health by lowering blood pressure, cholesterol levels and body mass index. The 'Journal of Psychiatric Practice', which suggests 'yoga' can complement treatment for major depressive disorder by integrating physical postures and meditation techniques laying emphasis on mindfulness and breath control fosters inner calm and concentration, thus enhancing cognitive function. Also, the 'International Journal of Yoga' enhances emotional regulation and positive effect with practices like guided meditation and pranayama that are particularly effective in cultivating emotional stability and resilience. Presently, millions of individuals worldwide adopt yoga not merely for physical fitness, but as a comprehensive approach to health and well-being. For instance, in the United States, yoga participation has increased dramatically over the past decade, with a significant percentage of the population practicing yoga regularly. Similarly, in Europe, yoga has been integrated into public health programs and educational curricula, emphasizing its role in promoting overall wellness. Thus, International Yoga Day has become a global event following its proposal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the United Nations General Assembly in 2014. The resolution, co-sponsored by 177 nations, emphasizes yoga's holistic benefits for health and well-being. This day aims to enhance global awareness of yoga and encourage its practice, promoting unity and peace. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, International Yoga Day has gained unprecedented global recognition, empha-



JUNE 21 CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY AND WORLD MUSIC DAY, UNITING THE ANCIENT PRACTICE OF YOGA AND THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF MUSIC TO PROMOTE HOLISTIC HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND GLOBAL HARMONY

sizing the timeless relevance of yoga in today's world. Simultaneously, World Music Day celebrates the joy of music in all its diverse forms, underscoring its power to heal and unite. Today, celebrations worldwide feature mass yoga sessions, workshops and educational events, highlighting yoga's universal appeal and its capacity to unite people across cultural and national boundaries. Similarly, "World Music Day", also known as 'Fête de la Musique', is celebrated on June 21, coinciding with International Yoga Day. Originating in France in 1981-82, according to one theory, this day has grown into a global event dedicated to celebrating the universal language of music. It encourages musicians of all levels to perform in public spaces, promoting free and diverse musical expressions. Music's power to unite, heal and uplift resonates deeply, making this celebration an important cultural event. Music has long been recognised for its therapeutic effects, aiding in emotional healing and mental wellness. Research indicates that music can reduce stress, alleviate pain and improve cognitive function. In the context of yoga, music enhances the practice by creating a serene atmosphere, aiding concentration and facilitating deeper relaxation. The synergy of yoga and music can profoundly influence one's well-being, offering a comprehensive approach to mental and emotional health. Yogi and mystic, *Sadhguru* once said, "Yoga is not just about bend-

ing and twisting, it's a process of creating a situation where your body and mind are in tune with nature and music," which can be seen during the Shivaratri celebrations which Isha Foundation organizes every year, blending music, meditation and yogic practices. This connection between yoga and music does elevate the practice, enhancing the flow of positive energy and creating a meditative State conducive to inner peace. As B.K.S. Iyengar, a pioneering yoga guru, had put it that "Yoga, an ancient but perfect science, deals with the evolution of humanity. This evolution includes all aspects of one's being, from bodily health to self-realization." The integration of music into yoga practices helps achieve this holistic development, fostering mental clarity and emotional stability. According to a June 21, 2022 report from TOI, Dr. Pratiksha Gadkari, a physiotherapist, emphasized the benefits of yoga in enhancing joint flexibility and range of motion. She highlighted its role in improving balance through posture and movement, while also noting the calming effects of music on the mind. Dr. Gadkari suggested that starting exercise routines with soothing music can boost energy and promote a fresh start to the day. The report also quoted Amar Kulkarni, a renowned singer and music teacher who practices yoga regularly. He drew parallels between yoga and music and mentioned how both disciplines can generate internal energy and positive vibes. Kulkarni pointed out

yoga's emphasis on '*Omkar Sadhana*', which resonates with the foundation of Indian classical music in '*Omkar*'. He highlighted how these practices complement each other, enhancing respiratory strength through physical exercise and drawing inspiration from the energy of sound. However, some 'Yog Acharyas' also believe that in certain styles of yoga, the incorporation of music varies and may not universally be deemed suitable. For instance, within the contexts of 'Vinyasa' and 'Anusara' methodologies, music has gained greater acceptance. Conversely, in Iyengar sessions, the auditory environment typically consists solely of the teacher's guidance. Here, the utilization of music, when employed, hinges upon the instructor's discretion, which may be argued. In today's fast-paced world, where stress and mental health issues are prevalent and have hit the youth largely, the combination of yoga and music offers a sanctuary for healing and rejuvenation. This synergistic approach can alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety, providing a natural remedy to combat the pressures of modern life. Together, yoga and music intertwine to foster physical well-being and mental relaxation, offering a holistic approach to health and harmony. It's time we start to breathe in with rhythm and experience divinity in our inner peace.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Mushroom farming empowers women in rural Bihar

Women in Bihar thrive through mushroom cultivation, achieving financial independence and contributing significantly to local economies

Mushrooms are rapidly gaining recognition and popularity in the culinary world for their unique taste and versatility. Dishes such as mushroom curries, pudding, pickles and snacks are becoming favourites on many people's palates. Along with this growing culinary trend, mushroom farming is expanding swiftly across various States in India, including Bihar. According to National Horticulture Board data, Bihar produced approximately 28,000 metric tonnes of mushrooms in 2021-22, accounting for 10.82 per cent of the total mushroom production in India. In the previous year, the State produced a total of 23,000 metric tonnes of mushrooms.



PRIYANKA SAHU

The Bihar Government is providing up to a 50 per cent subsidy to farmers engaged in mushroom cultivation, which is boosting production and increasing farmers' incomes. Under the Integrated Horticulture Mission scheme, these subsidies have also raised farmers' morale, leading to a surge of women farmers entering the field. In many districts of Bihar, women have established a

distinct identity in mushroom production, often surpassing their male counterparts. For the past ten years, Manorama Singh, a farmer, has been recognised for her mushroom production not only in the Vaishali district but across the State. She cultivates mushrooms herself and also trains nearby farmers in mushroom farming. Manorama prepares mushroom seeds and makes the necessary compost. Mushroom farming has emerged as a powerful catalyst for financial independence among many women. Neelam Devi, a 34-year-old farmer from Bandra block in Muzaffarpur district, was married off at a very young age due to her family's poor

financial condition. She always aspired to be self-reliant. One day, she learned about a mushroom farming training programme offered by an NGO called 'Atma'. She joined the programme, received training and began cultivating mushrooms in a room of her house. Despite facing disapproval and opposition from her in-laws, Neelam remained steadfast and determined to pursue her goal. Gradually, she began to achieve success and earn significant profits from mushroom production. Today, she has become so proficient in this field that she is teaching 200 women how to cultivate mushrooms, supporting them in their journey to become self-reliant.

For her commendable work, Neelam has been honoured as a successful farmer by Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa. Her reputation as a mushroom trainer and producer has spread far and wide. Those who once opposed her, including her in-laws, now take pride in her determination and passion. Like Neelam, dozens of women farmers in Muzaffarpur are creating a new identity through mushroom farming and earning substantial profits annually. 45-year-old farmer Lal Bahadur from Kothiya village in Kanti block, about 17 km from the Muzaffarpur district headquarters, believes that both women and men find mushroom cultivation bene-

ficial because it is easy to grow. It can be cultivated easily at home, with low costs and high profits. The mushroom crop is ready in just 25 days. He shared that initially, he too lacked knowledge about mushroom farming. Then, in 2012, he met Dr. Daya Ram, a professor at Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa. After training with him in mushroom farming, Lal Bahadur began raising awareness about mushroom cultivation among farmers in the surrounding villages. He explained that initially, due to a lack of proper information, people did not support him. They believed that mushrooms were wild plants, known in the village as gobar chhata, some of which are

highly poisonous. After much explanation, people began to understand the difference between edible mushrooms and gobar chhata. Once this distinction was clear, the villagers started mushroom farming with him and women actively participated. Lakshmi Devi, another farmer from the same village, shared how Lal Bahadur's understanding of mushroom farming opened a new avenue for them in farming. "Before we knew about mushroom farming, we would go to the city for labour work, but even then, it was difficult to make ends meet. Since we started mushroom cultivation, our household situation has improved." In recent years, the demand for mushrooms has increased

significantly across various districts in Bihar. From hotels and restaurants to wedding functions and feasts, mushroom dishes are becoming a status symbol. Beyond the capital city of Patna, mushrooms are now easily available in the vegetable markets along the roadsides in cities like Hajipur, Samastipur and Muzaffarpur. As the mushroom market continues to grow, so does its demand. This increasing demand has opened new doors for farmers, allowing them to benefit from this trend. Not only are they gaining financially, but these women farmers are also contributing to strengthening Bihar's economy.

(The author is a rural writer from Muzaffarpur, Bihar. Charkha Features;

MONEY MATTERS

IIFL Finance Q4 profit falls 6% to Rs 431 cr

IIFL Finance on Sunday reported a 6 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 431 crore for the March quarter as the RBI barred the financial services firm from undertaking gold loan business. The company had earned a net profit of Rs 458 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on March 4 barred IIFL Finance Ltd from disbursing gold loans, with immediate effect following multiple supervisory concerns, including serious deviations in assaying and certifying the purity of the yellow metal. Its consolidated total income during January-March 2024 rose to Rs 2,922 crore as compared with Rs 2,276 crore in the year-ago period, IIFL Finance said in a regulatory filing. Interest income of IIFL Finance offers a range of loans and mortgages increased to Rs 2,720 crore during the quarter, as against Rs 2,058 crore in the year-ago period. During the quarter, the gross non-performing assets (NPAs) increased to 2.3 per cent as against 1.8 per cent at the end of March 2025.



India's coal import rises 13% to 26 MT in April: mjunction

India's coal import rose by 13.2 per cent to 26.10 million tonne (MT) in April 2024 as buyers took fresh positions amid early onset of summer. The country had imported 23.05 MT of coal in the year-ago period, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services ltd. This comes amid coal and mines minister G Kishan Reddy stating that India should increase domestic production of the fossil fuel and reduce coal imports. "India's coal and coke imports in April 2024 through the major and non-major ports increased by 13.2 per cent over April 2023," the data showed. Of the total import in April, non-coking coal import stood at 17.40 MT against 15.15 MT in the year-ago month. Coking coal import was 4.97 MT against 4.77 MT. "There was an increase in volumes...Going ahead, there may be continued demand from both the power and non-regulated sectors due to pre-monsoon restocking," mjunction MD & CEO Vinaya Varma said.



HP government to invest Rs 1,000 cr in bulk drug park in Una: Dy CM

The Himachal Pradesh government will invest Rs 1,000 crore on a bulk drug park in Una district with an aim to make this park more people-oriented, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said on Sunday. The total cost of the project will be borne by the state and central government in the ratio of 50-50 per cent, Agnihotri said, while inaugurating a multispecialty Ayurvedic Hospital in Badhera. The Himachal government will also be responsible for the operation of the project. He said the project will set an example in development and employment generation for the entire state, including the district. Earlier, Agnihotri inaugurated a 40-bed multi speciality Ayurvedic hospital at Himcaps Nursing College in Badhera. He expressed hope that the hospital will earn fame in the state and the country with its special services. Newly elected Kulliehar MLA Vivek Sharma was also present in the function.



'SBI to monetise subsidiaries after scaling up their businesses'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SBI Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has said the lender would wait for its subsidiaries like SBI General Insurance and SBI Payment to further scale up their operations before monetising them.

Scaling up of their operation will increase valuation and ensure better returns for the parent State Bank of India (SBI). When it comes to subsidiaries, their monetisation would be through the capital market, he told PTI in an interview.

"The subsidiaries, which would be eligible for this kind of route, would be essentially our SBI General and may be at some stage, SBI Payment Services, but as of now, we don't have any such



SH KHARA
IRMAN, SBI

"Maybe, we would like to scale them up a little more, and then we will think in terms of going to the capital market for monetising our holding in these companies. But not in the current financial year," he added.

During the year ended on

"The subsidiaries, which would be eligible for this kind of route, would be essentially our SBI General and may be at some stage, SBI Payment Services, but as of now, we don't have any such plan," he said.

March 31, 2024, the bank infused additional capital of Rs 489.67 crore in SBI General Insurance Company Ltd. The company has also allotted ESOP to employees and consequently, the bank's stake has decreased from 69.95 per cent to 69.11 per cent.

SBI General Insurance reported a 30.4 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 240 crore for the financial year ended March 2024. The non-life subsidiary of State Bank of India had recorded a net prof-

it of Rs 184 crore in the previous financial year.

SBI Payment Services Pvt Ltd, which is in the Merchant Acquiring Business, is 74 per cent owned by SBI, and the rest with Hitachi Payment Services.

SBI Payments is one of the largest acquirers in the country, with more than 33.10 lakh Merchant Payment Acceptance Touch Points as of March 31, 2024, including 13.67 lakh POS machines, deployed across geographies.

Income tax relief for those in lowest slab may need to be considered in Budget: CII

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Income tax relief for the people in the lowest slab may need to be considered in the upcoming full Budget for 2024-25 considering the high levels of inflation, according to newly-elected CII President Sanjiv Puri.

In an interview, he also suggested creation of an institutional platform for consensus building between the Centre and states to successfully carry out all reforms, including those related to land, labour, power and agriculture.

The industry body also said it does not see compulsions of coalition politics hampering the reforms in the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In stead, it believes that the performance of Indian economy and the success of policies in the previous two

Puri further said there are some operational difficulties in TDS (tax deducted at source) and multiplicity of rates and CII would prefer simplification of these



stints would set the base to accelerate the process.

"Broadly, I would say at this point of time it is public capex, adherence to fiscal glidepath, roadmap for investment in the social infrastructure, green fund and greater investment in the rural sector. These are the broad principles," he said, when asked about CII's expectations from the upcoming full Budget for 2024-25.

The wholesale inflation rose

inflation rate with the 4 per cent target, and added that no action on rates will be possible till the RBI is confident of it remaining at or below 4 per cent.

As per CII's estimate, Puri said inflation is "probably going to be around 4.5 per cent this year" on the back of an expected good monsoon, which has in the past led to moderation of food inflation.

On the tax side, he added, "What we are suggesting is that the process of simplification should continue. There are certain suggestions relating to capital gains, which are different for different instruments. Can it be rationalised?"

Puri further said there are some operational difficulties in TDS (tax deducted at source) and multiplicity of rates and CII would prefer simplification of these.

Indian room air-conditioner market to reach Rs 50,000 cr by FY29: Voltas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India room air-conditioners (RAC) market is likely to grow at a healthy CAGR of 12 per cent to reach Rs 50,000 crore by FY 2028-29, Tata group firm Voltas said in its latest annual report.

The competition in the Indian RAC market has "inten-

sified" with the presence of homegrown and leading foreign players, said Voltas, a market leader in the segment.

Moreover, the competitive "intensity is going to increase" further in the near future, the company said while discussing challenges and opportunities.

Factors like increasingly hot

summers, rising disposable incomes, and the quest for a better lifestyle with easy access to consumer finance are likely to drive growth for this room air-conditioner segment.

"The Indian RAC market is expected to grow at a healthy CAGR of 12 per cent to reach a figure of Rs 50,000 crores by 2028-29," said Voltas.

Global trends, foreign investors' move to drive markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the absence of any major immediate domestic trigger in sight, investors would focus on global trends and trading activity of foreign investors for further cues in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and rupee-dollar trend would also guide the market.

"This week is a truncated



one with no major triggers expected. However, we anticipate sector-specific movements amid budget-related buzz. Key factors to watch will

be progress of monsoon and institutional flows," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. On the global front, data from China, movement in the dollar index, and US bond yields will be crucial, he added.

Equity markets will remain closed on Monday on account of Bakri Id. "This week, shortened by a holiday on Monday, will see participants looking to global mar-

kets, particularly the US, for cues in the absence of major events," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 299.41 points or 0.39 per cent, while the Nifty advanced 175.45 points or 0.75 per cent. The BSE Sensex hit its all-time high of 77,145.46 on June 13, while the Nifty reached its lifetime peak of 23,490.40 on June 14.

"Domestic markets would

remain closed on Monday, while globally investors would keep an eye on BoE (Bank of England) interest rate decision.

"We expect market uptrend to continue this week supported by positive macro trends, expectation of sustained government spending and policy continuity, healthy monsoon and strong earnings," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd

CBIC cautions public against frauds in the name of Indian Customs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday asked public to stay alert and discern the modus operandi of fraudsters committing fraud in the name of Indian customs.

In a statement, the CBIC said various incidents have come to light through news portals/social media platforms of fraudulent persons posing as Indian Customs officers cheating the public of their hard-earned money across the country.

These frauds are primarily done using digital means like phone calls or SMS, and are focused on extracting money through the 'purported' fear of immediate penal actions.

In order to counter these frauds through public awareness, CBIC is mounting a multi-modal awareness cam-



These frauds are primarily done using digital means like phone calls or SMS, and are focused on extracting money through the 'purported' fear of immediate penal actions

paign that includes newspaper

advertisement, SMS/e-mails to the general public, social media campaign, besides awareness campaigns by CBIC field formations.

The CBIC also advised the public to take measures to safeguard themselves from becoming a victim of such scams by discerning the modus operandi of fraudsters, protecting their information, verifying antecedents of caller and reporting such acts by staying alert.

Some of the common modus operandi used by fraudsters are fake calls/SMS. Fraudsters posing as courier officials/staff target the unaware people via calls, text messages or e-mails claiming that Customs have held a package or parcel and requires payment of Customs duties or taxes before it can be released.

Mutual funds industry adds 81 lakh new investor accounts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The mutual fund industry has added over 81 lakh investors' accounts in the first two months of the current fiscal (FY25), mainly due to consistent marketing efforts, celebrity endorsements and dedicated work of the distribution network.

Additionally, changing perceptions about fixed deposits, which no longer offer competitive returns compared to mutual funds, and the rise in income levels and accessibility to financial markets have also contributed to the rise in new investors, Trivish D, COO of stock trading platform Tradejini, said.

Going ahead, the outlook for mutual fund folios remains

strong, supported by the ongoing bull run in the stock market, solid risk management practices, continuous investor education, and consistent marketing efforts, he added. Moreover, the industry will continue to see decent growth as savers increasingly look for alternative avenues to create wealth for their long-term goals, experts said.



"As India's per capita income grows, investors will look to save money in asset classes, which have the potential to beat inflation and create wealth."

As the penetration of mutual funds increases, this will translate into a higher folio base at the industry level," Abhishek Tiwari, CBO, PGIM India Mutual Fund, said.

'SOP in final stages to facilitate visa for Chinese technicians'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After formulating a standard operating procedure (SOP) for streamlining visa approvals for Chinese professionals whose expertise is required by vendors under the PLI scheme, the government is in the final stages to put in place similar processes for other manufacturing units, an official said.

The move assumes significance as some domestic manufacturing firms have flagged the issue of delay in getting visas for Chinese technicians, who are required for works like installation or repair of certain machines, besides training workers in India. "Most of the PLI (production-linked incentive scheme) visas have been taken care of. For general manufacturing also, we are trying to create a better streamlined SOP... that is with the Ministry

of Home Affairs. It's at the final stages. We are hoping to sort it out. We have done a lot of sensitisation," the official said.

The rollout of SOPs does not require any approval from the Union cabinet as it is an inter-



nal process to relax norms "a bit" for facilitating visa applications of Chinese professionals or technicians whose expertise is required by domestic manufacturing units, the official added.

Normally, these experts require a visa for 3-6 months. Hailing the move, an industry

official said an SOP will help greatly as these manufacturing units need some expertise from Chinese professionals.

"The SOP will be a very good decision. Chinese technicians are working in countries like Vietnam and Cambodia in the footwear sector. They are affordable also compared to Taiwanese or other experts. It will help upscale our production," leading footwear manufacturer and Chairman of Chennai-based Farida Group Rafeeq Ahmed said.

The PLI scheme was announced in 2021 for 14 sectors, including telecommunication, white goods, textiles, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles, speciality steel, food products, high-efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, drones, and pharma with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore.

Infinity Learn focuses on tapping 6th-12th grade users

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Edtech firm Infinity Learn has increased focus on tapping 6th-12th grade students to expand user base following the government's restriction on physical coaching for those below 16 years, and the company expects to double revenue to Rs 400 crore this fiscal.

Ujjwal Singh, Founding CEO of Infinity Learn by Sri Chaitanya, said the new rule that barred coaching centres from admitting students below 16 years has opened a new market for the company which already has a large user base of those preparing for all-India level engineering entrance exam JEE and medical entrance NEET.

Singh said that the compa-

ny expects to double revenue this fiscal to Rs 400 crore with expansion of its business both in India as well as overseas.

"The new rule... is actually very helpful for us. Students can stay back home and attend online classes. We are addressing them. That is a new big market which has opened for years and this is the reason we have enhanced focus on grade 6-10," Singh said. The edtech firm is seeing growth in clusters like north-east, Ladkhak, and Jamu and Kashmir, he said.

"...the results of the JEE Mains also help us to naturally grow 30-40 per cent. One of our online students secured an impressive All India Rank 6. More than 30 students qualified for JEE Advanced this year," Singh said.

PwC India expects upswing in small, mid-size M&A transactions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

PwC India anticipates an upswing in the India markets, especially in small to mid-size M&A (merger and acquisition) transactions and growth fundings driven by increasing investors' confidence.

The year 2023 witnessed the emergence of a nuanced M&A landscape, with investors showing interests in diverse strategies and larger-scale ventures, even amid an overall decrease in PE investment, said Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson, PwC in India.

While PE deals were higher in volume, strategic deals dominated the top deals -- and



domestic deals with group-level consolidations were a prominent theme. The first quarter of 2024 marked a resurgence in deal value and volume.

According to a PwC report, top 10 deals of 2023 included JV buyouts, strategic investments, PE buyouts, and

"On a sectoral basis, traditional sectors including retail and consumer and healthcare and pharmaceuticals are in the lead. We anticipate an upswing in the India markets, especially in small to mid-size M&A transactions and growth fundings," Krishan said

stock mergers, and contributed to 21 per cent of the total deal value. While PE deals were higher in volume overall, strategic deals dominated the top deals with domestic deals and group-level consolidations as a significant theme.

"On a sectoral basis, traditional sectors including retail and consumer and healthcare and pharmaceuticals are in the lead. We anticipate an upswing in the India markets, especially in small to mid-size M&A transactions and growth fundings," Krishan said.

He was responding to a query on the changing landscape of M&A in India.

FPIs pumps Rs 11,730 cr into Indian equities on positive market cues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors made a strong comeback with a net inflow of Rs 11,730 crore (US\$ 1.4 billion) in the week ending June 14, driven by positive signals from domestic and global markets.

The net inflow was in stark contrast to the net outflow of Rs 14,794 crore (US\$ 1.77 billion) witnessed in the preceding week from June 3-7, data with the depositories showed.

With the latest flow, net outflow stood at Rs 3,064 crore in the month so far till June 14.

"After the roller coaster ride in the market in the first week of June, stability has returned to the market as indicated by the sharp fall in India VIX

from 27 on June 4 to 12.82 on June 14. This fall in India VIX indicates the return of stability and a likely consolidation phase in the market," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Although in a coalition, the formation of the NDA government at the Centre for the third straight term fanned expectation of a continuation of policy reforms and economic growth, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

On the global front, lower-than-expected inflation numbers in the US also raised hopes of one rate cut this year.

Sunny Singh to star in a biopic next



Luv Ki Arrange Marriage, the latest movie by actor Sunny Singh, is presently available for viewing on Zee5. It's the ideal balance of humour, romance and drama! The lead actor talks about the movie's idea and a few behind-the-scenes shots from the shoot in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*.

rehearsing lines together; after a successful take, we would sit down to a satisfying supper. We even ventured out together to explore the city."

"Rajpal Yadav and Annu Kapoor were coming up with jokes in the middle of the shooting that used to crack me up (he laughed)," when asked about BTS moments from the *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage* set. "It's in their nature for there to be humour amongst them, even when you are taking a vacation. Additionally, I recall filming in blazing sunshine, so their humour helped to keep us in check. I also had a difficult day when I had to shoot a song sequence in the scorching sun without shoes. My feet nearly burned!

But there is a flaw in me. We used to do several retakes, even when I was in pain, because I would laugh so hard. Overall, the shoot was enjoyable!"

"I love doing emotional scenes—these are the kind of scenes that really come within me," he continued to disclose. "I also think that because fans aren't used to seeing Sunny Singh and Avneet Kaur together, they will like us both. I personally think that romantic comedies are better to watch!"

In the meantime, he declares, "I'll never say 'no' to a biopic script; I finally got one, and I'm going to be doing it this year."

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The movie's tone was successfully established by the trailer for *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage*, which highlights the film's unique blend of drama, romance and humour. It presented the main characters and made hints about the conflicts between families and cultures that form the plot.

Avneet Kaur and Sunny Singh have a strong connection, and the trailer's lively graphics and soundtrack promised an enjoyable and captivating moviegoing experience.

Subsequently, Sunny Singh gives a noteworthy performance, which gets us an exclusive interview with *Adipurush* fame!

"In my film, a single father's point of view is shown and I had to play a really streetwise person. Although love triangles have been in a lot of movies up to this point, none of them seem as quirky as *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage*. I have no doubt that the entire story will enchant you when you watch the movie! I was able to play 'Luv' without having to prepare. I was somewhat impromptu on the sets because I was performing a situational comedy," a self-composed Sunny shared.

He went on to explain more about his connection with co-star Avneet, saying, "I made friends with her. Together, we used to practice our scenes all the time. Working with her as a co-star was a breeze! It was not difficult to perform next to her."

He continues, narrating, "In our film industry, veteran actors are considered legendary figures. They used to come up with so many original improvisations that were meant to be included in the film! They are so good that a filmmaker can't turn them down. On the sets of *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage*, they treated Avneet and myself like family. Our relationship extended beyond merely



EVENT COVERAGE

Celebrating culinary mastery with *Telugu MasterChefs*

SHRADDHA NEWARE

Freshly, *MasterChef India-Telugu* held a small, intimate "meet and greet" event at SOHO Cafe in Hyderabad to honour the culinary prowess displayed by the contestants. The meaningful engagement was made possible by the cafe's event, which was held in a quiet area!

The programme was renewed for a second season this year due to the popularity of the first one, which debuted in 2021. This event was organised by *MasterChef India-Telugu* for the participants to display the love and support from the fans. The competitors were a cheerful group of individuals who stated they had now become extended family.

Participants Akhil Tumpudi, Raaga Sri, Shyam Gopiseti, Amjad Lala, Rohit Chidurala, P. Ashwini, Neetu Srigiri and the winner, Mahboob Vin Basha, arrived to kick off the event!

When the *MasterChef India-Telugu* champion appeared and gave a round of applause to each and every one of them, the crowd went absolutely berserk.

As soon as the anchor took the stage, conversations began. The participants started joking around with one another and answered a few audience questions. The candidates left a lasting impression on the spectators, as what happened was less of a meet-and-greet and more akin to a family get-together with tons of praise!

A fan quiz session led by the anchor drew enthusiastic responses

from the audience. As the competitors eagerly responded to questions from the audience, they casually started arguing, as if they were comfortable with one another.

Known for her baking prowess, competitor Ashwini disclosed during this session that she is a vegetarian and has only ever had the opportunity to prepare non-vegetarian meals for the competition. "I took help from my cooking class friends to get the basic idea of cooking non-vegetarian dishes; before that, I never cooked with meat or seafood," said the baker.

One young fan asked a question aimed at Akhil Tumpudi. After viewing the episode, the little child has already signed up for cooking classes, hoping to follow in his footsteps. Overwhelmed Akhil commented, "I hope you have the finest possible day after finding out from the boy's mother! For me, cooking is a form of meditation and a way to decompress. If this resonates with you as well, cooking is for you."

The competitors discussed their friendships both on and off screen while sharing their journeys through the tournament. Even though they had clashed during the tournament, they returned to the service apartments and gave each other feedback on how they could have performed better.

There were numerous obstacles throughout the show, and each contestant got the opportunity to highlight their special culinary skills. Raaga incorporated all the essential ingredients into her recipe using her skills as a dietician, while Shyam brought his street-food knowledge to the

MasterChef table. During the tag-team competition, Neetu imparted her experience to Ashwini, while Amjad Lala demonstrated his best during the biryani. Everyone discussed how they had grown from one another and how the show had allowed them to try new foods.

Curious fans were treated to some fascinating behind-the-scenes information from the participants. Mahboob Vin Basha, the champion, talked about his difficult experience: "The crab challenge! The difficulty of the Protein Time Auction was really tough. I wanted to make crab cake, so I decided to use crab as the ingredient. The crab I used on the show was liquid, but normally it needs to be denser for the dish. I had trouble getting the flavour just perfect."

Supporters spoke just as loudly about the show's experience for them and the influence the contestants had on them. They behaved, showed respect, and were polite to the participants. Some shared their hometowns and other common roots with the contestants, while others were occupied taking pictures of their favourite contestants.

The fact that every person was so understanding was the most fascinating aspect of the experience. The fans were kind, nice, and harmonious, despite the small space.

Everyone had a great time interacting with one another throughout the event, especially the contestants. Additionally, fans were given delicious refreshments and candies to gorge on. Overall, both the *MasterChef India-Telugu* competitors and their supporters had an amazing time.

UNEARTHING BUDDING FUTURE STARS IN PARASPORTS

RIYA KOMMINENI

Indians from throughout the nation will be glued to their televisions as the Paris Olympics approach in July, excitedly applauding the different athletes who will be representing their country on the biggest sporting stage in the world.

Few people are aware of the Paralympics, a set of international sporting events that take place in the host city just after the Olympics.

The Aditya Mehta Foundation (AMF), a Hyderabad-based organisation, works to assist individuals with disabilities in redefining their lives through participation in parasports, with the ultimate goal of competing in competitions such as the Paralympic Games.

Aditya Mehta, the organisation's founder, founded it after losing his leg in a bus accident. Following the injury, Mehta developed a passion for cycling and placed second in the Asian Para-Cycling Championships.

Mehta came to the realisation that he wanted to assist other disabled people, like himself, who were less fortunate and unaware that they could be athletes, after participating in international competitions. Since its formal founding in 2014, AMF has won over 80 medals at the world level and has assisted over 100 para-athletes in reaching their full potential by offering them equipment and training.

At the JNV Ranga Reddy Campus in Gachibowli, from June 13 to 18, AMF, in collaboration with Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, organised the National

EVENT COVERAGE



Parasports Talent Identification Hunt and Training Camp. The purpose of this competition was to find athletes to train for the 2025 Youth Asian Games and the Los Angeles Paralympics in 2028.

For the opening ceremony on the first day of the competition, more than 400 competitors and their coaches were seated in a big hall at JNV Ranga Reddy. The athletes attend JNV schools in the eight regions of India that comprise Shillong, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Patna, Pune, Chandigarh, Lucknow, and Jaipur.

During the opening address, chief guest Avinash Mohanty, Cyberabad Commissioner of Police, expressed his inspiration for all the athletes and their perseverance. "A camp like this is really a great opportunity for each one of you to put in your best effort and make use of the opportunity to get an opening in the forthcoming events and maybe make it to the national and international events," he said while addressing the athletes. In his remarks, T. Gopalakrishna, the regional Hyderabad NVS deputy commissioner, reiterated the same feelings.

Actress Regina Cassandra attended the function as well, meeting with athletes and giving a statement. Cassandra has been associated with the AMF since 2014 and currently holds the positions of trustee and board member. She discussed her connection with AMF and how it has been her only source of inspiration in an interview with *The Pioneer*. "Aditya was someone you won't forget when I met him. You'll carry his imprint with you forever. He stands up for the people that need him," Cassandra remarked. "After that, I got to

know him and we went cycling and on some nighttime rides with some of my friends who are actors."

The actress continued her speech by discussing her decision to commit herself to AMF. "It was crucial for me to know who I would be linked with if I wanted to be a part of an organisation. I was curious about the amount of labour they were willing to do. As soon as I began working with AMF, I was able to observe Mehta's workload and his determination to see it through to completion. After all these years, looking back, it has truly paid off. Joining this organisation has been such a great adventure, so I'm extremely glad I did."

Speaking about the occasion, Regina said that the training camp held particular meaning for her, as it was the first in which she was given a significant role. This was the first training camp where parathletes received a lot of attention; previous ones had occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two parathletes received recognition for their accomplishments during the inaugural tournament. Paracyclists Jyothi Gaderiya and Arshad Shaik, who both receive training from AMF, were called up to the qualifying stage in order to secure spots in the 2024 Paralympic Games and other international tournaments in which they had won medals.

Mehta anticipates that the organisation will be able to identify and nurture athletic talent for India during the tournament. He claims that he believes there is a lot of potential in the quantity of medals that the country can win!

what's brewing?



● Nandita Swetha



● Mahesh.k, Dimple, Nadaita Swargam and Shahabuddin



● Amjad Habib and Vamshi



● Dimple Hayathi

Actresses Nandita Swetha and Dimple Hayathi launched the new Amjad Habib salon at Miyapur. Amjad Habib, the founder of the salon, shared that they further have plans for expansion in and around Hyderabad.

Telangana Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, along with MSR Charitable Trust founder Siva Reddy and co-founder Shirisha Reddy, organised a cheque distribution to over 300 poor students, which would help them for their education purpose.



PARTY



Young designers ignited Hyderabad at JD Design Awards 2024 and Fashion Show at HICC Novotel inHITEC City. The show attracted a prestigious audience, including media influencers, academics, representatives from premium brands, and design industry leaders. The event witnessed the presence of Nealesh Dalal, Managing Trustee JD Institute of Fashion Technology and Founder of JD School of Design; Yogesh Dalal, Trustee, JD Institute of Fashion Technology; and Dora Swammy, Brandix India Apparel City, founder and promoter of Touchstone group of Companies.



Photos by- SV Chary

No Child Labour Day walkathon

Enabling Child and Human Rights for Seed Companies (ECHO) successfully organised a Walkathon commemorating World Day against Child Labour at Hyderabad's Necklace Road. The event aimed to raise awareness about child labour in the seed industry and promote ethical practices. The walkathon received enthusiastic participation from over 300 individuals representing various seed companies.

Tempest advertising organises Blood Donation Camp

Tempest Advertising organised a blood donation camp across their branches - Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Pune. Several volunteers came forward to give their token of life at all three metros making the blood donation camp a success. The donation drive in Hyderabad, in association with Rotary Club of Hyderabad Deccan and Sai Sagar Heights Residents Welfare Association, was organised at Sai Sagar Heights, Prakash Nagar, Begumpet, which saw an active participation of several volunteers including residents, corporate employees of different organisations and Tempestians who took pride in doing their bit for society.

Vicks breaks 'sabse badi khabar' with Ranveer Singh

Vicks breaks Sabse Badi Khabar "Vicks ki Goli Ab Ho Gayi hai Badi" with powerhouse brand ambassador Ranveer Singh unveiling the first-ever double powered transformation of India's iconic Triangular Vicks Cough drops in two decades.

PNB MetLife declares ₹930 Cr

PNB MetLife announced a bonus of INR 930 crore for eligible participating policyholders, benefiting 5.82 lakh customers. This milestone showcases PNB MetLife's unwavering commitment to customer care, financial security, and helping individuals achieve their big dreams. This year's bonus marks a significant 21% increase from the previous year, with an additional INR 161.40 crore taking the bonus amount declared this year to INR 930 Cr. The number of eligible beneficiaries has increased by 30,000 policyholders, representing a growth rate of 5.43% against last year.

Kurlon unveils fresh identity

Kurlon, is now 60 years young and has a new and refreshed positioning. Today, Kurlon has revealed its new logo and the tagline "Life Banegi Hula Hula." This rebranding marks a significant evolution for the brand, positioning it to resonate with contemporary consumers and signalling freshness in the current market.

It's raining offers at Inorbit Mall Cyberabad

Inorbit Mall Cyberabad is all set to celebrate June with a line-up of events and offers that you just can't resist. From End of Season Sale to Father's Day Out to Shop and Win, and much more. The End-of-Season Sale has begun and will run until the end of July, offering visitors the perfect opportunity to revamp their wardrobe with sale essentials. With over 100 brands participating, including Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, Marks and Spencer, and other favourites, and discounts of up to 50% off, who could say no to such offers? Shoppers can also join the thrill of Shop and Win, running from June 21st to July 21st, offering incredible rewards. Simply shop for Rs 2000 and above to get an assured voucher and a chance to win the bumper prize, which is the TVS Ronin Bike.

Haier India redefines home aesthetics

Haier Appliances India unveiled its Graphite series, a premium range of steel door refrigerators featuring a matte finish and contemporary design elevating the aesthetics of modern Indian homes. The series will be available in capacities ranging from 205 to 602 Lts, catering to various storage requirements, making it suitable for every Indian household. With a focus on premiumisation, the new range of refrigerators feature a sleek matte finish design, seamlessly blending into modern Indian homes and elevating kitchen spaces with contemporary elegance.

Kshema General Insurance launches marketing campaign

Kshema General Insurance Limited today announced the launch of its national marketing campaign aimed at raising awareness about crop insurance to coincide with the beginning of the Kharif season. The centerpiece of the 360-degree campaign is a TVC which will reach farmers as they start sowing with the onset of the monsoons. The TV campaign will be further augmented by a concurrent campaign in print, digital, and outdoor media. The campaign highlights the importance of crop insurance in creating a financial safety net for farmers when extreme climate events are becoming more frequent and intense. The 30-second TVC was developed in-house to forge a deeper connection with farmers, and easy accessibility of Kshema's industry-first crop insurance plan Sukriti along with Prakriti.

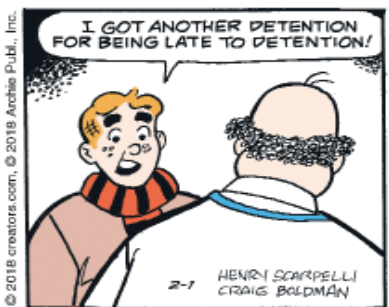
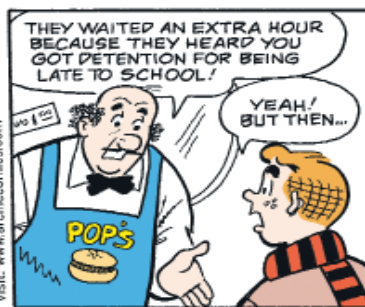


British Deputy High Commissioner Garen Win Ovet, Consul General of Kazakhstan Nasir Ali Khan and music director RP Patnaik, Turkish Consulate General Archon Allman Okan, along with other dignitaries, marked their presence at the Reni Crystal Fashion Show, organised by fashion designer Reni. The fashion show, which was organised at Jubilee Hills Road no: 45, saw several fashion students, including director Sukumar's daughter Sukriti, walking the ramp.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



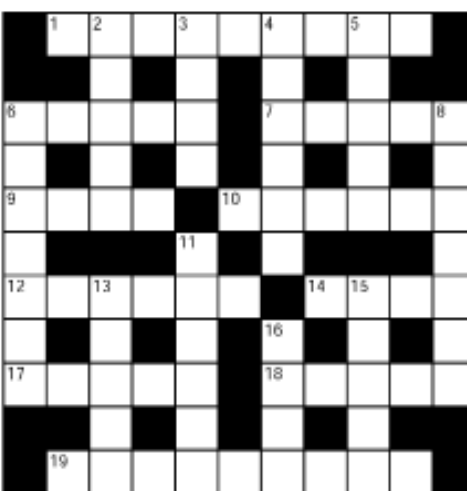
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



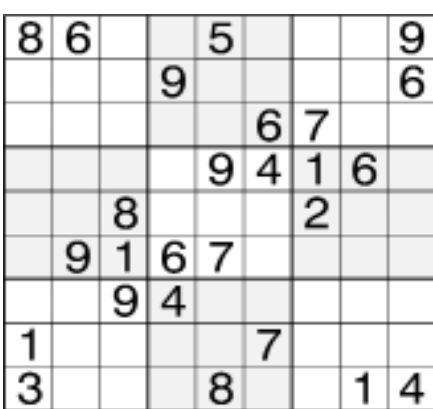
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Yesterday's solution												
2	3	1	7	5	8	9	4	6				
6	9	8	3	1	4	7	2	5				
7	4	5	2	6	9	1	3	8				
3	7	6	5	9	1	4	8	2				
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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.

ACROSS

- Not remembered
- A brass musical instrument blown in the army
- Time of darkness
- Very small
- This is made from cream
- A symbol on playing cards
- Wear this on a foot
- Lift up
- A word of greeting
- Allowed

DOWN

- Seller of meat
- A kind of long bomb fired under the sea to sink ships
- A small river
- Similar
- Cut exactly into two pieces
- Injured by a gun





Actress Ashika Ranganathan is quite busy working on some major Telugu films, and she is really happy with the affection she has been receiving from people in the South. She talks about her incredible career, collaborating with megastar Chiranjeevi in *Vishwambhara*, and her "dream come true" collaboration with Siddharth in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*.

'STARRING ALONGSIDE SIDDHARTH WAS MY "DREAM-COME-TRUE" COLLAB'

TEJAL SINHA

After her prowess in the Kannada industry, Ashika Ranganathan has certainly been making waves in the Tollywood industry ever since her debut with *Amigos* and then going on to star in *Naa Saami Ranga* and *O2*. The Bengaluru beauty is now having her hands full with projects, especially those in the Telugu industry.

But would you believe it if we said that she did not enter the cinema world to stay? Well, yes, today Ashika is enrapturing hearts from all over the south. However, she reveals in our fun telephonic chitter-chatter on a bright Sunday morning that she just started it all just for an experience. "I just wanted to try because I had gotten the opportunity and didn't want to let go of it," begins the *Amigos* fame. "Though I had no dream to act, my journey since the beginning has been pretty overwhelming. Getting so much love and broadening my perspective to other languages has also been a very new experience."

She goes on to reveal how she had no plans to learn any other language because, after all, Kannada was her mother tongue and something she was pretty comfortable with. But again, it was her mother who helped her push the boundary and she very well credits her for the same.

"She's always been someone who has been bold as a woman and on the other hand, I've been very shy and had a lot of stage fright. Today, if I am an actor, a major credit goes to my mom. Initially,

I did face a lot of difficulties in terms of acting, performance, and talking to the team. In other industries, I used to put in 200 percent of my hard work and that made me a better actor and gave me a career in other languages too with a lot of exposure."

Now that she has done films in Telugu, she's enjoying the love that she has been receiving. In fact, she goes on to recall how every time she goes on to promote her other films, people recognise her through Telugu films.

She further says, "People texting and appreciating the performance is what an actor needs at times. At some point or other, you need that validation, and I personally feel so satisfied working on *O2*. I would want to explore more such films."

The *Naa Saami Ranga* actress is currently shooting for the much-anticipated *Vishwambhara*, alongside megastars Chiranjeevi and Trisha. Working with the stalwarts, she says, has been a great opportunity to learn every single day. "The way people love and respect them is commendable. Just when it was announced that I was going to be a part of the film, people from my circle started texting me because of the love Chiru Garu has and how much people have celebrated his films in theatres. Even now, he enjoys a major fan following. I have watched so many films of Chiranjeevi and Trisha as a kid and to be a part of the film, even if it means having a small screen presence is a dream come true and I feel very grateful."

Working on the sets of *Vishwambhara*, she says that she did not feel pressured

at all. She goes on to reveal, "Trisha ma'am and I haven't shot yet and with Chiranjeevi garu, it was so much fun; he's so friendly and made me so comfortable that I didn't for once feel pressured to work with him. I know about the aura and image that he carries outside, but on the sets, he is very friendly and that's never been the case for me. I am always prepared to work on the character I am given and confident enough to go on a set. But when it comes to films with big actors, you of course need to put in extra effort and give your best."

Speaking of her character, without revealing much of the details, she shares that it's going to be a never-seen-before avatar. Basically, she is going to play a warrior princess and *Vishwambhara*, she says, is going to be a whole different world that the audience is going to enjoy. "I am an archer in the film and my character has a very good impact and weightage on the story. It's going to be a different avatar," shares the *Raymo* actress, who always looks up for projects that excites her. "For me, it's not like it needs to be a never-before-done story, but the way the director presents me or the story matters. Sometimes, you need to be a part of a project because it brings out the best in you. And sometimes, because of its vast canvas and the way it is being presented."

Apart from *Vishwambhara*, she also has *Miss You* alongside Siddharth, which she's very excited about. And guess what? The film holds a special place in her heart. Why, you wonder? Let's hear what she has to tell us: "When I was in school, I used to watch a lot

of Siddharth's films and Allu Arjun sir's movies. It was because of their films that I learned about the language and I used to watch these films for them. Since my childhood, I've had a major crush on him (Siddharth), and my whole school knew how much I adored him as an actor."

Next, what happened was something she couldn't believe: "They offered me a role with him. I was actually cross-checking every now and then if it was actually Siddharth, until I went to the 'Mahuratham'. Even then, until I saw him, I couldn't believe it. *Miss You* is something I personally connected to and that is very special to me. There was never a point for me, 'Let's just give it a read'. I was very happy that I had a full-fledged role to perform alongside him and to be seen with him. I still feel like it's a dream. It's a very special film for me."

Sharing some more exclusive tidbits, she reveals, "We are done filming *Miss You* and I am playing a character called Subhalakshmi, who has a different kind of role. There are two shades to her role. She is very cute and innocent and at the same time, there's a lot of maturity. There's a lot of secret side to the character too, which I cannot reveal much, but it's definitely like the girl-next-door character you would connect to. It's a very performance-oriented role and I had to put in a lot of effort to bring out the differences between the two variations my character has."

But also on the workfront, she says, she's manifesting to work alongside her another personal favourite Nani.

Atlee's next with Allu Arjun hits salary roadblock

The highly anticipated collaboration between renowned director Atlee and Tollywood superstar Allu Arjun has hit a major snag. Reports confirm that their upcoming project, much-awaited by fans, has been shelved indefinitely due to salary disputes.

Atlee, known for his blockbuster hits across multiple languages, including the record-breaking Hindi film *Jawan*, had reportedly demanded a staggering sum exceeding 100 crores for directing Allu Arjun. This demand comes on the heels of his massive success with *Jawan*, which grossed over 1000 crores worldwide, cementing Atlee's stature as one of the highest-paid directors in the industry.

However, the production company backing the project balked at meeting Atlee's salary expectations, leading to a deadlock in negotiations. Sources close to the production reveal that despite efforts to find a middle ground, no agreement could be reached, ultimately resulting in the project's suspension.

In light of these developments, speculations are rife within industry cir-



cles that Atlee may consider casting another leading actor for the envisioned storyline, hinting at a potential shift in the project's dynamics. This unexpected twist has added an element of suspense to the fate of *#Atlee06*, leaving fans and industry insiders alike eagerly awaiting further updates. As discussions continue behind closed doors, the future of Atlee's ambitious venture with Allu Arjun remains uncertain, marking a significant chapter in the evolving narrative of Indian cinema.



'Bujji' from Kalki 2898 AD makes grand entry in Jaipur at Patrika Gate

The futuristic vehicle 'Bujji', a prominent element of the upcoming sci-fi epic *Kalki 2898 AD*, has arrived in Jaipur amidst great fanfare. Following its earlier showcases in Chennai, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad, 'Bujji' made a spectacular debut at Jaipur's iconic Patrika Gate, captivating enthusiasts with its futuristic design. As a key character in the film and the trusted companion of Prabhas's character 'Bhairava', 'Bujji' has garnered significant attention. Recently unveiled in Hyderabad in a unique event, the life-size vehicle continues to amaze audiences across India.

In Jaipur, fans gathered to witness 'Bujji' at the Patrika Gate, where it was displayed before its next stop at the picturesque Jal Mahal on June 16th. The vehicle represents a glimpse into the future within the city's historic settings, adding a touch of sci-fi allure to Jaipur's vibrant landscape. Directed by Nag Ashwin and produced by Vijayanthi Movies, *Kalki 2898 AD* features a stellar cast including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Deepika Padukone, and Disha Patani. Scheduled for release on June 27th, 2024, this multilingual cinematic spectacle promises to transport audiences into a mythological-inspired future world.

Vishwak Sen promises to donate his organs

Popularly known as Mass Ka Das, Vishwak Sen participated as the chief guest at the Metro Retro event dedicated to promoting organ donation. The event aimed to raise awareness and support for the noble cause of organ donation, emphasising its importance in saving lives.

During the event, Vishwak Sen made a significant pledge by announcing his decision to donate his organs, setting an inspiring example for others to follow. His gesture has garnered widespread appreciation, highlighting his dedication to humanitarian causes. Encouraging everyone present to join him in this noble endeavour, Vishwak Sen urged people to consider pledging their organs, emphasising the impact it could have on transforming and saving lives. Director Sailesh Kolanu, who collaborated with Vishwak Sen on the blockbuster *HIT*, also graced the occasion, adding to the event's significance. In his upcoming projects, Vishwak Sen continues to explore diverse and impactful roles. Following his appearance in *Gangs of Godavari*, he is set to captivate audiences with the upcoming mass-action entertainer *Mechanic Rocky*.



RAM CHARAN CELEBRATES FIRST FATHER'S DAY

Actor Ram Charan, alongside his wife Upasana Kamineni Konidela, welcomed their daughter Klin Kaara into the world in June 2023. As she approaches her first birthday, Ram Charan reflects on his newfound role as a father, expressing a deep bond with his daughter.

On his first Father's Day, Ram Charan opened up about the profound impact Klin Kaara has had on his life. "My world now revolves around my little princess," he shares affectionately. "Since she started interacting and recognising people, I feel a pang when I'm away from her. It's like I'm missing out on something special."

Ram Charan admits to adjusting his work schedule around Klin Kaara's routine, emphasising his commitment to being present in her life. "I want to cherish every moment with Klin," he says. "After fifteen years of hard work, I prioritise being home early."

Seeing her brightens my day—I find it hard to leave for work sometimes."

Reflecting on his parenting journey, Ram Charan humorously notes his dedication to feeding Klin Kaara. "I feed her twice a day," he shares proudly. "I've become quite good at it—I can get her to finish her entire bowl. It's a superpower I seem to have!" Ram Charan underscores the importance of hands-on parenting, particularly in the formative years. "Providing a secure and nurturing environment early on is crucial," he explains. "I take her to play school, accompany her to swimming classes, and even involve her in my readings. It's about building a routine together."

As he celebrates Father's Day with cherished memories of Klin Kaara, Ram Charan radiates happiness and gratitude for the joy she has brought into his life.



Double iSmart to release on Independence Day

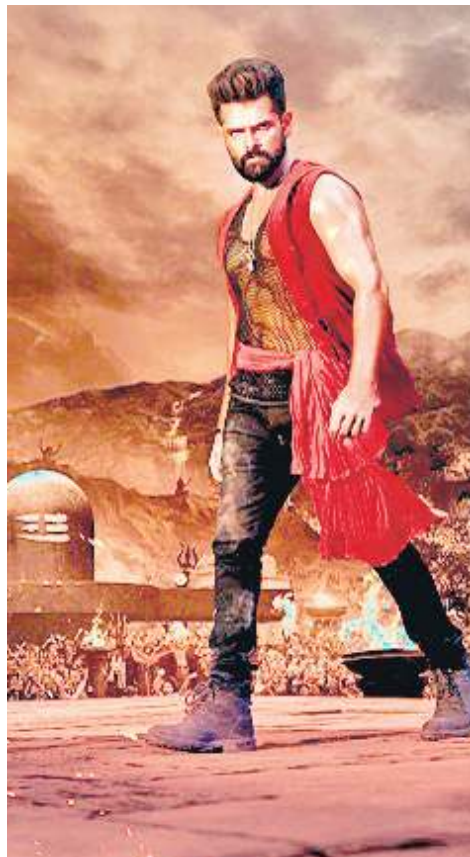
Filmmaker Puri Jagannadh's upcoming film *Double iSmart* will be released in theatres on Independence Day on August 15, the makers announced on Saturday evening.

The film, also backed by the filmmaker and Charmme Kaur's banner, Puri Connects, features Telugu actor Ram Pothineni in the lead.

In a post on Instagram, the actor shared the release date of the film, which will come out in five languages: Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. "Maammaaaaa! Date block kar!! Ustaad *#DoubleiSmart* Shankar *#DoubleiSmart* on Aug15," the actor wrote alongside a poster of the film.

Double iSmart is a sequel to Pothineni and Jagannadh's 2019 sci-fi action film *iSmart Shankar*, about an assassin who helps the police when a slain cop's memories are transferred to his brain. Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt, who was recently seen in Vijay's Tamil hit *Leo*, is also part of the cast of *Double iSmart*.

Mani Sharma has composed the music for the film.



ZEE5 & Bahishkarana celebrate Anjali's b'day with intense motion poster

Renowned for her compelling performances, Telugu actress Anjali is celebrating her birthday today, receiving warm wishes from fans and colleagues alike. Known for her versatility across genres and languages, Anjali is set to star in the upcoming web series *Bahishkarana*, directed by Mukesh Prapath and produced by Pixel Pictures. Co-starring Shri Teja, Ananya Nagalla, and Ravindra Vijay, the series is scheduled to stream on ZEE5, with the premiere date to be announced soon.

In honour of Anjali's special day, the makers of *Bahishkarana* unveiled a striking motion poster. The poster captures Anjali in a fierce avatar, exuding intensity as she stands draped in a red saree, wielding a sickle amidst dramatic visuals. Set against a backdrop of powerful music, the motion poster showcases Anjali's commanding presence, hinting at the series' high-octane narrative.

Bahishkarana promises a gripping tale of love, societal stigma and revenge across six thrilling episodes. With Prasannakumar as



the cinematographer, Siddharth Sadashiv composing the music and Ravi Teja Girijala handling editing duties, the series aims to deliver an emotional rollercoaster filled with dramatic twists.

As anticipation builds for the release of *Bahishkarana*, fans can expect yet another compelling addition to ZEE5's extensive library, promising an immersive viewing experience that resonates with audiences across the globe.

Pushpa 2 release may be postponed

The release of *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, starring Allu Arjun, originally slated for August 15, 2024, has been postponed indefinitely due to ongoing post-production requirements, sources have disclosed. According to them, the film's original editor, Karthika Srinivas, has exited the project, with Navin Nooli now overseeing the final editing stages.

Director Sukumar is reportedly overseeing revisions to enhance certain VFX aspects, considering potential reshoots to elevate the film's overall quality. While an official announcement regarding the postponement is awaited from the film's producers, industry sources anticipate *Pushpa 2* to hit screens around Diwali instead. In response to these developments, producers of Hindi, Tamil and Telugu films are now eyeing the August 15 slot for their own releases, capitalising on the shift in *Pushpa 2*'s schedule.

PIC TALK



KALAVEDIKA-NTR FILM AWARDS POSTER UNVEILED BY CHIEF MINISTER NARA CHANDRABABU NAIDU

Honouring the legendary Padma Shri Dr. Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, fondly known as Viswa Vikhyata and Nata Sarva Bhawma, the inaugural "Kalavedika NTR Film Awards" will celebrate eminent artists across all facets of cinema. Scheduled for June 29, 2024, at Hotel Dasapalla in Hyderabad, this event is organised jointly by "Kalavedika" (R.V. Ramana Murthy) and Raghavi Media. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Nara Chandrababu Naidu, marked the occasion by launching the awards' poster. The ceremony aims to commemorate Taraka Rama Rao's enduring legacy and contributions to Indian cinema. Movie celebrities and NTR enthusiasts are urged to mark their calendars for this significant event, contributing to its grand success on the 29th of this month.

BANGLADESH LOOK TO SEAL SUPER 8 SPOT IN CLASH AGAINST NEPAL

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN (ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES)

Bangladesh will look to iron out their flaws and seal the second Super Eight spot from Group D when they take on a tricky Nepal in the T20 World Cup here on Monday.

With four points, Bangladesh are all set to progress further in the tournament from the last group in the competition but a spirited Nepal will pose a strong threat.

Even though they have not yet won a game and are out of race for the next round, Nepal's confidence will be sky high after they nearly pulled off a win against South Africa and will be keen on fulfilling their dream of beating a Test-playing nation before signing off.

The equation for Bangladesh, however, could change if they lose to Nepal by a big margin and the Netherlands manage to do the same against a struggling Sri Lanka - an unlikely scenario indeed but this tournament has thrown its share of surprises.

TEAMS (FROM):

Bangladesh: Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Taskin Ahmed, Litton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Shakib Al Hasan, Tawhid Hridoy, Mahmud Ullah Riyad, Jaker Ali Anik, Tanvir Islam, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib. Travelling reserves: Afif Hossain, Hasan Mahmud.

Nepal: Rohit Paudel (c), Aasif Sheikh, Anil Kumar Sah, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Gulshan Jha, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC, Sundeeep Jora, Abinash Bohara, Sagar Dhakal and Kamal Singh Airee.

Match starts at 5:00AM IST.

SRI LANKA LOOK TO SIGN OFF ON A HIGH: Gros Islet (St Lucia): Wary of the Dutch firepower and current form, the 2014 champions Sri Lanka, who are placed fifth in Group D, will take on the third-placed Netherlands. Already out of reckoning for the



Super Eight round, Sri Lanka's pride will be at stake given they have had a tournament to forget, marred with multiple issues on and off the field. For the Scott Edwards-led Netherlands team, there will be a

great deal of motivation to bring out their best and hope for a big win as well as luck to favour them. Netherlands have notched wins in two out of three games in this tournament yet they find

themselves nearly eliminated in a tight Group D, from which South Africa have already sailed through.

TEAMS (FROM):

Sri Lanka: Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis

(wk), Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunieth Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka.

Netherlands: Scott Edwards (c&wk), Aryan Dutt, Bas de Leede, Daniel Doram, Fred Klaassen, Logan van Beek, Max O'Dowd, Michael Levitt, Paul van Meekeren, Sybrand Engelbrecht, Teja Nidamanuru, Tim Pringle, Vikram Singh, Viv Kingma, Wesley Barresi.

Match starts at 6:00AM IST.

NEW ZEALAND EYE CONSOLATORY WIN OVER PNG: Tarouba (Trinidad and Tobago): A consolatory win over a lowly Papua New Guinea would be the best that the New Zealand can walk away with in this T20 World Cup, with curtains coming down on their campaign prematurely.

For a team as consistent as New Zealand in ICC tournaments, the

Kiwis have paid a heavy price for being sluggish at the start as a couple of defeats upfront led to their surprisingly early exit.

The game will, however, carry a massive significance for the Kiwi group as Trent Boult has confirmed this is his last T20 World Cup for the country and the Kane Williamson-led side will be motivated to give their best against PNG, who have lost each of their three matches so far.

TEAMS (FROM):

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (c), Finn Allen, Trent Boult, Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway (wk), Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips (wk), Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee.

Papua New Guinea: Assadollah Vala (c), Alei Nao, Chad Soper, CJ Amini, Hila Vare, Hiri Hiri, Jack Gardner, John Kariko, Kabua Vagi Morea, Kipling Doriga (wk), Lega Siaka, Norman Vanua, Sema Kamea, Sese Bau, Tony Ura.

Australia crush Scotland by 5 wickets



PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

Australia did their arch-favour with a five-wicket win over a gritty Scotland as the Richie Berrington-led side crashed out of the T20 World Cup Super Eight stage race here.

With England hammering Namibia earlier in the day in a rain-truncated game, all that Jos Buttler's side needed was Australia's win over Scotland to get a lifeline.

Australia scored 186/5 while chasing 181 in 19.4 overs after Scotland fought right until the end to keep their hopes alive. After putting on a formidable total on board, Scotland had even reduced an edgy Australia to 60/3 at one stage but their most successful batters in this World Cup - Travis Head (68) and Marcus Stoinis (59) - delivered again.

"We spoke about sticking to our plans. Scotland are a good team, they have improved a lot and we certainly wanted to respect them," Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh said after the win.

"We just wanted to stay

consistent and if we fail, we fail our way. Whenever our team is challenged, it brings the best out of us. Today we were challenged and it was a good experience and a good game of cricket. We start fresh now," he added.

With Australia's chase appearing to be falling apart, the in-from Head and Stoinis joined forces to bring them back in the game.

On a wicket where batters could swing their willows without fretting much over the pace or movement off the surface, the two seasoned campaigners put the Scottish resolve to a stern test with a sturdy 80-run association for the third wicket off only 44 balls.

Head smacked four sixes and five fours to top score with 68 off a mere 49 balls but Stoinis was more aggressive, cracking nine fours and two sixes to make a quickfire 59 from a mere 29 balls.

But before that, there were some nervous moments for the former champions when David Warner (1) was removed from the equation early, skipper Mitchell Marsh



England enter Super 8 of T20 World Cup

failed to impose himself, and Glenn Maxwell's torrid run with the bat continued. Maxwell was done in by one from Mark Watt that straightened enough to beat his bat and crash into the top of the off-stump, extending the all-rounder's struggles further with the bat, even though he claimed two wickets in the first half.

"I think the guys can hold their head high. We played some really good cricket throughout the tournament. It was a great learning for us. Obviously, we are a bit disappointed given the position we were in. We came here to qualify but couldn't do that," Scotland captain Berrington said.

Earlier, Scotland put their best foot forward in terms of setting a formidable total against the heavyweights, finishing at 180 for five after being asked to bat first.

Australia had expectedly rested some of their frontline pacers and their absence was felt with the others not producing as much impact and control as their first-choice bowling attack can.

Brandon McMullen was the star with the bat for the Scots as he took on the Australian bowling, hitting six sixes and two fours to race to 60 from a mere 34 balls and set up a strong platform for his side following an early blow.

Aston Agar had cleaned up opener Michael Jones for two in the first over but the pair of McMullen and George Munsey produced an excellent recovery for Scotland, putting on 89 runs for the second wicket in a mere 48 balls.

If McMullen was more belligerent of the two, Munsey played his part well with a 23-ball 35, which was studded with three sixes and a couple of fours.

After the pair was separated, Scotland skipper Richie Berrington took charge of taking his side forward as he forged multiple crucial stands with the following batters to take them to 180.

Berrington made 42 not out from 31 balls with two sixes and a four to keep pushing on for the Scots, even as Australia looked to pull things back in the last five overs, conceding 42 runs.

No concerns about Kohli's form, couple of dismissals will not change anything: Rathour



PTI ■ LAUDERHILL (FLORIDA)

Virat Kohli's string of single digit scores in the ongoing T20 World Cup is hardly a concern as he has been in superb touch during nets and is looking hungrier than ever ahead of the Super Eight, India's batting coach Vikram Rathour said.

Kohli, who was the highest run-scorer in the IPL, went through a dry run so far scoring 1, 4 and 0 against Ireland, Pakistan and USA respectively.

The moment the question popped up at the post-match media conference after the game against Canada got washed out on Saturday, Rathour was ready with the answer.

"I love it when every time I come there is a question about Virat Kohli, whether he is doing well or not. No concern at all, no concern at all," Rathour said.

"He (Kohli) has been batting

superbly from the tournament that he came from (IPL). Couple of dismissals here, doesn't change anything, he is batting really well."

Rathour is confident that India's No. 1 batter would come good when it matters the most.

"Actually, it's good that he is a little hungrier, he is really keen to do well and really switched on. It's a good space to be as a batsman, I think."

"Looking forward to some good games and we've watched some good innings from him."

The batting coach sidestepped the query about whether playing four all-rounders, including Shivam Dube and Axar Patel, is cast in stone or not.

"Again, we need to be a flexible team. We need to look at the conditions that are in front of us and be ready to deal with those. So as a team, we are going to be really flexible, I think."

"We'll react to what (conditions) we get on the day. We have enough sources in our team to deal with any kind of conditions," he said.

Some game time in Florida ahead of Super Eights would have surely helped, he said.

"But if the game had happened that would have really helped us. We were really looking forward to playing a game, to play a good game of cricket. There's always a concern when you play a game in conditions like this that some injury can happen."



Italy concedes goal after 23 seconds but recovers to beat Albania 2-1 at Euro 2024

AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)

By conceding a goal after just 23 seconds, Italy made the worst possible start to its European Championship title defense.

Thankfully for the Azzurri, it soon got much better.

Italy recovered from letting in the quickest goal in the tournament's 64-year history to beat Albania 2-1 in Dortmund on Saturday in an atmospheric Adriatic derby that immediately threatened an upset.

Nedim Bajrami thrilled a heavily pro-Albanian crowd at Westfalenstadion by pouncing on a throw-in by Italy left back Federico Dimarco that failed to reach teammate Alessandro Bastoni, before taking a touch and smashing a rising shot inside the near post.

Within 16 minutes, the Italians were ahead as Bastoni headed in Lorenzo Pellegrini's cross to the back post in the 11th then Nicolò Barella struck home a swerving first-time shot from the edge of the area.

Barella was one of five survivors from the team that started for Italy in the penalty-shootout win over England in the 2021 European Championship final.

The pressure was on Italy's new-look side under Luciano Spalletti to win its opener given the other teams in Group B are three-time champion Spain and Croatia, a World Cup semifinalist in 2022. Spain beat Croatia 3-0 earlier Saturday.

Bajrami's goal gave the Azzurri a jolt and created some history - it was much quicker than the previous fastest in the tournament's lifespan, which was 67 seconds by Russia's Dmitri Kirichenko in 2004.

Yet they controlled the game

after that, dominating possession to a backdrop of jeers and boos from a sea of Albanian red in the crowd.

"They showed there was a gulf in class by playing good football... we played the game the right way," Spalletti said.

"The scoreline doesn't reflect the difference between the two teams."

It's now just one loss in 12 matches under Spalletti, who took over last August - three months after leaving Napoli following its Italian league triumph - and was tasked with restoring national pride after Italy failed to qualify for the World Cup for a second straight time.

Italy is clearly more at home in the European Championship these days as it goes for a record-tying third title.

Making its second appearance at a European Championship, Albania - coached by former Barcelona and Arsenal defender Sylvinho - nearly grabbed a draw in stoppage time only for Rey Manaj's deft chip to deflect just wide off the back of Gianluigi Donnarumma, Italy's goalkeeper and captain.

"We need to play in lots of Euros and World Cups so we can get better," Sylvinho said. "The first 25 minutes were tough but we were up against one of the favorites to win the comp."

"We didn't play those first 25 minutes well but we stayed in the game."

Euro 2024 has gotten off to a fast start.

Saturday started with Switzerland beating Hungary 3-1 in Cologne and that, after host Germany's opening-night 5-1 thrashing of Scotland on Friday, means there has been 16 goals so far - an average of four a game.

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Bishweshwar Nandi, a recipient of the prestigious Dronacharya award for outstanding contribution to gymnastics, is pinning hopes on Tripura's gymnasts to shine on the global stage.

Nandi is also the coach of top gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who had finished fourth in the vault final at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

"Tripura has great prospects in gymnastics... Six to seven girls are showing potential to perform well not even at the national level but also on the global stage. Gymnastics is a highly competitive, injury prone and technical game. Proper guidance from the coach is very important," Nandi told PTI.

Tripura has great prospects in gymnastics: Nandi

He lauded the state government for providing good facilities at the Netaji Subhash Regional Coaching Centre (NSRCC) here for development of gymnastics.

"During the rigorous training, boys and girls develop injuries, which is a major concern in this sport. The coach needs to walk the extra mile to ensure that the gymnasts remain physically fit," Nandi said.

The award-winning coach said he is "in search of a second Dipa", which would become a reality "when proper coaching and environment meet at one point".

Asserting that Dipa shattered many



myths surrounding Indian gymnastics, Nandi said gymnasts from Odisha, Delhi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and a few southern states are also performing well.

Dipa, hailing from Tripura, recently became the first Indian to win a gold medal at the Asian Senior Championships, after she clinched the yellow metal in the women's vault event in Tashkent.

"As I said, providing proper guidance to budding gymnasts is the most important duty of coaches in order to make them perform well at global tournaments," he said.

Kylian Mbappé and France aim to start with a win over on form Austria

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

World Cup runner-up France is one of the favourites for Euro 2024 and starts its campaign Monday in Dusseldorf against Austria.

Poland and the Netherlands are the other teams in Group D. Kickoff is at 9 pm local time (1900 GMT). Here's what to know about the match:

MATCH FACTS: France had a strong 2023 with eight wins from 10 games and only one loss, to Germany. Four games this year have already included a 2-0 loss - again to Germany - in a March friendly and a 0-0 draw with Canada last week in France's last game before Euro 2024.

France's players have been speaking out on politics ahead of upcoming elections, with forward Marcus Thuram calling on French people to "fight daily" to keep the far right out of power. Teammate Ousmane Dembélé urged people to vote ahead of the first round of elections on June 30.

Coach Ralf Rangnick has revitalized

Austria since taking over in 2022 and turned down Bayern Munich to stay with the team.

Austria comes into Euro 2024 on a seven-game unbeaten run with just three goals conceded during that time. A 2-0 win over Germany in November and a 6-1 demolition of Turkey in March were the highlights.

TEAM NEWS: France midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni hasn't played since he missed Real Madrid's Champions League final with a foot injury. N'Golo Kanté played the defensive midfield role in France's two pre-tournament friendlies, his first international games since 2022.

Austria trained at full strength Friday in Berlin except for defender Gernot Trauner. Coach Ralf Rangnick said he was being rested but wasn't injured.

Attacking midfielder Christoph Baumgartner says Austria's attacking players will focus on helping out their defence by trying to put Kylian Mbappé and Dembélé under pressure.

BY THE NUMBERS: Mbappé is on



course to play his 80th game for France and a hat trick would take him to 50 career international goals. Mbappé scored in France's last two games against Austria, a 1-1 draw and a 2-0 win, both in 2022.

Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann will be only the fourth French player to make 130 international appearances if he plays against Austria.

Austria midfielder Christoph Baumgartner has scored in each of the team's last five games.

Germany is familiar territory for Austria's players. Eight of the starting line-up for its 1-1 friendly draw against Switzerland last week play for German clubs.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: "In just one week he reminded us all why he was one of the best midfielders in the world and we are very happy to have him with us." - France forward Marcus Thuram on teammate N'Golo Kanté's form after nearly two years away from the team.

"Now, there's a very special tingling feeling once again, of course."