





# Defections: BRS MLAs find Cong safer than the BJP

SNCN ACHARYULU  
■ HYDERABAD

Why the BRS MLAs who want to defect are preferring the Congress than the BJP? These MLAs are thinking that their political future will be safe in the Congress than in the BJP. The BJP not getting a majority seats in the Lok Sabha elections to form the government on its own at the Centre made the BRS MLAs to think twice about joining that party. In Telangana, the BJP won 8 Lok Sabha seats on par with the Congress. The BRS MLAs feel that it was not the BJP's

strength, but swelling only. A senior BRS leader who did not want disclose his name, detailed the reasons on why the BRS MLAs are preferring the Congress. If they join the Congress, they are sure of getting Muslim minority votes. In Telangana, Muslim minority voters play a key role several Assembly constituencies in the elections. If they join BJP, they will lose these votes. While the Congress is becoming strong at the national level, the BJP is losing its strength. By the time of next elections the BJP may further weaken and the Congress may become further

strong. If the join the Congress they may have a chance of getting place in the Cabinet or otherwise some nominated post. If they join the BJP they have to fight with the State government, which they are already doing being in the BRS. If they join the Congress, they would be able to get required funds to develop their constituencies. The present BRS MLAs majority did not have any threat from the Central investigation agencies to join the BJP. Moreover, the BJP-led NDA government may not take any decisions freely like in

the previous tenure. Because, if any partner leaves the NDA, the Central government will be in trouble. The opposition is strong in the Lok Sabha unlike in the previous Lok Sabha. In the present political circumstances in the State and at the Centre, their political future will be safe in the Congress than in the BRS or the BJP, the BRS MLAs feel. In the Congress, there will be some guarantee about their winning chances in the next elections. But in the BJP, there is no such guarantee, is the BRS MLAs opinion, who want to cross the line.

## BJLP leader Alleti demands govt to release Rythu Bharosa

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP Legislature Party leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy alleged that Congress's 'Abhaya Hastam' has turned into Bhasmasura's hand for the farmers.

Speaking to the media at Nirmal district centre on Wednesday, Maheshwar Reddy was furious with the State government's attitude towards farmers. He questioned whether Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who claims to be a farmer's son, does not know that he should provide Rythu Bharosa as per his promise, or is he trying to bypass it with lame excuses? He asked the government to tell how the cultivation would proceed if the government failed to give Rythu Bharosa in time. He expressed anguish that the farmers are facing difficulties for investment as the cultivation of monsoon crops has already started. He demanded the government to provide Rythu Bharosa to all the farmers without putting any conditions or cut offs by the end of this month.

## ‘Only 1,874 banks in rural areas against 6,415 banks in State’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao highlighted the pressing need for expanding banking services in rural areas at the State-Level Bankers' Committee meeting held at Marigold Hotel, Begumpet on Wednesday.

Despite the State having 6,415 bank branches, only 1,874 serve the rural populace. The Minister commended the efforts in making financial services accessible to all villages in the LWE-affected Bhadradri district but emphasised the need for further expansion. He pointed out the gaps in the implementation of Central government social security and insurance schemes like PMSBY, PMJJBY, and APY, noting that while enrolment statuses are reported, the actual benefits to beneficiaries are often missing from reports. The Minister stressed the importance of these schemes, particularly in providing support to families during unforeseen deaths. Addressing agri-



cultural financing, the Minister acknowledged an increase of Rs 13,000 crore in loans over the previous year but lamented that small and marginal farmers did not receive their fair share. With 73.11% of land in Telangana held by these farmers, Nageswara Rao urged banks to exceed RBI-imposed limits and increase loans to this group. He also called for 100% achievement in loans for agricultural infrastructure, currently at 29.29%. Minister Rao urged bank controllers to ensure comprehensive details of crop loan beneficiaries are

maintained to prevent them from missing out on government assistance. He highlighted a lack of banking support for the Ddate's oil palm cultivation, despite substantial government subsidies. Rao revealed that Rs 100.76 crore in subsidies was recently disbursed to drip companies for oil palm farmers, covering 59,261 acres of new cultivation under NABARD's RIDF scheme, but only about 50 farmers received loans. Furthermore, he criticised the lack of loans for food parks and processing units, even after NABARD released Rs 10.07 crore for a food park in Buggapadu village. Rao urged bankers to focus on providing more loans in allied agricultural sectors to boost the rural economy. Concluding his address, Minister Rao called on banking leaders to introspect and innovate to better support farmers, emphasising the need to stay true to the spirit and purpose of rural banking. He reassured the government's full cooperation and support for banks in these endeavours.

## PRIMARY SECTOR LENDING UNDER ANNUAL CREDIT PLAN

# Bhatti: Will back bankers extending loans on large scale

‘No state can develop without positive involvement of bankers’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu has called upon bankers to adopt 'a social and humanitarian attitude' and extend loans on a large scale to the primary sector. He was speaking at the launch of the Annual Credit Plan of bankers on Wednesday. Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao was present at the meeting.

Bhatti pointed out that Telangana had surplus power, with no power cuts and supply of 24-hour free electricity to the farm sector. Under the upcoming new Power Policy, development would be possible only with increased loans. "Extend loans on a large scale, and the government will support you," Bhatti told bankers. In his address, the Deputy CM highlighted that Telangana, a rapidly developing state, had become a prime destination for investors across the globe. For Hyderabad, the state capital, boasted an Outer Ring Road (ORR), an international airport, affordable human resources, a friendly government, and a cosmopolitan envi-



Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu and Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, along with bank officials, unveiling a brochure of the annual credit plan of bankers

ronment with no language barriers. However, Bhatti emphasized, no state could develop without the positive involvement of bankers. He called on bankers to extend loans not just to big industrialists but also to the poor and middle classes. Bhatti stated that the construction of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) would significantly transform Telangana, fostering urban, semi-urban, and rural development.

He also announced plans that would enable the Musi Riverfront Development Board to boost business in the Musi catchment area on the lines of the Thames River development in London. Telangana aimed to compete with devel-

oped nations by rapidly advancing its agricultural and industrial sectors, he said.

The Deputy CM assured full support to the agricultural sector, including investment support through Rythu Bharosa, 24-hour free power supply to farms, and bonuses for certain crops. He also highlighted the state's increased paddy production and the resulting incentives from the Centre for ethanol production. The state government was committed to providing incentives for oil palm cultivation and recently Rs 100 crore was released for oil palm cultivators. Telangana was considered ideal for this crop, he said.

Bhatti urged banks to offer

substantial loans to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and large-scale industries, noting that these sectors were major employment providers. He emphasized the importance of extending loans to weaker sections for integrated state development. Despite the government releasing its share for subsidized schemes, bankers' cooperation was often found lacking, he said.

The Deputy CM criticized the reduction in the number of branches of various banks and urged national as well as rural banks to enhance their brand image, considering that statistics suggested a preference for private banks among people.

## FILLING NOMINATED POSTS

# Cong eyeing ‘hardworking’ activists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Although several Congress leaders have been making all-out efforts to grab nominated posts in the state administration, the party leadership is keen on filling these positions only with "leaders who have genuinely worked hard and sincerely for bringing the party to power in the state". Besides, priority would be given to leaders who had been denied MLA tickets in the last minute

before the 2023 Assembly polls. It may be recalled that some leaders had withdrawn from the contest during the Assembly elections, including Patel Ramesh Reddy, who dropped out from the Suryapet constituency.

The party gave the Suryapet ticket to senior leader Ramreddy Damodar Reddy, who was defeated by BRS candidate G Jagdish Reddy.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti

Vikramarka said that the party's high command had data relating to party leaders who had worked hard for bringing the party to power in the state.

So, posts would be given to them soon.

This being so, 37 names are doing the rounds in party's circles as those unofficially deemed eligible for nominated posts.

However, these names may be shuffled in view of intra-party criticism.

# India to get ‘below normal’...

Continued from page

Bengal by May 26 along with Cyclone Remal.

It simultaneously reached Kerala and the northeastern states on May 30, two and six days earlier than normal, respectively.

By June 12, it had gradually covered the entire states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; most parts of southern Maharashtra and some parts of southern Chhattisgarh and southern Odisha; and most parts of sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and all northeastern

states."Thereafter, the monsoon has not progressed, and its northern limit on June 18 passes through Navsari, Jalgaon, Amravati, Chandrapur, Bijapur, Sukma, Malkangiri, and Vizianagaram," the IMD said. The IMD reported that 11 meteorological sub-divisions in the country have received normal to large excess rainfall between June 1 and 18 while 25 have experienced deficient to large deficient rainfall. The forecast suggests that the average rainfall over the country in June is most likely to be below normal (less than 92 per cent of the LPA).

Normal to above-normal rainfall is expected in most areas of the southern peninsula and some parts of north-east India, while below-normal rainfall is anticipated in many areas of northwest and adjoining central India, as well as some parts of north-east India.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Sukla Paksha

Tithi:

Trayodashi:

Jun 19 07:28 AM to Jun 20 07:50 AM

Chaturdashi:

Jun 20 07:50 AM to Jun 21 07:32 AM

Nakshatram:

Anuradha:

Jun 19 05:23 PM to Jun 20 06:10 PM

Jyeshtha:

Jun 20 06:10 PM to Jun 21 06:18 PM

Rahukalam:

1:55 PM to 3:33 PM

Varayagam:

5:46 AM to 7:24 AM

Vijayam:

11:48 PM to 01:24 AM

Gulika:

9:02 AM to 10:40 AM

Amritakalam:

07:25 AM to 09:05 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham:

11:51 AM to 12:43 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

Temp: 33°C

Humidity: 62%

Sunrise: 5:43 AM

Sunset: 6:53 PM

Updated: June 19, 2024 5:00 PM

## 10th round...

Continued from page 1

Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Chandra Dubey, Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Coal Secretary Amrit Lal Meena will be present on the occasion, it said.

"The upcoming auction round includes 60 coal blocks, encompassing a diverse range of coking and non-coking coal mines. Strategically located across different states/regions, these blocks will support regional economic development and employment generation," the ministry said. Out of 60 coal mines, 24 are fully explored, while 36 are partially explored.

# Kejriwal demanded...

Continued from page 1

"Now AAP has been made an accused. Kejriwal is responsible for the conduct (of the party)," it added.

Kejriwal is the national convener of AAP.

The judge, meanwhile, also extended Kejriwal's judicial custody after he was produced before the court through video conference on expiry of his judicial custody granted earlier. The counsel appearing for Kejriwal opposed the ED's application seeking extension of his judicial custody, saying there were no grounds to justify his continued incarceration. During the arguments on his bail application, Kejriwal's counsel told the court that the entire case against him rested upon statements.

"The statements are of those who have confessed them-

selves to be guilty. They are not saints here. They are those who are not only tainted but it appears that some were arrested and were given a promise of bail and promise of being granted pardon. Approvers. And there is another category who have not been arrested," the counsel said.

"Circumstances have to be so intrinsically linked (as to) lead to the guilt. These statements by tainted persons discredit the case of prosecution. There is no evidence that Rs 100 crore came from South Group. These are all statements. There is no evidence. This is all in the form of statements," Kejriwal's counsel said.

According to the ED and the CBI, the South Group is a cartel of politicians, business people and others who lobbied for liquor licences for which they paid bribe to the Delhi's ruling

party. Kejriwal's lawyer claimed there were contradictions in the statements made by several co-accused. "I won't be surprised if another statement is recorded to fill the lacunae. This is the process they follow. The investigations are always unending. Whenever they want they implicate anyone. This is the biggest instrument of oppression," he added.

The counsel said the Supreme Court had granted Kejriwal interim bail after being satisfied that there was no likelihood of him trying to escape justice or influence the investigation or witnesses. He also said Kejriwal has no criminal antecedents.

The ED opposed Kejriwal's application, asserting, "The requirement is not that you don't have (criminal) antecedents."

## ‘Paper leak government’: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after the cancellation of UGC-NET, the Congress on Wednesday dubbed the Modi government as "paper leak government" and asked whether the education minister would take responsibility now. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also attacked the government

over the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam NEET, and asked when will Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold "NEET pareeksha pe charcha". Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra slammed the government after the Education Ministry ordered the cancellation of UGC-NET and asked for accountability to be fixed.

## NAIDU IN AMARAVATI TODAY

# Renewed push to capital city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu is visiting the Amaravathi capital region on Thursday to examine the progress of the construction of various buildings in different parts of the region.

Starting at his official residence at Vundavalli at 11 am, the Chief Minister will begin his tour from Praja Vedika, which was demolished by the previous government. He will then move to the area where Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation for the capital in Uddandarayuni-palem.

Then he will visit the Seed Axis Road, the housing complexes being built for the All India Service officers, the ministers and the High Court Judges, and later move to the sites where construction works were started during the last TDP regime for the iconic buildings. During the five years of YSRCP government, the construction activity in Amaravathi capital region has come to a grinding halt. The buildings where 70 to 80 per cent construction was completed were also left which are in a bad shape without maintenance. Chandrababu Naidu,



who visited Amaravathi as Leader of Opposition, was stopped by the YSRCP government. Now, he will be visiting the capital region in the capacity of Chief Minister. Minister Narayana said that Chandrababu will begin his tour from Praja Vedika. The CM will first visit where Prime Minister Modi has laid the foundation stone for the capital. He will inspect the quarters constructed for MLAs, MLCs, ministers, judges and officials. Finally, the CRDA Project Office will be inspected and then he will address the media. The minister said that first they will form committees and assess the damage done in the capital. "Since the deadline for tenders has expired, fresh tenders should be invited. New estimates should be made and tenders should be called.

# Cong rule is about...

Continued from page 1

Venkat Reddy said that the previous Congress government (in combined AP) had made Hyderabad as the investment hub.

The Minister said expansion works on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada national highway would begin soon. The state government would conduct an all-party meeting for the construction of a new building for Osmania General Hospital

soon. Referring to a legal hurdle for the laying of a 6-lane road, Venkat Reddy said that he would get letters from the Chief Ministers of the Telugu states to launch the 6-lane works before December.

The Minister said that the Uppal flyover works would be started within one month with help from Union Minister G Kishan Reddy help and that the project would be completed within three months. He said that roads in

Telangana would stand out as models.

Venkat Reddy said that the government was preparing Delhi Telangana Bhavan DPR and that tenders would be called within two months. The Minister said that the Hyderabad-Bangalore road modernisation works would be taken up with an outlay of Rs.5,600 crore. If necessary, the state government would set up a Road Corporation to mobilize funds, he added.



# SC to clear 295 cases of TG in 4 days of Lok Adalat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

For the first time in the country, the Supreme Court is going to conduct a special Lok Adalat from July 29 to August 3. With this, both the parties need not go to the Supreme Court in New Delhi.

Telangana State Legal Authority (TSLA) member Secretary Ch Panchakshar said that from the Telagnana State, the High Court identified 295 cases and notices have been issued notices to those parties. There is a chance of compromise in these matters. After selecting those cases, the Supreme Court sent the list to the High Court.

"If both parties are interested, we are conducting a virtual conference with them. Some of the parties have agreed to solve their cases in the Lok



TSLA member secretary Ch Panchakshar and TSLA administrative officer G Kalarachana unveiling the poster of Lok Adalat at High Court on Wednesday

Adalat," he said.

"The Supreme Court is giving a format. On what terms they would compromise would be filled in that form and should be signed and then sent to the Supreme Court. That becomes part of

the case record. Basing on that, the Supreme Court will pass an order," Panchakshar said. In the 75th year of its establishment, the Supreme Court of India is organising this Special Lok Adalat to facilitate amicable settlements

**The Supreme Court is organising this Special Lok Adalat to facilitate amicable settlements of suitable pending cases**

of suitable pending cases. Cases having elements of settlement, including cases relating to matrimonial and property disputes, motor accident claims, land acquisition, compensation, service and labour, which are pending before the Supreme Court, would be taken up to facilitate speedy disposal.



## Quality medical edn is priority: Health Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Health Minister Damodar Narasimha on Wednesday stressed on providing quality medical education in the State.

Narasimha further stressed on making Telangana the best destination for medical education. "A task force will be set up to ensure quality education. Action has been taken to provide better medical education in government and private medical colleges as well as dental colleges."

At a meeting held with the management of various private medical colleges, Narasimha said that the government aims to produce best doctors in Telangana.

# Four young TG climbers scale Himalayan heights

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Four young climbers from Telangana have successfully completed a four-day high-altitude expedition to Mount Everest base camp. The youth expedition was organised by Winners and Achievers, an adventure company led by famous mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta, in collaboration with the 13 Foundation of Ranchi.

According to Siddhanta, the 14-day expedition began in Kathmandu on May 5 and included a series of treks, acclimatisation days and climbs to Everest base camp and Kalapatthar, concluding on May 20.

Satyarup highlighted the talent of the young climbers who dared to come up to Mount Everest camp. Lattupally Lalitha Reddy, Shamin Ramesh Kyatham, Lattupally Srihan Reddy and Goli Preetham from Telangana, along with Jahnvi Mantri and Riya Shridhar from



Four young climbers from Telangana, seen along with mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta at the summit

Mumbai were involved in the expedition. Aged 11 to 16, these youngsters displayed remarkable courage and strength throughout the journey. The expedition prioritised safety with detailed insurance, helicopter-evacuation services, personal oxygen supplies and a doctor on call.

Siddhanta said, "We believe in nurturing a spirit of adventure in young minds. This expedition showcased the potential and determination of our youth. Lalitha, Shamin, Srihan and Preetham have shown extraor-

dinary courage and passion."

Climbers from Telangana shared their experiences. Lattupally Lalitha Reddy said, "This expedition was life-changing. I learnt about resilience and teamwork." Shamin Ramesh Kyatham said, "Climbing these heights gave me a new perspective on my capabilities."

Lattupally Srihan Reddy said, "The journey was tough but rewarding. Support from seniors was crucial." Goli Preetham said, "This expedition ignited my passion for adventure. I feel more confident now."



## Born on TGSRTC bus stand, infant gets lifetime travel pass

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) gave a lifetime bus pass to an infant, who was born at Karimnagar bus station.

On June 16, a pregnant woman named Kumari, along with her husband came to Karimnagar bus station to catch Bhadrachalam bus. When she experienced labour pains at the bus station, RTC staff immediately called 108 and passed the information. As the pain increased, RTC women helped her by providing a saree cordon and delivered the child. Later, she was taken to the government hos-

pital on an ambulance. The doctors said that the mother and baby are fine.

The TGSRTC decided to give free lifetime passes to infants who were born at bus stations and buses.

TGSRTC officials on Wednesday congratulated TGSRTC's staff for helping the pregnant woman passenger to deliver a baby girl safely on the bus station premises in Karimnagar on Sunday.

TGSRTC MD VC Sajjanar appreciated the services of staff Syedamma, Lavanya, Sravanti, Bhavani, Renuka, Rajani Krishna and Anjaiah who delivered the baby.

## 1,645 students pass TG-PECET

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 1,645 students passed the Telangana Physical Education Common Entrance Test (TG-PECET) as per the results released by Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) on Wednesday. TGCHE allotted Satavahana University to conduct the exam for the admission of B.PEd and D.PEd for academic year 2024-25.

Out of 2,392 candidates who applied for the admission, 1,650 students applied for B.PEd and 742 for D.PEd. In all, 1,198 students appeared for B.PEd while 507 appeared for D.PEd.

As per the data regards to gender, out of 2,392 candidates who applied for the exam, 1,023 are female students while 1,369 are male students. Out of 2,392 candidates, only 1,705 students appeared for the exam. Out of 1,705 students, 738 are female students while 967 are male students. About 1645 students passed the exam in which 703 were female students while 942 were male students. The pass percentage of students in the test is 96.48 per cent of which the pass percentage of women is 95.26 % while pass percentage for men is 97.41%.

# BITS Pilani signs MoU with MSNL to train professionals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani Work Integrated Learning Programmes (WILP) signed an MoU with MSN Laboratories (MSNL) on Tuesday to elevate educational opportunities for their Self-Directed Teams (SDTs) within the formulation units.

The collaboration aims to help their professionals in keeping pace with the rapid global pharmaceutical industry evolution and they will undergo training to operate machinery and fulfil roles within different production departments, by working closely with their senior staff members. Currently, sixty team members from MSNL's formulation division have been enrolled in the B.Sc. Pharmaceutical Science programme offered by BITS Pilani WILP.

Dr MSN Reddy, CMD, MSNL, said, "As the leader of this rapidly growing research-based pharmaceutical company, I deeply believe that the



true strength of our successes lies in our people. Engaging and nurturing internal talent is not just a principle, but also the mission of our organisation. We are committed to continuing to invest in their growth and development, ensuring that together, we reach new heights."

Prof. G Sundar, Director, Off-Campus Programmes & Industry Engagement, BITS Pilani, said, "Considering the ever-evolving demands of the pharmaceutical industry, this strategic collaboration not

only helps address the immediate need of MSNL for highly competent working professionals, but also aids them in nurturing a pool of skilled professionals over a period of time. Additionally, the flexibility provided by the programme allows participants to maintain a healthy balance between their professional commitments and time for their personal life and pursuits, which is especially even more important, considering that they are young professionals."

# T-Sat to telecast digital bridge course till June 30

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Skills, Academic and Training (T-SAT) will telecast a bridge course digital curriculum to school students in the State. The bridge course syllabus in Telugu, English and Urdu languages will be telecast from June 20 to 30. These digital classes will be telecast on T-SAT Vidya Channel, announced SAT CEO, Bodanapally Venugopal Reddy on Wednesday.

Venugopal Reddy said, "As part of the initiative to provide technology-infused education, these digital lessons will be communicated where the bridge course for the academic year 2024-25 will be telecast according to the curriculum for nine days, excluding Sundays.



The half-hour curriculum will start at 10 am for students from Class III to Class X, he added.

Venugopal also mentioned that digital lessons will continue for three hours a day for nine days, totaling 27 hours, covering Maths, Hindi, English, Science and other subject. The syllabus is prepared in three languages by the Telangana Education department.

He emphasized that the syllabus prepared by the State

Institute of Educational Technology has already been distributed to respective schools in the State, where teachers are teaching regularly offline, while the same will be followed online.

The CEO advised parents to be aware and make use of the digital platform lessons, making it clear that these digital curriculum telecasts will continue in line with the State school education department's curriculum.

## Man held for killing daughter after she resisted sexual assault

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Banothu Naresh, 35, was arrested on Saturday for killing his minor daughter after she allegedly resisted having sexual intercourse with him.

Police have registered a complaint on June 7, stating that his daughter was missing. On June 14, police received information that a female body, which was in a decomposed state, was found lying in the forest near Nadigadda Thanda at Miyapur.

The police said that by verifying the CCTV footage, at 10.02 am, it was revealed that father of the deceased Banothu Naresh was taking his daughter on his bike into the forest and it was also found that at 10.14 am the accused returned alone from the forest.

Miyapur ACP Narsimha Rao said, "From day one, we had a

doubt on her father's behavior. As per the collected evidence and his confession, he has been addicted to alcohol and used to watch porn videos. A few days back his phone's display did not work.

So he allegedly tried to molest his daughter. In the disguise of collecting firewood from a nearby forest, he tried to assault her. Out of fear that if she spoke to anyone in the village, he would lose prestige, he killed her by hitting her head with a stone."

After killing his daughter, he along with his wife came to Miyapur police station and lodged a complaint stating that their daughter was missing.

According to the confession of the accused, the Section of law has been altered to Sections 302, 201, 376 and 511 IPC and 5, 6 and 18 of POCSO ACT.

# Drugs destroying golden future of youth, says CP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Tarun Joshi unveiled anti-prohibited drug campaign posters at Rachakonda office in Neredmet on Wednesday for the upcoming occasion - International Anti-Drug Day, which will be observed on June 26 every year.

The Commissioner warned that youth should not waste their energy by falling under the spell of drugs. Even if they use drugs once, there is a danger of developing an addiction towards it. He advised the youth to participate in the police's fight against drugs, refrain from drug use and immediately inform the police if information related to the supply and use of prohibited



drugs comes to their attention.

The Commissioner called upon the police department, youth and all sections of the society to work together for a drug-free society.

Awareness programmes will be organised in colleges along with social media to educate the youth about the side effects of drug use in Rachakonda Commissionerate.

He stated that the use of illicit drugs is like a pest in the society, and the use of drugs

should be eradicated. The golden future of the youth is being destroyed due to unknowingly falling under the influence of drugs, and drugs are destroying the physical and mental health of youth. Strict measures are being taken to prevent the transportation and use of drugs in Rachakonda Commissionerate.

Apart from the regular inspections at the check posts, special SOT teams have caught many gangs supplying prohibited drugs like ganja, opium and heroin and registered strict cases under the NDPS Act-1985 and other laws.

DCP Crimes Arvind Babu, DCP SB Karunakar and ACP IT Cell Narendra Goud participated in this programme.

## Hyd CP transfers nine police inspectors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Sreenivas Reddy on Wednesday transferred nine inspectors.

In the latest round of transfers, Karunakar Reddy Pailla, who is currently serving as SB City North Zone, has been posted as SHO Lalaguda. Konakanchi Sathyanarayan, who is currently serving as Detective Inspector of Bandlaguda, has been posted as SHO Bandlaguda. B Srinivas, who was promoted as Inspector of Police has been posted as DI Bandlaguda. Shreya Nandanpally has been posted as SHO of Women police station, South East Zone. Sh Jahangir Yadav has been posted as Detective



Inspector of Asifnagar. Palle Padma, who was released from suspension, has been posted to the CCC. Mohammed Shaker Ali, who was released from suspension, has been posted to the Telangana Legislative Assembly Security. J Mahender Reddy has been posted at CSW and P Mahender has been posted in Multi Zone 2.

# TGCSB probing trans-national cyber crime network; 3 arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) has launched a comprehensive investigation into a complex cyber crime network involved in the illegal procurement and sale of SIM cards and bank accounts. This organiSed operation spans multiple Indian states and extends internationally to countries such as Dubai, Thailand, and Cambodia.

The Cyber Crime Police station (Headquarters) of TGCSB has successfully apprehended three individuals implicated in this supply chain. The individuals arrested in connection with this case are Shaik Subhani, 26, from Jagadgiriutta, Hyderabad; K

Naveen, 22, from Chintal, Jeedimetla, Hyderabad; and M Prem Kumar, also known as Michael or Mike Tisson, 24, from RTC X Road, Hyderabad. During the arrests, authorities seized 113 SIM cards and three mobile phones. The modus operandi of the accused involved procuring SIM cards using the identities of various individuals and entities. These SIM cards were then supplied to cyber criminals and exported primarily through Dubai. The procurement process involved numerous individuals from different states responsible for collecting, transporting, and exporting the SIM cards. Key players residing in Dubai coordinated the receipt of SIM cards and bank accounts from

their associates across India.

Vijay, the main accused residing in Dubai, collaborated with SIM card suppliers from Uttar Pradesh. These SIM cards were then couriered to Michael, who sent them to Naveen and Subhani using Rapido. Naveen and Subhani subsequently handed over the SIM cards to Vijay whenever he visited India. Vijay works in a Chinese-run call center in Dubai and supplies the SIM cards to the Chinese management at higher prices. If anyone from India approaches to purchase, SIM cards are supplied to the Indian buyers through Naveen and Subhani.

The SIM cards, purchased for around Rs. 500, were sold for Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000,

depending on their position within the supply chain. The accused set up multiple Telegram groups, such as "Indian SIM Cards Sale" and "Indian Bank Accounts Sale," to attract potential buyers. Upon expressing interest, buyers were contacted privately on Telegram to negotiate the sale. After finalising deals, the physical SIM cards were delivered to buyers in exchange for cash. The accused residing in Dubai frequently traveled to India to collect SIM cards from their sources, transporting them back to Dubai for sale to Chinese nationals involved in cybercrimes. Some of these SIM cards were further distributed to Thailand and Cambodia.

TGIC-INDUSTRIAL AREA LOCAL AUTHORITY AEP-Gundlupochampally, Medchal-Malkajgiri Dist			
SHORT TENDER NOTICE NO.01/COMMITTEE/TGIC-IALA/AEP/GPP/2024-25, dated, 19.06.2024			
Tender Schedule is invited for the Sealed Quotations Tender for the undersigned for the following work of lumpsum contract basis and to be received by the officers indicated below from all DMMCR/SHG groups who have ESI A EPF and labour registration in Medchal Circle (Local Contractors and who have experience in the works of similar kind below. The applicants should invariably have valid EPF, ESI and Solvency Certificate, PAN, GST Registration, Experience Certificate and Labour Registration are enclosed the same in Tender Schedule) (Request For Proposal).			
1. Process Fee (RFP) along with : Rs 10,000.00 in the shape of DD on any Nationalised Bank in favour of Tender Schedule			
2. Tender Schedule Cost : Rs 10,000.00 in the shape of DD on any Nationalised Bank in favour of TGIC-IALA Revenue Gundlupochampally			
3. Security Deposit (RFP Successor) : Rs 1,00,000.00 for Sweeping, Rs 50,000.00 for Security Services			
SCHEDULE			
Sl No.	Particulars	Approx. Value of Work put to tender for 12 Months i.e., from 01.07.2024 to 30.06.2025	
1	Name of the Work	1. Sweeping and Garbage Removal Work AEP-GPP	1. Sweeping and Garbage Removal AEP-GPP 13,05,151.44
2	Issue of RFP Documents	From 29.06.2024 to 29.06.2024 from 10.30 am to 5.00 pm on all working days.	
3	RFP Document fee	For each RFP Document Rs. 10,000.00, D.D in favour of TGIC-IALA Revenue.	
4	Submission of RFP Document	On or Before 27.06.2024 @ 12.00 Noon.	
5	Opening of RFP Document	On 27.06.2024 @ 3.00 PM at TGIC-IALA-MEDICAL Office	
The RFP document containing all the details is available with Office of the Commissioner, TGIC-IALA-AEP- Gundlupochampally on payment of Rs. 10,000.00 towards cost of documents in the shape of Demand Draft drawn in favour of TGIC-IALA Revenue Account.			
Place: Gundlupochampally Date: 19.06.2024			
COMMISSIONER TGIC-IALA-AEP-GPP			



# Reconstructing Telangana by fulfilling people’s aspirations

Against all odds and after overcoming numerous challenges, the Congress-led 'Praja Prabhutvam' has begun taking corrective steps in a state beleaguered by detrimental policies of its predecessor. Upon assuming office, the Congress confronted a landscape where administrative and grassroots conditions had deteriorated, much to the dismay of the populace.

The previous regime in Telangana had veered significantly from its constitutional obligations and political responsibilities. Allegations of widespread corruption across various sectors had engendered profound disillusionment among people of the state --- a fact underscored by preliminary investigations into several government initiatives.

The previous era was characterized by the unabashed use of police and intelligence apparatus to surveil political opponents, officials, and prominent figures, infringing upon fundamental privacy rights. State resources and administrative efforts were disproportionately channelled to benefit a select cadre of MLAs, ministers, and their associates.

In the face of these challenges, the Congress leadership in Telangana, led by A Revanth Reddy, consolidated its position and unseated the repressive regime through democratic means.

Upon assuming power, the Congress government pledged to rebuild the state and restore dignity to its residents. Despite its predecessor's ostentatious promises upon taking office, it had failed to fulfill its basic obligations to people, thereby losing their trust.

Guided by principles of social justice and equitable development, the Congress government committed itself to rectifying past mistakes and amending the failures of the previous administration. It immediately dismantled barriers-both tangible and intangible-that had hindered citizen-government interactions, thereby enhancing accessibility to governance.

One of the most significant benefits bestowed upon the people of the state was the sense of freedom they rightfully deserved. This freedom had been yearned for by the people of Telangana over the past decade. Under the leadership of Revanth Reddy, the Congress government ushered in this breeze of liberation by ousting the previous BRS administration.

Staying true to its electoral promises, the new government swiftly implemented the Maha Lakshmi Scheme and Telangana Rajiv Aarogyasri Scheme within days of assuming office. Initiatives such as free RTC bus travel for women and transgender individuals, along with increased Arogyasri insurance cover up to Rs 10 lakh, were rolled out to benefit the populace. Additionally, commitments to provide subsidized gas cylinders and 200 units of free electricity for deserving households were also promptly fulfilled.

These initiatives have had a profound and positive impact on the lives of a significant portion of the state's population within just a few months. The government remains



BOREDDY AYODHYA REDDY

steadfast in its commitment to fulfill all campaign promises and continue advancing the welfare of its citizens.

To add few more, the government issued appointment orders to approximately 30,000 educated youth, announced multiple new job opportunities through notifications, ensured integrity in competitive examinations with no instances of paper leaks and enhanced transparency. The state govern-

ment swiftly resolved thousands of public grievances within a short timeframe, established a dedicated panel to address issues related to the 'Dharani' portal, and delegated government projects such as stitching school uniforms to women self-help groups, thus promoting local empowerment.

This administration's proactive stance in fulfilling electoral pledges and promoting public welfare underscores its dedication to rebuilding trust and fostering inclusive growth throughout the state.

Meanwhile, the administration, under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has undertaken a comprehensive overhaul, meticulously assessing every facet across all departments. Significant changes in personnel have been implemented through new appointments and strategic reassignments. In tandem with these administrative reforms, many ambitious projects have been announced, with some of them already underway.

Notable among these are the Metro Rail expansion, Musi Riverfront Development, Elevated Corridors on the outskirts of Hyderabad, redefinition of ORR boundaries, construction of the Regional Ring Road, as well as extensive new tar roads and railway routes.

On the investment front, Telangana made a strong impact at the World Economic Forum meetings in Davos, securing a record-breaking Rs 40,000 crore in investments.

Concurrently, the government has actively addressed allegations of widespread corruption during the previous administration's tenure, particularly in major projects such as Kaleshwaram and the Telangana Secretariat, alongside other infrastructure ventures. Investigations have also brought to light irregularities in power procurement from Chhattisgarh, as well as scams related to the distribution of double bedroom units and sheep distribution schemes.

Inquiries have been initiated, resulting in arrests in some cases and further investigations into others.

The administration has prioritized bolstering law and order, refining the competitive examination process, and enhancing transparency measures to safeguard the future prospects of the state's educated youth. A steadfast commitment to combat communal discord underscores the government's policy framework, with decisive measures being taken to ensure communal harmony.

Under the leadership of Revanth Reddy, the Congress government is steadfastly working to reconstruct the state methodically, laying a foundation for sustainable development in phases. The government is working on fulfilling the promises made to farmers, youth, women, and other sections of society.

(The writer is CPRO to Telangana Chief Minister)

## SI sacked for raping woman cop

A POLICEWOMAN LODGED A COMPLAINT WITH HIGHER OFFICIALS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Sub Inspector of police who was arrested on Wednesday for raping a woman head constable at gunpoint in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district in Telangana has been dismissed from service, police said.

The constable had filed a complaint with senior officials following which an inquiry was conducted against the SI and the allegation was confirmed, a release from Telangana Police said.

Bhavani Sen, working at Kaleshwaram police station in the district was accused by the constable, who is also working in the same police station, of committing sexual assault on her on June 16 in a guest room of an irrigation project's accommodation facility, they said. In her complaint, the constable alleged that the SI threatened her using his revolver and raped her. He then warned her of dire consequences if she revealed to anyone what he did to her.



**Bhavani Sen, working at Kaleshwaram police station in the district was accused by the constable, who is also working in the same police station, of committing sexual assault on her on June 16 in a guest room of an irrigation project's accommodation facility, they said. In her complaint, the constable alleged that the SI threatened her using his revolver and raped her. He then warned her of dire consequences if she revealed to anyone what he did to her**

Taking a serious view of the allegation against Sub Inspector Bhavani Sen, the Inspector General of Police

(Multi Zone -1) A V Ranganath issued orders to permanently remove him from service.

Based on the constable's complaint, the SI was booked under relevant sections of the IPC, another police official said.

There were also allegations against the SI that he had sexually assaulted three other women constables in the past, taking advantage of his position. A case was earlier registered against the SI in July 2022 in Asifabad district over sexual harassment charges, the release said.

The SI frequently indulging in sexual assaults and harassment was hurting the prestige of state police, the release added. In these circumstances, the SI was permanently removed from service as per Article 311 of the Indian Constitution, the IGP Ranganath said. Article 311 of the Constitution provides for the dismissal of a person employed in civil capacities under the union or state.

## Man murders wife over family dispute

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a shocking incident, a man allegedly murder his wife on Tuesday at Tukaramgate over a family dispute.

The accused was identified as Lakshman. The deceased was identified as Roja,

The accused, the police said, did not work. On Tuesday, he returned home drunk and began quarrelling with his wife. Subsequently, in a fit of rage, Lakshman stabbed his wife multiple times, leading to Roja's death on the spot.

Upon being alerted, the police arrived at the scene and shifted the victim's body to the hospital for a post-mortem examination. Lakshman used harass his wife of infidelity suspecting infidelity The police registered a case and launched manhunt for Lakshman.

## YSR implemented 1:100 criteria in Group-1: Kaushik

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy vehemently condemned the recent comments made by MLC Jeevan Reddy against their leader, Harish Rao.

At press meet at Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday, Reddy criticised Jeevan Reddy's understanding of the Group-1 examination management, claiming that the latter himself lacked awareness on the matter. "Jeevan Reddy has no understanding of Group-1 management, unlike Harish Rao. During Jeevan Reddy's tenure as a minister, when YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the Chief Minister, they called 1:100 candidates for Group-1 interviews.

How can Jeevan Reddy now claim it's impossible?" questioned Kaushik Reddy. He further accused the Congress party of double standards, citing examples of contradictory statements made by the oppo-

sition leader Bhatti Vikramarka regarding the Group-1 interviews. "It has become a habit for Congress members to say one thing when in opposition and another when in power," he remarked.

Kaushik Reddy also highlighted the changes made to the Group-1 notification in Andhra Pradesh, pointing out the inconsistency in the Congress's stance on unemployment issues. "If their demands are unclear to them, how can they expect to address them properly?" he added. In a sharp rebuke, he advised Jeevan Reddy to think twice before criticizing Harish Rao. "Jeevan sReddy, being a lawyer, should speak with legal understanding. How can he make statements that harm the graduates he represents?" asked Reddy. Defending Harish Rao's efforts in addressing unemployment, Kaushik Reddy stated, "When Harish Rao speaks for the unemployed, how can

Jeevan Reddy accuse him of not being interested in job recruitment?" He accused Jeevan Reddy of showcasing ignorance by claiming that a Group-1 notification, once issued, cannot be changed. "Jeevan Reddy should read the Group-1 notification thoroughly. The Public Service Commission has the authority to amend it at any stage," he clarified. Warning the Congress leaders, he said, "If they continue to speak against Harish Rao recklessly, the people will not tolerate it. Congress leaders need to learn from Harish Rao's work ethic instead of making baseless accusations." Kaushik Reddy concluded by criticizing the Congress for failing to implement their promises. "The Congress leaders promised six guarantees but ended up with six scams. If they fail to implement their guarantees, we will ensure they face the consequences," he warned.

## Man awarded five-year imprisonment for rape

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The POCSO Court L.B.Nagar awarded a man five-year imprisonment and Rs 20,000 fine on Wednesday.

Visal Bind (20) should undergo 5 years rigorous imprisonment and pay a fine of Rs 20,000. The court also awarded victim compensation of Rs 2,00,000 According to prosecution, Visal Bind was charged with an offence under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences. Police officer G Raman Goud investigated the case.

## Medigadda sand tenders to fill pockets of Cong leaders: BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former MLA Balka Suman held a press conference at Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday, where he levelled serious allegations against the current Congress government regarding the Medigadda Barrage repairs and other issues.

Suman began by addressing the longstanding issue of the Medigadda Barrage. He noted that there was a common belief that whichever party came to power would undertake necessary repairs. However, he accused the Congress government of failing to repair the barrage and instead trying to

shift the blame onto the previous KCR administration.

"The government has wasted valuable time," Suman asserted. "Now, the Congress government has unveiled yet another conspiracy. They have issued tenders to transport 92 lakh cubic meters of sand from Medigadda Barrage. This move is merely to fill the pockets of Congress leaders."

He demanded that the current Revanth Reddy-led government review this decision, claiming that the tender process violates the orders of the Green Tribunal.

Suman warned that if the government did not retract

its decision, they would seek legal recourse. Accusing the Congress leaders of being embroiled in various scams, including those involving sand, Suman criticised their lack of concern for farmers' irrigation needs while prioritising sand extraction plans.

He also brought up a letter from Union Minister Kishan Reddy, which set a deadline for mineral auctions, questioning the state government's stance on the Singareni coal mines. "We have demanded that these mines be allotted to Singareni, but the state government has yet to clarify its position," Suman stated.

## Water supply to be cut off if bills not cleared

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Managing Director C Sudharsan Reddy ordered the officials to remove the water connection to those who have shown negligence in paying the bills to the board.

MD Sudarshan Reddy ordered the officials to reach the set targets on revenue by the end of this month. A review meeting was conducted by MD on Revenue at the head office in Khairatabad.

Special attention should be given to outstanding dues and dues of commercial consumers.

Sudarshan Reddy said that general managers, deputy general managers and managers should encourage meter readers to collect bills. The officials should work hard to reach the target in the next 10 days.

Revenue Director VL Praveen Kumar, Operation Director - 1 Ajmira Krishna, Operation Director - 2 Swamy, CGMs, GMs and DGMs of all circles participated in this review.

## Step to prevent rainwater stagnation in city areas

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The monsoon teams have been instructed to take careful measures in areas where rainwater has accumulated during the rainy season. A review meeting was held with monsoon teams in the chamber of Srilingampally Zonal Commissioner Sneha Sabarish on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Sneha Sabarish emphasised that preventive measures should be taken in identified water-

stagnant areas. Encroachments on canals must be cleared and steps should be taken to ensure unhindered flow of rainwater. She ordered regular cleaning of canals to prevent garbage accumulation. Commissioner Sneha Sabarish stressed the need for continuous reporting on activities in water storage areas.

Sneha also directed coordination among various departments to prevent traffic issues and urged staff to stay vigilant during the rainy season. Officials from respective departments attended the review meeting.



Srilingampally Zonal Commissioner Sneha Sabarish speaking with the monsoon teams at a review meeting in Hyderabad on Wednesday

## Case filed against scribe for tweet on power interruption

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A journalist was booked for tweeting about power cuts in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

Revathi P, the journalist posted a tweet around 4:52 pm stating that tired of the frequent power cuts, a woman from LB nagar tweeted about the incident and a lineman arrived at her residence. He demanded that she delete the tweet. The victim dialed the electricity department and told them about the incident. She even requested the officials not

to send such people to threaten her. The official responded to her by stating that she should call them instead of tweeting about the issue as there is too much pressure on the electricity department from the higher officials.

Following the tweet, an Assistant Engineer in the operation section at the Hayathnagar sub-division of Saroornagar division lodged a complaint against Revathi with the LB Nagar police alleging that a Hyderabad resident made a false allegation of seven hours

of power interruption. As per the FIR, the complainant stated that he received a message from higher officials that a Twitter user, @revantitweets, posted a message stating that there was a seven-hour power interruption in the LB Nagar area. After reviewing data sheets from the sub-station, it was noted that there had been no power interruption of seven hours in the LB Nagar area.

"It is merely a false allegation and an intentional attempt to defame the State government and TGPSPDCL," he added.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Not so neat

The Supreme Court demands a comprehensive investigation into administrative negligence surrounding the NEET fiasco

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), serving as a critical gateway for students aspiring to enter undergraduate medical and dental programs in India, is at the centre of controversy. The Supreme Court of India has raised concerns about potential negligence in the administration of the exam, calling for an exhaustive investigation. Since the results were announced on June 4, the NEET exam has faced intense scrutiny due to various issues, including errors in the question paper, improper allocation of grace marks and allegations of paper leaks and fraud. In response, students and parents have called for a re-test, leading to numerous petitions being filed in courts. Despite National Testing Agency (NTA) officials denying any paper leaks, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan acknowledged that "some irregularities" had been detected at certain exam centers. NEET was introduced to standardize medical admissions across India, aiming to create a uniform criterion for entry into medical courses. However, since its



inception, the exam has faced a multitude of challenges, including allegations of fraud, question paper leaks and complaints of unequal access, which have sparked widespread debate and protests. In a pivotal decision, the Supreme Court of India has brought attention to serious concerns regarding the administration of the NEET exam, highlighting potential negligence and calling for a thorough investigation. Over the years, NEET has been marred by several instances of question paper leaks and cheating, which not only undermine the fairness of the examination but also cast a shadow over the credibility of the authorities responsible for conducting it. Such issues have been a recurrent prob-

lem, eroding trust in the system and fueling public discontent.

Additionally, there have been persistent concerns about accessibility and equity. It has been alleged that NEET inherently favors well-to-do students from urban areas who have better access to high-quality coaching and educational resources, thereby disadvantaging those from rural or economically weaker backgrounds. This perceived inequity has led to protests from various States and communities who feel marginalized by the current system. The Supreme Court's call for an investigation into possible negligence underscores the gravity of administrative lapses within the NEET examination process. There are allegations of corruption involving insiders within examination boards or associated entities who might be leaking papers or enabling cheating in exchange for bribes. Such internal corruption severely compromises the examination's integrity. Some States have expressed opposition to NEET, citing disadvantages for their students due to regional and linguistic differences. This opposition could reflect broader political dynamics, where certain political interests align against the centralization of medical entrance examinations. Indeed, a probe is crucial for restoring faith in the NEET process and ensuring that all aspiring medical students have a fair opportunity.

### PICTALK



Devotees gather to take a holy dip in the Ganga river on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra, in Haridwar

PTI

# India's foreign policy under Modi 3.0

Amid geopolitical tensions, Modi's engagements at the G7 reflect India's commitment to democratic principles and its positioning on the world stage



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN



In less than a week of assuming office as the Prime Minister for the largest democracy in the world, Mr Modi, is back where he excels. He was in Italy this week, meeting the leaders from the powerful group of nations also known as the G7. On the sidelines were several bilateral meetings with leaders of African, Arab nations, besides several clear messages to the primarily American and European groups leaders. This was PM Modi's first trip abroad, after assuming office for a third time (a remarkable feat in itself), where nearly 670 million voters, patiently waited in queues, under an extremely harsh summer sun, over a period of nearly two months, to choose the leader of the largest democracy. PM Modi and his party, despite, setting really ambitious expectations, could not manage a majority by itself and is now dependent on a bunch of pre poll alliance political parties, to lead the National Democratic Alliance Government. This assumes significance at a time when several parts of Europe, not to mention US are going their own set of democratic churns. The US goes to poll end of the year and voices on either side of the aisle

, are getting harsher and louder. Similarly the elections to the European Parliament, has thrown a resurgence of far right parties, which is likely to have an impact on the geo political dynamics for a long time. What Mr Modi may be comforted by, is the fact that he may not need to look around for carefully worded diplomatic Statements, while explaining the State of Indian democracy to the western nations. In the past few years, several questions have been raised across western nations and in US regarding the health of the Indian democracy, its report card on minority rights, religious freedom, existence of press etc. The near majority verdict, by the Indian electorate, with ample scope of checks and balances to keep the party with highest seats under leash, a robust opposition presence in the parliament would be clear talk point for PM and his set of diplomats to set out a gold standard for democracy, when engaging with several nations. This becomes even more robust, given India's unblemished record of being a largely



IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, SEVERAL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED ACROSS WESTERN NATIONS AND IN THE US REGARDING THE HEALTH OF THE INDIAN DEMOCRACY, ITS REPORT CARD ON MINORITY RIGHTS, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, THE EXISTENCE OF THE PRESS, ETC

democratic nation, with a huge diverse population, in a neighbourhood, where there are several non democratic regimes, not to forget the second largest economy in the world China. Mr Modi, with his nearly three decades of experience as head of the State and nation, is not new to diplomacy and in several interviews, leading up to the general elections, has articulated his target of enhancing India's global image. The grand spectacle around G20 (not to forget back room diplomatic negotiations to arrive at a joint Statement), several high level State visits, a bunch of rescue operations carried out for citizens and neighbours from war torn areas, supply of emergency medicines during Covid, are all pointers towards the focus the Prime Minister's Office attaches on global reputational management. PM's first visit in his third term to meet the G7 leaders, is a reassurance of continuity, as well as scoping out newer engagement roadmaps with existing and potential new allies. Mr Modi's visit to Italy

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BATTLING THE HEAT

Madam — Apropos the news story "Battling the heat with tribal ammunition," published on June 19, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, I am struck by the diverse range of topics covered in these articles. From the historical significance of May Day to the ongoing challenges of terrorism and global security, each piece provides valuable insights into the complexities of modern society. The essay on the Kutia-Kondh tribes of Odisha, highlighting their traditional methods for coping with heat waves, is particularly noteworthy. It showcases the resilience and resourcefulness of indigenous communities in adapting to harsh environmental conditions. The article on China's two-front problem, discussing its growing confidence in its defence capabilities, is also thought-provoking. Overall, these articles demonstrate the breadth and depth of the newspaper's coverage, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of the world around us.

Preeti Arya | Jind

### INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Madam — Apropos the news story "Child Development and National Progress," published on June 19, this is my response. The article rightly highlights the critical importance of investing in early childhood care and education (ECCE) to achieve the vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India). With over 50 per cent of India's population below 25 years old, nurturing this demographic dividend through quality ECCE is paramount. The benefits of ECCE are multifaceted — it enhances learning outcomes, positively impacts personality development and bridges social equity gaps. Yet, India's current ECCE spending is a mere 0.1 per cent of GDP, far below the recommended 1.5-2.2 per cent. To make ECCE universally accessible, the article rightly suggests incorporat-

### Nurturing India's Startup Potential



Apropos the news story "Startups must innovate and execute for commercial success," published on June 19, this is my response. The article highlights the significant progress made by India's startup ecosystem in the past decade while acknowledging the challenges that young entrepreneurs face. The author rightly points out that the growth potential is vast, bolstered by supportive Government initiatives and the commitment of funders to nurture India's youth. The primary challenge lies in the dearth

of operational and financial management skills among young entrepreneurs, who often struggle with executing their innovative ideas. The author's emphasis on the need for comprehensive mentoring alongside financial support is well-founded. Funders like YEA play a crucial role in guiding startups in enhancing operational efficiency, managing finances and leveraging Governmental incentives. The author's emphasis on the importance of genuine innovation, meticulous planning, resilience and patience in entrepreneurship is commendable. Startups often aim for rapid multi-million-dollar or billion-dollar success, but true success hinges on sustained commitment, focus and perseverance. The article serves as a valuable reminder that building a thriving enterprise demands continual effort to benefit entrepreneurs, investors, clients and stakeholders alike. Overall, the article provides a balanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing India's startup ecosystem and the critical role of funders and mentors in nurturing the entrepreneurial potential of the country's youth. Kularani Kapoor | Ranchik

Roshan Naik | Kolkata

### ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS

Madam — Apropos the news story "Elder abuse remains an underreported crisis," published on June 19, this is my response. As a daily reader of the newspaper, I am deeply disturbed by the alarming statistics on elder abuse. The fact that 1 in 6 older adults experiences abuse in community settings is a stark reminder of the urgent need for concert-

ed action. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is a crucial step in raising awareness about this issue and empowering communities to identify and address it effectively. I believe that a multifaceted approach involving awareness, education, legal measures and societal change is necessary to address elder abuse. It is essential to educate both the elderly and the younger generations about the importance of respecting and caring for the elderly. The Government, NGOs and the private sector must collaborate to bridge the gap between policy and implementation, ensuring proper care for India's elderly population.

Pradeep Kumar | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Attain happiness by living in the moment

Embracing small moments and choosing to smile can transform not just our day, but the lives of those around us, making the world a happier place

I have often wondered if happiness is a choice or an effort. As I have aged, I realise that it is a choice for which one needs to make an effort. I understand that happiness derived out of immersing oneself in the moment is also meditative. A few years back, I was standing in the airport security queue with a grumpy face. It was an early morning flight for which I had to wake up in the dead of the night. I was also stressed as I had to make a presentation to my Board of Directors in a few hours. In short I had no reasons to be happy. In this self-made gloom surrounding me, my eyes fell on an old gentleman, standing patiently in front of me. His cheerful disposition even at that early hour, despite the struggle to navigate the slow moving long queue and the broad smile on his face as he walked jauntily for the mandatory check, was enough to light up the faces of everyone around him. He smiled at the security personnel, asked his name, introduced himself and still laughing, picked up his cabin baggage and moved on with



a spring in his steps. The usually taciturn security staff kept looking at the retreating back — with a smile on his face! We had a laughter club in my condominium complex. These sexagenarians to octogenarians burst into laughter at the drop of a hat, oblivious to the smirks of the other walkers. The laughter is forced, but the young at heart are immersed in the act. They have chosen to work for happiness, unmindful of the worry of the moment. Children do not need a reason to be happy — they do not even have to fake it. Each moment is a miracle for them. It would not be wrong to say that they live in the moment. The purity and

the sheer joy of their happiness is a sight to behold. I was a young boy of 9. My brother was 8. We were having annual sports in our school. The winter days were gloriously sunny. It was a pleasure to sit on the boundary wall to watch the young athletes. It was an equally satisfying act to clap for the winning heroes. We lost sense of time, so absorbed were we in the pleasure of the moment. This led my worried and irate father to march to the school and drag us back home. The lasting memory is that of our sitting on the boundary wall lost in the joy that it afforded us and not the subsequent thrashing. As we grew into adulthood, with accompanying respon-

sibilities of the daily grind, lines of frown started appearing on our foreheads. We forgot to even smile. We also forgot to make friends. We thought that the professionals that we spent time with could at best be acquaintances. We could not have been farther from truth. Friends are forever a source of joy. Now that we are in the winter of our lives, we realise that there is so much to be happy about. The act of waking up in the morning, or going about our routine with our hands and feet and many other such acts that we considered mundane in our younger days, are now sources of happiness. Everyone loves to spend time with a smiling person, avoiding a grumpy face. The world would be happier if all of us chose to be the lighted candle of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "When a happy person comes into the room, it is as if another candle has been lit." (The writer conducts workshops on creative writing for young adults and corporate executives. Views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

THE INFALLIBLE LAW OF KARMA




RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It is said that 'Honesty is the best policy'. But sometimes people get appalled when they see a dishonest corrupt person rising to the heights of success, power and fame while a sincere and kind person toiling it out without much success. As a result, often life seems unfair and the seeming injustice turns people bitter and revengeful. However one fails to understand an important fact that the law of karma is an eternal law that works on the simple principle of cause and effect- 'as you sow so shall you reap'.

We all know that the issue of corruption has stirred up numerous debates and agitations and attracted extensive coverage in the Indian media over the past few years. It is also a well known fact that in many countries taking and giving bribes, financial scams and misuse of public money have become a norm. Many times those involved in these activities go scot free and they lead a luxurious life and enjoy many privileges without being accountable for their nefarious deeds. But we forget that the law of karma is infallible and immutable.

As per this law every act or expression by a human being will be experienced by him/her in the same degree and nobody can escape the effects of this law. What we cannot see most of the time is how and when an action is punished or rewarded, as a result of which we get disillusioned. However, as per karmic law, sometimes the result of an action may be carried over to the next life and hence it says that there is always perfect justice in whatever happens.

This can be seen when we see someone who is born with physical, economic and social challenges, Why? Simply because past karma is carried over and experienced in the next birth. Thus, understanding the law of karma will help us to perceive life in a deeper and holistic way. Firstly, we must realise that the doer of karma is not the body but the being or the soul which is immortal and the eternal Law of karma facilitates and shapes the continuous journey or evolution of the human soul. We are here to express our true nature and experience the reward of that. Our expressions may be a subtle feeling or thought or they may be a visible action.




It is unfortunate that most people today are blind to their spiritual identity and law of karma, as a result of which they believe that they are here for one lifetime and so they can eat, drink, make merry and indulge in all pleasures through right or wrong means. But the fact is that such people may have wealth but they lack peace of mind, health and true joy. This narrow-minded limited view of human life has spawned vices such as lust, greed, ego and attachment. In the effort to have more, enjoy more and possess more, people have become totally callous about values like honesty, compassion, sharing and cooperation. Even when people suffer the result of their bad karma they do not realise that they have to improve themselves instead they blame others and become even more corrupt and vicious. If people could see in advance that each corrupt deed they commit would boomerang into a painful suffering or loss for them either in this life or in the future lifetime, they would never commit a wrong again. But they neither have the wisdom nor have the strength to live a life of total moral integrity. We must realise that richness of character is the most essential and real wealth that raises the value of human life, for, without this, a rich person may have temptations to commit more crime. But, it seems that there is little attention to these things. Today people have lost faith in God and good karma. But the law of karma is the most foolproof law that guarantees good return to those who do good. The time and place and the source from where it will come will vary. But the wheel of divine justice never fails. So, instead of seeking short-term pleasures and rewards through corrupt deeds let us live a righteous life and reap the fruit of abundant joy and wellbeing.

*(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)*

# Navigating farmer discontent amid unfulfilled promises

As the Govt embarks on its third tenure, winning back the trust of the farming community will require genuine and substantial reforms that prioritise farmers' welfare



BK JHA

Agriculture has always been a cornerstone of India's economy and social structure. Despite its critical role, the sector has witnessed a turbulent relationship with the central Government in recent years. The Union Government's ambitious promises and subsequent policies aimed at revolutionizing agriculture have often been met with skepticism and anger from the farming community. This discontent was vividly reflected in the recent general election results in States like Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The deep-seated issues that plagued the sector, including the contentious farming laws and the unmet demand for legal guarantee to Minimum Support Price (MSP), continues to fuel

farmers' agony and anger. Around 65 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas, with 47 per cent reliant on agriculture. Despite India's rapid economic growth, agricultural income has stagnated, averaging about Rs 10,000 rupees monthly in 2019, with half of the families in debt and lacking traditional financing. Public spending on farming has declined over the past decade and needed reforms

have not been implemented. Consequently, the agriculture sector, which employs nearly half of India's workforce, contributes less than a fifth to the GDP. Modi's promise to double farmers' income by 2022 remains unfulfilled. The Modi Government's first tenure starting in 2014 saw a significant focus on agriculture, with promises to double farmers' income. However, these promises were overshadowed by controversies and policies perceived as anti-farmer. Agony and anger of farmers reached its tipping point in 2020-21 and nationwide protests began against controversial farm laws aimed at easing rules for crop sales, pricing and storage. The protests ended after Modi promised to repeal the laws.

Farmers demanded legally guaranteed MSP for 23 crops, set at 50 per cent above production costs, as recommended by scientist MS Swaminathan. While the Government sets MSPs for 22 crops, it primarily buys only wheat and rice for welfare programs and private buyers aren't legally required to pay MSP. The controversial farming laws were aimed at liberalizing the agricultural sector but were seen by many farmers as a threat to their livelihoods. The prolonged protests that followed led to the eventual withdrawal of these laws, yet the underlying discontent persisted. The recent Lok Sabha elections reflected this ongoing anger, with significant losses for the ruling party in agricultural strongholds. What

future awaits Indian Agriculture Ministers? Newly appointed Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will have to bring in all his expertise and experience of transforming Madhya Pradesh agricultural landscape at national level to address the challenges. He must curious and cautious about the fate of his predecessors. Initiator of the Soil Health Card scheme, under then Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh was never inducted in the Cabinet again. The scheme, intended to boost soil productivity, ended up mired in inefficacy and controversy. The subsequent minister, including Narendra Singh Tomar shifted to Madhya Pradesh State politics and now he is speaker in

Assembly. Recently, Arjun Munda, faced electoral defeat. Defeat of Junior Ministers Kailash Choudhary and Sanjeev Balyan also indicate farmers' dissatisfaction with the Government's agricultural policies. A critical demand from the farming community has been the legal guarantee of MSP. The Government's failure to address this demand has been a significant source of anger. Farmers argue that a legally guaranteed MSP would provide a safety net against market fluctuations and exploitation by middlemen. Despite multiple assurances, the Modi administration has not enacted legislation to this effect, fueling the perception that their interests are being ignored. Experts argue that legally guar-

anteeing MSP could create a fiscal burden and potential inflationary effects. However, opinions differ on this impact. Some believe that containing cultivation costs could mitigate inflation concerns. The cost of MSP implementation for all crops is also uncertain, varying with market prices, Government procurement quantities and duration. Estimates range widely, from CRISIL Market Intelligence & Analytics' 210 billion rupees to other analysts' 10 trillion rupees annually. A more effective approach might be direct income support linked to farmland investment. Additionally, revamping the current procurement process. Farmers could also benefit from a price stabiliza-

tion fund to cover the difference when market prices fall below MSP levels. This combination of strategies could better support farmers without causing significant fiscal or inflationary issues. In response to the ongoing challenges in the agricultural sector, the Modi 3.0 Government is poised to introduce several initiatives aimed at placating the agrarian community. Among these, the Krishi Sakhi Convergence Program (KSCP) stands out as a significant and ambitious effort. Modi 3.0 Government's focus on agriculture, marked by programs like the KSCP, reflects a recognition of the critical role farming plays in India.

*(The author is a senior journalist; vews expressed are personal)*



# NAM faces challenges of neo-colonialism

The Non-Aligned Movement must rejuvenate its commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty and resist the subtle encroachments of neo-colonialism

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was quoted as saying : "Those who forget history and do not learn from it are condemned to repeat it". Churchill's remark coming as it did from excerpts of his 1948 speech delivered in House of Commons was purportedly made against his predecessor whose failure to re-equip the country with requisite arms and ammunition made second world war ineluctable. On one hand, he cast aspersions on the dark side of colonialism. Paradoxically on the other, he, the great liberator of Europe, opined that colonialism should have continued in Asia and Africa in the wake of winning second world war. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which India manned as a founding member in 1955, was established in the aftermath of the Second World War, ostensibly with a view to safeguard the country's sovereignty, integrity from the evil designs of colonialists. As is well known, during '50s and later a sizeable number of countries were unshackled from the chain of colonialism. They joined NAM en bloc ; and soon the organisation became a force to be reckoned with and played a pivotal role as a mouth-piece for freedom of its members in the world besieged by the Cold War. With diplomatic sleight of hand, its most vocal member-countries introduced in its organisational charter the "neutralist policy" to be followed by other member-countries. Under the diplomatic scheme of things, member-countries would resist temptations and allurements offered either by capitalist West or the communist East to make them their allies. Instead in the quagmire unleashed by two superpowers, the organisation opted the middle path and stood tall as "third formidable forum". As a matter of fact, nothing illustrates the fact of NAM being a power broker more explicitly than the "swing votes" at the UN courted and shared by the east and west bloc. It provided succour to erstwhile have-not countries. Proof of pudding is in eating. The fact that most of the countries in the world refused to kowtow to either bloc spoke volumes about its sustenance as an independent entity. All this notwithstanding, Churchill was seemingly opinionated in his views about countries including India that they might have failed to learn from history. Without a powerful deterrent force against colonialism, possibilities for it to resurface again could not be ruled out. It might metamorphose into different forms in sync with different age. Undeniably, after the collapse of Cold War, NAM's relevance was on decline. Many factors which constituted early and undisputed principles of the Movement were blown to smithereens. A case in point: Economic Self-reliance. In the charter of Movement, Self-reliance acquired an ideological role as bulwark against economic aggression perpetrated by multinationals and monopolistic commercial, financial and industrial companies. Conflicting nature of Statements emanating from member-countries and incidents of trading charges amongst them on diplomatically impertinent issues led to strengthen the belief that the organisation had digressed from its chosen path and its future seemed bleak. . Today it goes without saying that the war of attrition against colonialism was far from over during the post-war period. What could not be pre-empted by NAM to happen was the rising graph of neo-colonialism presence in the countries ; and its pres-



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AFTER ASSUMING THE OFFICE OF CHAIRPERSON, AZERBAIJAN VOWED TO WIN BACK A QUARTER OF THE TERRITORY OF ITS COUNTRY KNOWN AS NAGORNO-KARABAKH, WHICH HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED BY ARMENIAN NEO-COLONIALISTS FOR THREE DECADES

ence manifested itself by controlling countries through money, debt and media. Colonialism was replaced by neo colonialism - the control of countries though independent in name through many means, but namely through the media, money and debt. Herein, NAM's purpose remained unfulfilled. In the context of Britain, King Charles III, while on a visit to Kenya, rendered his profound apologies for unleashing reigns of dictatorial oppression by his many predecessors within the colonised countries is a significant historical Statement. Now the United Kingdom's diplomatic intentions are clear. It seeks to enter into partnerships with countries based on motto of mutual respect. A free trade deal between the United Kingdom and India likely to be implemented in New Year may be cited as a case in point. That is slated to pave the way for bringing together the two countries as equals. But France, once regarded as Britain's close competitor with respect to setting up colonial hegemony in countries has not expressed such feelings of remorse over its past deeds. On the contrary, they have the audacity to run their fiefdom of neo-colonialism with alacrity. As a matter of fact, France is running its writ in so-called independent countries of West and central Africa by controlling two currencies, the west and central African francs. Notably the two currencies are used by 14 African countries. France's diktat is : these countries must deposit 50 percent of their foreign assets in the French Treasury. Obviously France's intention to maintain economic hegemony over them is loud and clear. These countries have been bearing the brunt of France's disdainful economic activities for decades after colonialism was considered to have ended. France behaved obsequiously with these countries for its own advantages. Desperation of these nations—who are only independent in name and not in reality—could be gauged by the fact that in the past twelve months almost all countries in French-speaking Africa have asked

French military, diplomats and businessmen to leave their lands for good. More or less France is engaged in the same agonising activities against the countries in other parts of the world where France has daringly disallowed any further independence. For instance, in 2021 the French territory of New Caledonia in the South Pacific faced the diabolical designs of France as the last of three independence referenda was deliberately thwarted by security pressure. The island of Corsica in the Mediterranean witnessed the murder of a freedom fighter which eventually culminated into island-wide riots leaving 76 policemen injured in its wake. Paradoxically France has even furthered its neo-colonial interests in countries which were never part of its erstwhile empire. In the last two years France has thwarted plans for a peace process in the south Caucasus, ostensibly to please Armenia with whom it has entered into deal of arms sales. French diplomats have publicly reprimanded Azerbaijan, Armenia's neighbour. Not only this, but also those diplomats instigated the million-strong Armenian diasporas in France to pressurise lawmakers in the French National Assembly to pass laws against Azerbaijan ; also they left no stone unturned in maligning the country in French media. Whether to say unlikely coincidence or no coincidence at all, Azerbaijan is now at the helm of NAM as its chairperson. After assuming office of chairperson, Azerbaijan had vowed to win back a quarter of the territory of its country known as Nagorno-Karabakh which was illegally occupied by Armenian neo-colonialists for three decades. In a 44-day war against Armenia in 2020 and later a 24-hour military operation against it in 2023, Azerbaijan finally got back its occupied territories. The fact of Azerbaijan winning back its occupied territories from Armenia did not go down well with France. It reflected in France's action of using its power initially and unabashedly to undermine European Union-



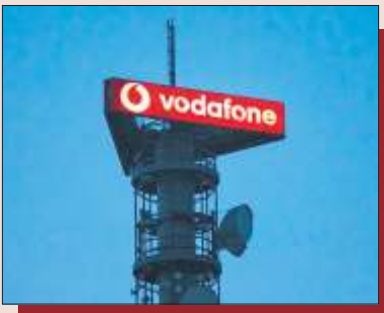
GYAN BHADRA



MONEY MATTERS

## Vodafone sells 18 % stake in Indus Towers for Rs 15,300 cr

British telecom player Vodafone on Wednesday said it has sold an 18 per cent stake in Indus Towers for 1.7 billion euro (about Rs 15,300 crore). The company will use the major portion of the proceeds to pay 1.8 billion euro outstanding bank borrowings secured against Vodafone's assets in India. "Vodafone Group Plc...sold 484.7 million shares in Indus Towers Limited, representing 18 per cent of Indus' share capital through an accelerated book-build offering. The placing raised Rs 153.0 billion (1.7 billion euro) in gross proceeds which will be used to substantially repay Vodafone's existing lenders in relation to the outstanding bank borrowings of 1.8 billion euro secured against Vodafone's Indian assets," Vodafone said in a note. Following the transaction, Vodafone now holds 82.5 million shares or 3.1 per cent in Indus Towers



## NHAI plans to offer projects worth Rs 44,000 cr under BOT

State-owned NHAI is looking to offer 15 road projects worth Rs 44,000 crore covering 937 km during the current financial year under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) mode. Earlier this year, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) came out with a modified BOT project document to attract private companies for investments in the highways sector. These stretches include Guwahati Ring road including Brahmaputra Bridge in Assam (project cost Rs 5,500 crore), Kasarwadi-Rajgurunagar in Maharashtra (Rs 5,954 crore), Pune-Shirur road project in Maharashtra (Rs 6,170 crore) and Armoor-Mancherial road project in Telangana (Rs 3,175 crore), among others. In BOT projects, private investors take the financing, building and operating a highway project over a concession period of 20-30 years.



## Container Port Performance Index 2023 lists 4 APSEZ ports

Four ports from Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ) portfolio have figured in Container Port Performance Index 2023, the company said in a statement on Wednesday. Developed by the World Bank and S&P Global Market Intelligence, the global Container Port Performance Index is a benchmark that assesses the performance of ports on parameters such as productivity, efficiency, and reliability. "While Mundra port was ranked 27, Kattupalli came in at number 57, Hazira at 68 and Krishnapatnam at 71," the company statement said. Nine ports from India made it to the top 100 list, including four from the Adani portfolio. APSEZ Chief Executive Officer and Whole Time Director Ashwani Gupta said.



# Retail inflation gradually easing, food prices still a concern: RBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Retail inflation is gradually easing, but volatile and elevated food prices are interrupting the path of disinflation, the RBI Bulletin said on Wednesday.

An article on the "State of the Economy", published in the June 2024 Bulletin, said global growth was resilient in the first quarter of 2024, and many central banks have pivoted towards a less restrictive monetary policy stance in response to the fall in inflation in their economies.

In India, high-frequency indicators suggest the real GDP growth in Q1 FY2024-25 is broadly maintaining the pace it achieved in the preceding quarter.

Also, the prospects for agriculture are brightening with the early landfall of the southwest monsoon, said the article



authored by a team led by Reserve Bank deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

"Headline inflation is gradually easing, driven by sustained softening of its core component, although the path of disinflation is interrupted by volatile and elevated food prices," the authors said.

The RBI has been mandat-

**In India, high-frequency indicators suggest the real GDP growth in Q1 FY2024-25 is broadly maintaining the pace it achieved in the preceding quarter.**

ed by the government to ensure retail or headline inflation remains at 4 per cent with a

margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Earlier this month, the RBI's monetary policy committee (MPC) voted to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent and reiterated its stance of remaining focused on the withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation progressively aligns with the target while supporting growth.

The central bank has projected the inflation to ease from 5.4 per cent in 2023-24 to 4.5 per cent in 2024-25, with evenly balanced risks from the rising incidence of adverse climate events, pressures from input costs and volatility in crude prices, among others.

The RBI said the views expressed in the Bulletin article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the central bank.



## ESIC adds 16.47 lakh new workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) added 16.47 lakh new members in April as per payroll data released on Wednesday.

"Through the data, it is noticeable that more jobs have been generated for the youth of the nation as out of the total 16.47 lakh employees added during the month, 7.84 lakh employees amounting to around 47.60 per cent of the total registrations belong to the age group of up to 25 years," a labour ministry statement said.

## TO AID 'STRUGGLING' JUTE INDUSTRY

# Industry body calls for policy intervention



PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA), in a representation to the government, has called for policy intervention to help the "struggling" sector tide over challenges, including declining demand for jute bags and its detrimental impact on workers and

farmers, a senior official said.

The industry body has written to Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Pralhad Joshi in this regard.

"In the letter sent on Tuesday, the IJMA highlighted the critical role the jute industry plays in providing packaging materials for food

grains procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State Procuring Agencies (SPAs).

"Despite the industry's readiness to meet the 100 per cent requirements for jute bags during the kharif and rabi seasons, the demand has sharply declined from 38-39 lakh bales annually in 2021-22 to an expected 30 lakh bales in 2024-25," former IJMA chairman Sanjay Kajaria told PTI.

The drop in demand has led to surplus capacity, forcing mills to cut shifts and shut down operations, resulting in massive job losses, he said.

The ripple effect has also impacted jute farmers, who are struggling to sell their produce at the minimum support price, Kajaria said.



## IOC, GPS Renewables form JV for sustainable energy solutions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) on Wednesday said it has entered into a joint venture with bio-fuels company GPS Renewables Pvt Ltd to foster sustainable energy solutions in India.

"This association will pave the way for the formation of a 50:50 joint venture company dedicated to advancing biofuel adoption across the country," the firm said in a statement.

The agreement was signed by Mainak Chakraborty, CEO & co-founder of GPS Renewables and Santanu Gupta, ED (Alternative Energy) at IOC.

"The joint venture will focus on integrating advanced bio-gas technologies to convert organic waste into compressed biogas (CBG), a cleaner and renewable energy source. This

will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing a sustainable alternative to traditional fossil fuels," it said.

By leveraging their combined expertise, IOC and GPS Renewables aim to accelerate the deployment of Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) plants nationwide.

These initiatives complement IOC's long-term low-carbon development strategy and will help the firm achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2046.

CBG will help cut dependence on imported fossil fuels and support the rural economy by creating local employment opportunities.

While IOC is India's largest oil refining and fuel marketing company, GPS Renewables is a full-stack biofuels firm offering technology and project solutions for climate-positive

# Sensex extends gain for fifth day to scale fresh peak

## NIFTY RETREATS FROM RECORD HIGH

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity index Sensex on Wednesday ticked higher to scale yet another lifetime closing peak of 77,337, while the broader Nifty retreated from the record high level amid a lack of immediate triggers.

In a volatile trading session, the emergence of profit booking in consumer durables, capital goods and energy shares negated strong gains in banking and financial stocks.

Rallying for the fifth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 36.45 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 77,337.59. During the day, it soared 550.49 points or 0.71 per cent to hit the fresh lifetime peak of 77,851.63.



The NSE Nifty ended at 23,516, down 41.90 points or 0.18 per cent. Intra-day, it rose 106.1 points or 0.45 per cent to hit a new record of 23,664.

"Strong buying in banking stocks helped Sensex sail through in a highly volatile trading session, while Nifty ended weak as investors

booked profit in auto, metals, oil & gas, telecom and realty shares after the recent upsurge.

"Ahead of the Budget, markets may see stock & sector-specific activities on hopes the government may increase the outlay for sectors to push growth," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

## Hospitality industry faces huge talent crunch

### TO ADD 1 MILLION JOBS IN NEXT FEW YEARS: EXPERTS

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The hospitality industry is likely to add around 1 million jobs in the next few years as the sector is grappling with a huge talent shortage amid rapid expansion after the COVID-19 pandemic, say experts.

The current demand-supply gap of talent in the industry stands at around 55-60 per cent, indicating a substantial mismatch between the needs and the available talent pool, Randstad

India Director, Professional Talent Solutions, Sanjay Shetty told PTI.

Talent shortage was triggered by the post-pandemic boom in demand, Shetty said, adding that the momentum is expected to continue in the next few years with at least a million jobs being created.

According to industry leaders, the overall hiring has more than quadrupled post-Covid with entry-level positions emerging as the most sought-after in the past two years.

## Plan to double market share in country: Volvo CE India MD

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Volvo CE India, a subsidiary of the Swedish Volvo group, aims to double market share in the segments it operates in the country, a top company official said on Wednesday.

"We are present in 40 per cent of the earth moving and construction equipment (CE) segment in India. The company has a market share of 6.5 per cent and we plan to double this in the coming years," Managing Director Dimitrov Krishnan said here.

Krishnan was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the launch of its 20-tonne class hydraulic excavator.

He said the CE sector in India is growing fast with the development of infrastructure.

Quoting figures compiled by the Indian Construction Equipment Manufacturers' Association (ICEMA), Krishnan said in 2023-24, the size of the CE industry in India in volume terms was 1,36,000 units with a value of around Rs 85,000 crore.

"This, according to ICEMA, is going to double by 2030," he said.

Krishnan said India's CE market is the most competitive with the presence of several international and domestic players. To a question, he said Volvo CE India is currently exporting products to Africa, the Middle East.



## JAGRAN PRAKASHAN

# GST authorities withdraw demands of Rs 202.8 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has withdrawn a GST demand of Rs 2,02.83 crore from Jagran Prakashan, publisher of the Hindi daily Dainik Jagran said in a regulatory filing.

The company has received an "order for dropping the proceedings" on June 18, 2024, with regard to the alleged GST Demand of Rs 2,02,82,60,875 (including penalty of Rs 18,43,87,351 on June 18, 2024, the company said.

Show cause notice (SCN) was issued by the joint commissioner, state GST, Kanpur, to the company in this regard.

The remaining one SCN alleging GST demand of Rs 13.50 crore (including a penalty of Rs 1.22 crore) is under pursuance and the company,

based on legal advice, believes that it has a strong case on merit, the filing said.

Jagran Prakashan has interests spanning across printing and publication of newspapers and magazines, FM Radio, digital, outdoor advertising and promotional marketing, event management and activation businesses.

The group brings out eight publications from 13 states/Union Territories in five different languages.

Besides, the group's radio business has operations at 39 FM stations.



## Food Minister Pralhad Joshi makes surprise visit to FCI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food Minister Pralhad Joshi made a surprise visit to the headquarters of Food Corporation of India (FCI) on Wednesday, urging officials to prioritise food security and reduce subsidies, an official statement said.

Joshi, accompanied by Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra, held detailed discussions with senior FCI officials on improving the efficiency of the country's food distribution system.

During the visit, his first engagement with FCI since taking charge.

# Flexibility, salary key jobseeker parameters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian workers persist in expecting higher salaries to offset escalating living expenses and to feel valued for their contributions and flexibility remains a pressing concern for most employees, says a report.

According to recruitment firm Michael Page India's Talent Trends 2024 report, flexibility has become a major point of contention in most parts of India as employers grapple with implementing hybrid working models and policies that meet both business needs and employee preferences.

At a time when a whopping 94 per cent of respondents



(India) are open to exploring different roles in 2024, employers must look beyond competitive salaries and address broader aspects such as flexibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I), and positive workplace culture to effectively

attract and retain top talent, the report said.

"A successful recruitment strategy needs to go beyond merely offering competitive salaries. It should prioritise cultivating a robust company culture, providing flexibility,

and addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives to effectively attract and retain top talent," Ankit Agarwala, Managing Director of Michael Page India, said.

The report titled "The Expectation Gap" covered responses from approximately 50,000 skilled white-collar professionals across 37 countries, including over 3,000 individuals from India.

According to the report, India leads APAC in reporting workplace discrimination, with 47 per cent of employees reporting workplace discrimination, higher than the APAC average of 31 per cent. However, 45 per cent of the workforce still faces barriers in formally reporting

such incidents.

Globally, 28 per cent of organisations report similar retention challenges, indicating a heightened pressure on Indian companies.

To maintain high levels of job satisfaction among all age groups, organisations must understand and address the distinct priorities of each generation, from Baby Boomers to Gen Z, the report said.

Among various sectors, 26 per cent of Indian employers report recruitment challenges, while 25 per cent face difficulties in retention. Meanwhile, 31 per cent of organisations in the Indian healthcare sector experience recruitment challenges, and 30 per cent struggle.





# Hyderabad

## Championing athletes with disabilities

SHRADDHA NEWARE

The Aditya Mehta Foundation, with its headquarters in Hyderabad, is dedicated to promoting community welfare and enabling those with physical disabilities to realise their aspirations.

Irrespective of the several obstacles that came his way, the founder Aditya Mehta brought in the foundation in 2013, making his goal to assist others in realising their potential despite having little to no resources.

In an exclusive interaction with *The Pioneer*, the founder of the first para-sports academy and rehabilitation centre in Asia shares that they evaluate, coach and guide athletes. "Being an athlete with physical limitations, I am aware of how difficult it is since, in most situations, the parents of the athletes we strive to find are hesitant. We must counsel them first. Second, the youngster or athlete who is with us does not have a greater aim after receiving counselling," the founder stated.

For those destined for greater things, this is where the trainers and the team offer to counsel. The para-athletes begin to exercise starting at 5:30 in the morning to improve their abilities and achieve greater objectives.

The former para cyclist further shares, "As a team, we are capable of elevating an individual to Olympic caliber. And without any help from the government or Paralympic authorities, we made history by getting both para cyclists to the Olympics. We did this from the beginning." An ecstatic Aditya feels it to be a great



accomplishment to be acknowledged by the Paralympic committees after obtaining the necessary criteria independently. Thanks to the AMF team's tireless efforts and the exceptional para-athletes. This is a challenging task that requires significant financial assistance and does not come easily. The majority of prostheses and equipment are custom-made; therefore, it will take some time for the para-athletes to have access to them."

While the silver medallist in the Asian Cycling Championship was cycling from Kashmir to Kanyakumari for a fundrais-

ing event, he along with the help of his parents and a close friend saw the value of starting an organisation.

"We have one challenge from day one," shares the double silver medalist and he says, it's the difficulties with money. "Due to the large number of participants, we are still having financial difficulties. People are starting to come forward, but we still need a lot of CSR help. We receive this help ten to fifteen days before the closure of March, and it becomes difficult to spend before March 31st."

He emphasised that they will be able to give back to the community and secure a prominent position in the Paralympics if the funds are provided quarterly.

The organisation has conducted several talent hunt projects across the country in collaboration with organisations that have shown willingness and assistance. They started with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police in Panchkula eight years ago, and they recently held a National Para-Sports Talent Identification Hunt and Training Camp in association with Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti in Hyderabad.

With the support of veteran para-athlete coaches, the committed staff of AMF sustains world-class training standards despite their challenges. "Every coach we have employed has competed at the international level and is a former para-athlete working odd jobs. They are employed by us in our capacity." The businessman-turned-activist further continued that they are working for passion and not money.

"They teach various people based on their strengths and attempt to determine

which sports are more appropriate for each person's particular skill level. We list every one of the 28 parasports. Since each kid or person with a disability has a unique set of abilities, we identify them and begin training them in that specific sport. A whole team is working on it. Everyone has contributed their blood, sweat, time and everything else to make our foundation better. My crew and I travel for 300 days out of 365."

While the organisation works hard to be visible and raise awareness, they also have the support of actress Regina Cassandra, being one of the organisation's notable and significant trustees.

The organisation has a lot of goals for the future, and it took them nearly ten years to compete at the world level in the Paralympic Games. Speaking about their organisation's future plans, the passionate para-athlete stated, "I can't speak on it because it's our first Paralympics. However, we want to win 100 medals at the Youth Asian Games in 2025. Every day, the participants exercise with diligence and efficiency, optimising their time and honing their talents. As I often remark, we use athletics to help our physically challenged extended family members earn their dignity. Try leveraging the disadvantages of others."

The foundation has shown a strong desire to achieve in parasports via their dedication, and they continue to set records in the para athletic community. Their passion has contributed to the development and bolstering of Hyderabad's community.

In addition to providing training and support to para-athletes, the Aditya Mehta Foundation also seeks to increase public awareness of and funding for parasports. This week, *The Pioneer* converses with the founder as we go into great depth about their goals and projects.



## MALISHKA CHANNELLED HER 'ANXIETY' INTO HER MIC FOR *INSIDE OUT 2*

RIYA KOMMINENI

Mumbai Ki Rani," with her hit show *Morning No. 1* with Malishka, RJ Malishka Mendonsa, has been a well-known voice that brightens residents' mornings. Not only that, but she has provided the Hindi voice of characters in films like *The Incredibles* and *Thor: Ragnarok*.

The radio host attended multiple auditions early in her career because she always thought she had what it took to be in show business. "I was accepted at the first radio station I applied to," she declares. Her first radio station, Win 94.6 FM, shut down after two years because she was so devoted to it. She then joined Red FM, where she has been for a number of years.

Mendonsa believed she had a lot of promise, even though she faced tough competition. The host has been able to combine her personal interests with a variety of themes through her show.

The *Tumhari Sulu* fame always loved to sing and dance and saw herself as a performer when she was little. She was able to assume this job and integrate this element of entertainment with journalism through her radio show. She claims that the show is a collection of important topics. "It's love, it's emotion. It's all of it. Because we've been so well-known over the years for doing these things, our listeners and guests inevitably like having them on the show."

Her first animation performance was in *The Incredibles*, when she provided the voice of the seductive villain Mirage (known as Mona in the Hindi version). Having gone through that, she was asked to try out for the role of 'Anxiety' in the Hindi adaptation of *Inside Out 2*.

Riley, a recently promoted teenager, is reminded of *Inside Out 2* by Disney and Pixar. Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger and Disgust play the same parts as they did in the first movie. But as Riley enters high school and progresses through puberty, feelings of embarrassment, envy, anxiety and ennui surface and he battles with the first feelings. For Riley's welfare, they must put aside their differences and cooperate. She relied on her person-



*Inside Out 2* features RJ Malishka as 'Anxiety'. Malishka is a well-known voice, not only from her morning broadcast but also from a few Hindi-dubbed movies. She talks about her new series and provides some fascinating anecdotes about being the voice of 'Anxiety' in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*.

al experiences during her exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, saying, "At least once a day, you feel a little bit too anxious about something, whether that be your future or something unknown. I therefore directed that energy onto the microphone, simulating the sensation of being highly apprehensive and stuttering somewhat."

She says that they worked with the dubbing directors to make the necessary changes so that portions of the movie didn't get lost in translation from English to Hindi. But dubbing isn't just about literal translation. The voice of 'Anxiety' claims, "The directors and voiceover performers must also take into account Indian context and customs and incorporate two cultures in a way that the audience can understand." The interviewee goes on, "She believes that *Inside Out 2* is a motion movie that depicts the reality of growing up and navigating unfamiliar and novel emotions."

Malishka also says, "When you're first born, your parents are your safe haven. Everyone loves you and you're the focus of attention. But as you get older and attend school, you have to adjust and grow up a little bit. You have to gain social skills and develop a mild obsession with getting along with people—if I don't, something bad will happen. Riley's experience with trying out for the hockey team, moving to a new school and having to make new friends is covered in the film similarly to this. I think most people who suffer from anxiety would agree that it's not fun. But according to *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 7* fame, 'Anxiety' is a necessary feeling that aids in mental regulation, rather than being portrayed as a villain in the film. 'Joy' is a good emotion to convey the sense that everything is alright. Although anxiety might make you feel bad, it can also serve as a shield. We all eventually discover how to control our feelings and integrate them all under this roof so that we never feel out of balance."

The radio host has acted in a few live-action films in addition to dubbing. She is scheduled to star in Nikhil Advani's next series, *Freedom At Midnight*, as poet and independence warrior Sarojini Naidu. She exclaims that she is thrilled for its release and has enjoyed every step of the process, without giving away too many specifics.

"It's a different thing to shoot for a regular project," she says as our fascinating conversation draws to a close. "Due to the use of prosthetics, the *Freedom At Midnight* look test is very unique. Sarojini Naidu is one of my favourite liberation fighters and I've learned so much from her poems, so this is really wonderful."

## Tummy tuck vs. liposuction

In India there are two most popular abdominal contouring procedures - tummy tuck and liposuction. However, the question on everyone's mind is - which one is right for me? So here we bring to answer this question for you.

**Aren't those same?**

Both tummy tuck and liposuction are excellent procedures designed to address different concerns. Tummy tuck, also known as abdominoplasty, is ideal for individuals who struggle with excess skin and loose muscles in the abdominal area, usually due to pregnancy or significant weight loss. On the other hand, liposuction is perfect for removing stubborn pockets of fat that resist all efforts of diet and exercise.

Neither of these procedures is a substitute for a healthy lifestyle. However, they can help you achieve a toned and contoured abdomen if performed by a skilled and experienced surgeon.

**What is done in these body contouring surgeries?**

A tummy tuck involves removing excess skin, tightening abdominal muscles, and repositioning the belly button for a flatter and smoother appearance. It can also eliminate stretch marks below the belly button. On

the other hand, liposuction removes localized fat deposits through small incisions and specialised tools. It can be performed on multiple areas of the body, including the abdomen.

**So which one is right for you?**

The answer lies in your individual goals and concerns. If you have excess skin and stretched abdominal muscles, a tummy tuck can provide dramatic and long-lasting results. However, if you are close to your ideal weight and want to get rid of stubborn fat pockets, liposuction may be a better option.

In my practice, it's always advisable to combine tummy tuck with liposuction, also known as Lipoabdominoplasty.

It has advantages of both procedures and gives a contoured body especially in males or females suffering from belly fat along with saggy skin post weight loss, aging, genetic or post pregnancy.

Each individual is unique, and so are their concerns and goals.

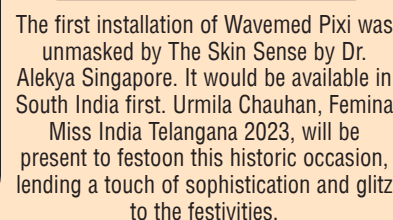
It is essential to understand that both tummy tuck and liposuction are surgical procedures that carry certain risks and require a recovery period. It is crucial to have realistic expectations and follow the post-operative instructions provided by your plastic surgeon for optimal results.



(The author, Dr. Anmol Chugh, is a Consultant, Plastics and Aesthetics Centre, at CK Birla Hospital.)



*what's brewing?*



**M**GM Healthcare announces yet another landmark achievement in medical history with the completion of a marathon of heart and lung transplant surgeries, where four heart transplants and one bilateral lung transplant were successfully performed within 30 hours. Dr. K R Balakrishnan, Director of the Institute of Heart and Lung Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support, MGM Healthcare and Dr. Suresh Rao KG, Co-Director of the Institute, led a dedicated team that rose to the challenge, seamlessly performing these transplants. This extraordinary accomplishment highlights our hospital's unparalleled capabilities in organ transplantation.

**SOLUTION**

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# For *Nindha* director, the film is a fusion of mystery & realism

K. RAMYA SREE

As the release of *Nindha* draws near, anticipation mounts among Telugu cinema enthusiasts eager to experience a narrative that promises to blur the lines between reality and mystery. Directed and produced by Rajesh Jagannatham under The Fervent Indie Productions banner, *Nindha* stars Varun Sandesh in a pivotal role and is slated to hit theatres on June 21. In an exclusive interview, Rajesh Jagannatham offered insights into the genesis of the project, its thematic elements, and the creative process behind bringing it to life.

"Many have speculated about *Nindha* since the unveiling of its intriguing poster captioned 'Kandrakota Mystery'," Rajesh Jagannatham begins, addressing the film's origins. "While

the title may evoke supernatural connotations, the essence of *Nindha* lies in its depiction of real events intertwined with fictional narrative elements. It's a deliberate choice aimed at engaging our audience right from the outset," he adds.

Casting Varun Sandesh, the director says, was a perfect fit for the role in the film. Explaining his choice of Varun Sandesh for the lead role, Rajesh Jagannatham shares, "Varun's portrayal in *Nindha* marks a significant comeback for him. I believed he possessed the ideal blend of charisma and depth required to breathe life into the character. His involvement added a layer of authenticity to the storytelling process."

Transitioning from discussing casting choices to production challenges, Rajesh Jagannatham reflects on his decision to take on the dual roles of director and producer: "Initially seeking external producers, I eventually took the reins

With the upcoming release *Nindha* nearing its release, director Rajesh Jagannatham offered insights into the genesis of the project and its thematic elements.

myself out of sheer belief in the narrative's potential. It was a learning curve, balancing creative vision with logistical realities, but one that ultimately strengthened my commitment to the project."

When asked about his expectations for audience reception, Rajesh Jagannatham exudes confidence asserting, "Drawing inspiration from impactful Malayalam cinema, *Nindha* aims to resonate with viewers on an emotional and intellectual level. I believe it will be a film that everyone can appreciate for its narrative depth and cinematic craftsmanship."

Looking ahead, Rajesh Jagannatham hints at future projects. "While *Nindha* remains my immediate focus, I have scripts ready for exploration. My passion lies in directing meaningful stories that resonate with audiences, and I look forward to continuing this journey," he revealed.



## SAKSHI VAIDYA INTRODUCED AS 'NITYA' IN SHARWANAND'S NEXT

Sharwanand, known for his charismatic presence on screen, is currently on a spree with a series of exciting projects lined up. Following the recent release of *Manamey*, the actor is now immersed in the shooting of his 37th film under the direction of Ram Abbaraju, the talent behind the sensational hit *Samajavaragamana*. Produced by Ramabrahmam Sunkara of AK Entertainments in association with Adventures International Pvt Ltd, this film promises to be an engaging family entertainer.

On Wednesday, on the occasion of her birthday, the makers announced the introduction of Sakshi Vaidya as Nitya in the film. Sakshi will portray the role of an architect and will be seen opposite Sharwanand, marking her debut alongside the charming star.

Excited about the project, Sakshi Vaidya joins the ensemble cast as film-ing progresses swiftly in Hyderabad. The production boasts music by Vishal Chandra Shekar, cinematography by Gnana Shekhar VS, and a compelling storyline crafted by Bhanu Bogavarapu, with Nandu Savirigana penning the dialogues. Art direction is helmed by Brahma Kadali, while Ajay Sunkara serves as the co-producer alongside Kishore Garikipati as the ex-producer.

## FIRST SINGLE FROM DULQUER SALMAAN'S *LUCKY BASKHAR* OUT NOW

Dulquer Salmaan, celebrated for his versatile roles in Telugu cinema with hits like *Mahanati* and *Sita Ramam*, is set to mesmerise audiences once again in the character-driven drama *Lucky Baskhar*. Directed by the acclaimed Venky Atluri and produced on a grand scale by Sithara Entertainments, the film has already garnered immense anticipation following its captivating teaser release. The latest treat for fans comes in the form of the film's first single, *Srimathi Garu*, composed by the national award-winning maestro GV Prakash Kumar. Released on Wednesday (June 19), the song introduces a musical journey that promises to tug at heartstrings.

*Srimathi Garu*, voiced beautifully by Vishal Mishra and Shwetha Mohan, opens with enchanting violin melodies that seamlessly blend into a serene flute arrangement, enriched further by rhythmic drum beats that elevate the composition to grandeur.

Lyricist Shreemani's poignant verses artfully portray the tender affection of a husband towards his irate wife, employing phrases like *Chamanti navvu* and *Paluke oo Vennapoosa* to evoke deep emotional resonance. GV Prakash Kumar's live orchestration, marked by the expert use of flute, strings and subtle percussions, adds layers of depth and charm to the song.

Following the success of *Mastaru Mastaru* from *SIR*, the collaboration of Shwetha Mohan, GV Prakash Kumar and director Venky Atluri promises another heart-touching melody that is sure to linger in listeners' hearts.

In *Lucky Baskhar*, Meenakshi Chaudhary stars opposite Dulquer Salmaan, portraying pivotal roles in a narrative set against the backdrop of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The film chronicles the journey of an ordinary bank cashier who achieves extraordinary success, captured with visual finesse by ace cinematographer Nimish Ravi.

Adding to the film's allure, production designer Banglan's creative expertise and national award-winning editor Navin Nooli's precision in editing ensure a cinematic experience of unparalleled quality. Produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi of Sithara Entertainments and Sai Soujanya of Fortune Four Cinemas, with Sri Kara Studios presenting, *Lucky Baskhar* is set for a global release in Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi, and Tamil languages. Stay tuned for more updates as the film gears up to enthrall audiences worldwide.



## Shraddha Kapoor confirms relationship with Rahul Mody

Shraddha Kapoor, known for maintaining a private stance on her personal life, has finally put an end to speculation surrounding her relationship status. Despite keeping mum about her romantic life in the past, Kapoor recently took to her social media to share a telling moment with Rahul Mody, confirming their relationship.

In a heartfelt Instagram Story, Kapoor posted a sun-kissed selfie featuring herself and Mody. She was adorned in a stylish white top complemented by delicate gold jewellery, while Mody sported a crisp white shirt. The couple leaned in close, posing affectionately for the camera. Alongside the picture, Kapoor playfully wrote, "*Dil rakh le, neend to vaapis de de yaar*." (Translation: Keep my heart but give me my sleep back), accompanied by several emojis, including a heart.

This declaration comes after months of speculation fueled by sightings of the duo together, including notable appearances at events like Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's pre-wedding celebrations in Jamnagar. Prior to this public acknowledgment, Kapoor had subtly hinted at her bond with Mody through social media, notably wearing a pendant engraved with the letter 'R' in one of her posts, sparking curiosity among eagle-eyed fans.



## Director Teja unveils *Police Vari Heccharika* title logo

Director Teja, a revered figure among youth audiences, inaugurated the title logo of the upcoming film *Police Vari Heccharika* on Tuesday. The film, helmed by Abhyudaya director Babji under the banner of Tulika Tanishk Creations and produced by Belli Janardhan, promises to deliver a powerful mass appeal.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, director Teja expressed his confidence in the film's title, emphasising its potential to draw audiences to theaters. "The title *Police Vari Heccharika* is unique and has the strength to attract viewers. It's a powerful mass title that I believe will contribute to the film's success," Teja remarked.

Producer Belli Janardhan expressed his delight at commencing the film's publicity under the guidance of Director Teja, considering it an auspicious start for their project. Director Babji added, "We have completed shooting in picturesque locations across both Telugu states and currently, the post-production work is underway."

With the momentum building around *Police Vari Heccharika*, anticipation grows for this upcoming film that promises to make a strong impact in Telugu cinema.



## Sundeep Kishan begins shooting for his next with Trinadha Rao Nakkina

Actor Sundeep Kishan embarks on a significant milestone with his 30th film, titled *#SK30*, under the direction of the acclaimed filmmaker Trinadha Rao Nakkina, known for his blockbuster entertainers. Jointly produced by AK Entertainments, Hasya Movies and Zee Studios, the film is set to be a wholesome family entertainer, promising a blend of love and emotions. The project, which was recently launched with much fanfare, has now commenced its regular shooting schedule from Wednesday in Hyderabad. With a focus on grandeur and heartfelt storytelling, *#SK30* aims to captivate audiences with its unique narrative and refreshing characterisations.

Director Trinadha Rao Nakkina is set to present Sundeep Kishan in a completely new light, showcasing the actor in a role that promises to be both distinctive and engaging. Renowned writer Prasanna Kumar Bezawada, known for his successful collaborations with Trinadha Rao Nakkina, has crafted the story, screenplay, and dialogues, ensuring a signature blend of entertainment and emotional depth.

The film's crew includes a talented lineup of young technicians, with Leon James composing the music, Nizar Shafi handling cinematography, Chota K Prasad editing and Brahma Kadali overseeing art direction, all contributing to elevating the cinematic experience.

Produced by Rajesh Danda with Balaji Gutta as the co-producer, *#SK30* is poised to be a noteworthy addition to Sundeep Kishan's filmography, promising audiences an unforgettable cinematic journey.



## Kamal Haasan shares heartwarming moment with Prabhas

The excitement surrounding the upcoming release of *Kalki 2898 AD* has reached high since the unveiling of its teaser, particularly among fans and industry insiders eager to witness Prabhas in a groundbreaking new role. The film, a visual spectacle set to feature legendary actors including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan and Deepika Padukone, promises to redefine cinematic boundaries.

In a recent revelation, veteran actor Kamal Haasan, known for his illustrious career spanning both southern and northern cinema, shared a touching anecdote about his experience working with Prabhas on the set of *Kalki 2898 AD*. Reflecting on his involvement in the project, Kamal Haasan humorously recalled, "About my participation, nobody believed I was a part of *Project K* (laughs)." He went on to recount a heartfelt moment with Prabhas, the film's protagonist, saying, "The funny thing is, yesterday, Prabhas just held my hand and said thank you. He said, 'I couldn't believe till today that you're a part of this.'"

The mutual respect and admiration between the two acclaimed actors highlight the camaraderie on set, underscoring Prabhas' humility and appreciation for his co-stars. Aside from *Kalki 2898 AD*, Kamal Haasan continues to forge ahead with an exciting lineup of projects, including the highly anticipated *Indian 2* alongside Rakul Preet Singh, cementing his status as a stalwart of Indian cinema.



# Kohli expected to shine on big stage as India ponder over Kuldeep question

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Virat Kohli will be expected to hit his straps after a lean run while left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav will anxiously wait for his chance when title-favourites India face a sprightly Afghanistan in their opening Super 8 fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday. The big talking point ahead of the game is the Indian team combination. Will India go in with the same line-up that worked for them in the group league stage or bring in their best spinner over the last 12 months, Kuldeep, at the expense of a specialist pacer now? At the start of the tournament, skipper Rohit Sharma had expressed his keenness to include all four all-rounders -- Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, and Ravindra Jadeja -- in the playing eleven. That strategy suited the Indian team in the bowler-friendly conditions in New York and the captain is expected to retain the winning combination that stretches their batting till number 8. The only way to fit Kuldeep into the

team is to either drop Mohammed Siraj or Arshdeep Singh for the wily spinner. If that does happen, Siraj is most likely to be benched. If the two practice sessions of the Indian team are an indication, the pitch could offer plenty to the spinners making Kuldeep's case stronger. With the gentle breeze blowing across the Kensington Oval, the pacers should get the ball to swing in the powerplay. As is often the case, all eyes will be on Kohli, who is yet to log a double digit score in the tournament. His strategy to go for his strokes did not yield the desired results in New York but he is expected to be at his imperious best on the better wickets in the Caribbean. The 35-year-old is always operating at 100 per cent and the intensity he showed during the training sessions was a testament to his exemplary work ethic. Shivam Dube, who was brought into the side to hammer sixes in the middle and death overs, has sent the ball out of the park only once in this competition. The pitches in USA did not allow him to go after the spinners. He would be expected to change that in



the Super 8s and beyond. India's premier T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav too was back among runs against USA, albeit not

in his usual swashbuckling style. But the effort was enough to boost his confidence. Besides Kohli, runs are pending

from the bat of Hardik Pandya, who has been exceptional with the ball. On the bowling front, Arshdeep Singh has grown in confidence with

each passing game, playing perfect wingman to Jasprit Bumrah in both the powerplay and death overs. With the surface likely to aid the slower bowlers, Axar and Jadeja would be backing themselves to make a decisive impact in the game. Afghanistan, on the other hand, head into the Super 8 fixtures after a humbling loss to the West Indies in St Lucia. Their bowling attack, which allowed them to boss their first three games, was put to sword by the hard-hitting West Indies batters. Captain Rashid Khan saw the defeat as a blip in an otherwise impressive campaign, insisting that his team remains a worthy contender for a semifinal berth. "As a bowler, you need to come up with plans to keep the scoring to under 10. The morale is still pretty high and this loss does not affect us. We have achieved our first goal of reaching the Super 8s and now it is about taking the next step," Rashid had said. He will be heavily banking on left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, who provided them with wickets in the powerplay and is currently the leading wicket-taker in the

tournament with 12 scalps. If he can the swing the ball back in like he has thus far, Rohit and Kohli will need to be on high alert. Rashid himself will be looking for wickets at a frugal economy rate in the middle overs. On the batting front, in-form openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran would be once again be crucial to the team's chances. **SQUADS:** **India:** Rohit Sharma (captain), Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Siraj. **Afghanistan:** Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wicketkeeper), Ibrahim Zadran, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Najibullah Zadran, Karim Janat, Rashid Khan (c), Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Hazratullah Zazai, Fareed Ahmad Malik, Mohammad Ishaq, Nangeyalia Kharote.



## Kettleborough, Illingworth to officiate blockbuster India, Australia Super 8 match

PTI ■ DUBAI

English duo of Richard Kettleborough and Richard Illingworth will officiate the blockbuster Group 1 Super Eight clash between India and Australia in the ongoing T20 World Cup in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia on June 24. India's opening Super Eight match against Afghanistan on Thursday will be officiated by the Australian pair of Rodney Tucker and Paul Reiffel, while David Boon will be the match referee. England's Michael Gough and South African Adrian Holdstock will officiate India's match against Bangladesh in Antigua on June 22. In other matches, Chris Gaffaney and Kettleborough, both members of the Emirates Elite Panel of ICC Umpires, will be the on-field umpires for USA's historic first-ever knockout match at the T20 World Cup, against South Africa on Wednesday. The co-hosts qualified in second place from Group A, in part thanks to a magnificent Super Over victory against Pakistan and will now take on the Proteas as well as England and fellow co-hosts West Indies in Group 2 of the Super

8s. Joel Wilson will be the TV Umpire for USA versus South Africa match, while he will also stand as on-field umpire alongside Gaffaney when the American team takes on England in Barbados on June 23. Allahudien Paleker, who is making his senior men's tournament debut in this competition, will be the fourth umpire. Illingworth and Michael Gough will oversee Australia's Super 8s opener against Bangladesh, while Nitin Menon and Ahsan Raza are the on-field umpires for England's meeting with the West Indies. Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, making history in this competition as the first Bangladeshi official at the T20 World Cup, is the TV Umpire for the England versus West Indies match, and will be the on-field umpire alongside Chris Brown for England's second Group 2 game against South Africa. Jeff Crowe, who has overseen more T20Is than anyone else, will be in the match referee for England's clashes against the West Indies and South Africa as well as Australia against India.

## Hosts West Indies primed for Super 8 clash against defending champions England

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

An in-form West Indies will be keen to carry the winning momentum but won't underestimate familiar foes England in their opening Super Eight clash of the T20 World Cup which promises to be a run fest here. Both England and West Indies are each competing for an unprecedented third T20 World Cup title. While the hosts are undefeated in the tournament so far, England had a rather anxious group stage and needed arch-rivals Australia's help to keep alive their title defence. Having played catch up after a loss against Australia in the league stage, Jos Buttler and his men now have the opportunity to start afresh. On the other hand, West

Indies, who head to the fixture on the back of an eight-match winning streak, put up a sensational display against Afghanistan, notching a huge 104-run win at the Darren Sammy National Cricket Stadium. They once again head to the stadium that holds the name of their head coach and two-time T20 World Cup-winning captain in search of a similar result. "It's not necessarily to send them (England) a message (the huge win against Afghanistan). It's just to show them that as much as they are playing good cricket, we're playing good cricket - so come Wednesday night it should be a very good game," skipper Rowman Powell said at the pre-match press conference. West Indies are performing as



a cohesive unit. Their batters have taken responsibility and stood up every time the team needed someone -- be it Shane Rutherford or Nicholas Pooran. Their bowlers too have done their job. The flat pitches and relatively short square boundaries here

are a paradise for batters with all matches played here so far being a high-scoring affairs. But the batters will have to be carefully negotiate the cross winds that sends some balls flying unexpectedly for six and others swirling. Pooran targeted them ruthlessly

against Afghanistan. West Indies will bank on their left-arm spin duo of Akeal Hosein and Gudakesh Moti against England's predominantly right-handed batting lineup. While the pitch favours batters, the extra bounce still offers incentive for the quicks and left-arm medium pacer Obed McCoy's role will also become important. England pacers Jofra Archer and Mark Wood would also be keen to make most of the conditions. The two teams have clashed rather regularly in the past and are well aware of each other's strength and weaknesses. "When we play the English guys so often, we play them actually every year, so they know a lot about us, we know a lot about them," Powell said.

"It's just that when you're playing the game on the day, whoever gets on top has to stay on top for as long as possible." **TEAMS (FROM)** **West Indies Squad:** Rowman Powell (c), Brandon King, Johnson Charles, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sherfane Rutherford, Andre Russell, Romario Shepherd, Roston Chase, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, Obed McCoy, Shamar Joseph, Shimron Hetmyer and Shai Hope. **England:** Jos Buttler (c), Moen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Tom Hartley, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley and Mark Wood.

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Mitchell Marsh is not just a captain but a true leader, Marcus Stoinis said eulogising his teammate but added that the current Australia group is easy to lead with everyone aware of their roles in specific situations. Marsh has been tasked with leading Australia to their second T20 World Cup title. "Mitchie is not a captain but a leader. The way he gets the groups together inspires it," fellow all-rounder Stoinis said on the "Unplayable" podcast. "He's been a leader for a longtime in this group. He has captained in the past at a younger age as well." It is not just Stoinis that has lavished praise on the all-rounder, the rest of the team also speaks highly of the 'Bison'. Marsh has had a love hate relationship with the fans, who booed him when his performance dropped leading the all-rounder to claim "most of Australia hates me". But Marsh witnessed a resurgence last year and has now become a fan favourite. He made his way back into the Test team and starred in Australia's stunning World Cup win in India. He also performed well in

## Marsh not just a captain but a leader: Stoinis



T20s. He was awarded with the prestigious Allan Border medal earlier this year. But Marsh was perhaps destined for big things given his father, Geoff Marsh was a former Australian ODI captain and World Cup winning coach. Growing up, he was surrounded by the likes of legendary captains Allan Border, Mark Taylor and Steve Waugh and that seems to have rubbed off on him. The 32-year-old had captained the Australian Under-19 team to the World Cup trophy, back in 2010. He also led Perth Scorchers in 31 matches in the Big

Bash League and was captain of the 2017-18 Marsh Cup-winning Western Australian team before graduating to become Australian T20 captain. Under his captaincy, Australia have entered the Super Eight stage at the ongoing T20 World Cup on the back of an unbeaten run in the group stage. Stoinis feels Marsh has it easy with the group in the West Indies with everyone knowing their roles and functioning like clockwork but the all-rounder is more then capable of being "creative" when required. "Not taking anything away (from Marsh), I think this group particularly is quite an easy group to lead. We have four best quicks, best spinner in the world and all-rounders. It's pretty much like clock work, most of us know when to bowl, where to field," Stoinis said. Australia have played all their group games in the Caribbean where the pitches can play slow and low, and may turn more as the World Cup wears on.



## Mandhana, Harmanpreet hundreds carry India to imposing 325/3 against SA

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Smriti Mandhana's stylish seventh one-day hundred, her second in as many matches, and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's belligerent century lifted India to a formidable 325 for three against South Africa in the second women's ODI here on Wednesday. Mandhana 136 (120b, 18x4, 2x6) and Harmanpreet 103 not out (88b, 9x4, 3x6), her sixth ODI ton, milked 171 runs for the third wicket, and ran roughshod over the Proteas bowlers after being asked to bat first. South African skipper Laura Wolvaardt's decision to have a bowl seemed vindicated as new-ball bowlers, Ayabonga Khaka and Masabata Klaas, found appreciable bounce and movement under overcast skies. In fact, Khaka started with two maidens in a row as Mandhana, whom she later dropped on 69 off left-arm spinner Nondumiso Shangase, and Shafali Verma struggled for a move-on. India's first boundary came only in the sixth over, a pull by Shafali off Klaas, but the opener departed soon after being ousted by left-arm spinner Noku Mlaba. A period of consolidation followed as Mandhana and Dayalan Hemalatha added 62 runs for the second wicket in which the latter was the more

dominant presence. Hemalatha (24), who clubbed Shangase for two sixes, looked good for more but her attempt to slog-sweep Klaas ended in the hands of Anneke Bosch. However, the arrival of skipper Harmanpreet changed the complexion of the innings as run-rate of India, which was hovering around 4 till then, first soared past five and then six runs an over. Mandhana hammered Shangase for three fours in a row, a period which included a total of five fours across six balls, took her to the 90s. Harmanpreet, who was grassed on 41 by Klaas off her own bowling, straightaway slipped into rhythm and pulled Sune Luus to start her scoring. The right-hander's aggressive intentions only grew with the innings as she punished Klaas for a four and six in successive balls. The SA bowlers tried to curtail the free-flowing Smriti, bowling wide off her off-stump. While the strategy was worth giving a go, they erred in line so much as the India vice-captain garnered a clutch of boundaries without much effort. She reached her hundred off 103 balls with a single off Luus, and later Harmanpreet joined her deputy with a boundary off Klaas in the final over. India plundered 118 runs in the last 10 overs, feeding on some shoddy bowling and fielding by the visitors.

# Williamson steps down as NZ's white ball captain, declines national contract

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson decided to forego his national contract for the 2024-25 season and also stepped down from white-ball captaincy to extend his international career, following the Black Caps' shock early exit from the T20 World Cup. "Helping push the team forward across the formats is something I'm very passionate about and something I want to keep contributing towards," the 33-year-old said in a New Zealand Cricket (NZC) release on Wednesday. "However, pursuing an overseas opportunity during the New Zealand summer means I'm unable to accept a central contract offer." The Black Caps have very little international cricket scheduled during the January window and Williamson, who had stepped down from Test captaincy in December 2022, will be available to play all three formats outside that month. "Playing for New Zealand is

something I treasure, and my desire to give back to the team remains undiminished," he said. "My life outside cricket has changed, however. Spending more time with my family and enjoying experiences with them at home or abroad is something that's even more important to me." The Black Caps are scheduled to compete in eight Tests, including a tour of India and then a three-match home series against England in November-December, before Christmas. There are a number of T20 leagues such as UAE's ILT20, South Africa's SA20, Australia's BBL and Bangladesh's BPL which are set to clash in January. New Zealand's Super Smash could also be scheduled during the same time period. The leagues will be followed by the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February-March. Players accepting the NZC central contracts must be available for both international and the domestic Super Smash



competition. NZC CEO Scott Weenink said Williamson has earned the right to take some time off to pursue other goals, including family-oriented priorities.

"This is a good way to help keep Kane in the international game so that he continues to play a major role for the BLACKCAPS - both now and in the years to come," said

Weenink. "We have very little international cricket in New Zealand through January and outside that period he's still the