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Guv Nazeer greets Muslims on Bakrid

On this auspicious occasion, let the spirit of charity and goodwill towards all be cherished."

2

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"There's a certain sophistication that is required to sit with a mixed emotion and to allow yourself to feel positive and negative at the same time."

Monday Mirchi

REVANTH ONE UP ON NAIDU IN HANDLING 'PARTISAN' BABUS

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

BUREAUCRATS CUT UP WITH RECENT TRANSFERS

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

REJIG IN CMO TOO?

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

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

WALKING THE RAZOR'S EDGE

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

A HEALTHY CHOICE

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

-- Yours truly

Palla Srinivasa Rao appointed State president of TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivasa Rao has been appointed Telugu Desam Party AP State president.

Chief Minister and TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu here on Sunday issued an order appointing him the State TDP president. It may be mentioned here that the present TDP State president K Atchannaaidu was inducted into Cabinet.

Palla Srinivasa Rao was elected to the Assembly with the highest majority of 93,235 votes over former Minister Gudiwada Amarnat from Gajuwaka. Palla Srinivasa Rao belonged to the BC (Yadav) community.

Palla Srinivasa Rao worked as Visakhapatnam district president and proved his capabilities. Naidu expressed hope that Palla Srinivasa Rao would work as TDP state president efficiently like K Atchannaaidu.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for IT, Electronics, and Education, Nara Lokesh, on Sunday, assured the residents of Mangalagiri that he would always stand by them. Lokesh participated in the Praja Darbar for the second consecutive day to gain first-hand knowledge of the issues faced by his home constituency, Mangalagiri. A large crowd gathered for the event, eager to share their concerns with the minister. Representatives from the Andhra Pradesh Velugu Teachers Association requested Lokesh to regularize the

Satya Kumar: AP will be made cancer-free State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Satya Kumar Yadav assumed charge as Minister for Medical, Health & Family Welfare at the AP Secretariat in Velagapudi on Sunday. On this occasion, the minister announced ambitious plans to transform the state into Aarogya-Andhra Pradesh and take decisive measures to make the state cancer-free. He emphasized that steps will be taken to enhance medical services in government hospitals, modelled after AIIMS, by providing necessary staff and improving infrastructure.

The minister highlighted the grave impact of cancer, noting that on average, 48,000 people die each year from the disease. His first official act as minister was to sign an initiative aimed at screening 5.30 crore people for oral, breast, and cervical cancers. This initiative will also focus on raising awareness and providing



necessary medical services for prevention. Additionally, steps are being taken to train ANMs, ASHA workers, and others through the Homi Bhabha Cancer Institute.

Minister Yadav revealed that nearly Rs 600 crore was spent in the last financial year under the AarogyaSri scheme to combat cancer across the state. He also signed a second initiative to screen all students under 18 years of age under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Programme, aiming to prevent illnesses among the youth.

Addressing another critical issue, the minister acknowledged the growing problem of drug addiction among the state's youth. He pledged strict action against those responsible for drug distribution and announced plans to establish de-addiction centres to help rehabilitate addicted individuals.

Minister Yadav criticized the previous government for mismanaging funds from the National Health Mission and other centrally sponsored schemes. He accused the former administration of negli-

gence, citing the improper implementation of the AarogyaSri scheme and the hasty establishment of a medical college without adhering to National Medical Council guidelines, developing affiliated hospitals, or providing the necessary infrastructure. He assured that the current state and central governments are committed to working sincerely and accountably to meet the people's aspirations.

State Health, Family Welfare, and Medical Education Special Chief Secretary MT Krishnababu, Commissioner S Venkateshwar, Director of Health Dr. Padmavathi, Director of Medical Education Dr. Narasimha Rao, AP MSIDC Managing Director Muralidhara Reddy, AarogyaSri Trust CEO Lakshmiisha, Health University VC Babji, Registrar Radhika Reddy, and many other officials and staff congratulated the minister on his new role.

‘INDIA bloc will try to ensure support for TDP if it contests for LS Speaker post’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday said all partners of the opposition INDIA bloc will try to ensure support for the ruling ally Telugu Desam Party (TDP) if it fields a candidate for the Lok Sabha speaker's election.

Talking to reporters here, Raut claimed the Lok Sabha speaker's election will be crucial and if the BJP gets the post, it will break the government-supporting parties like the TDP, JD(U) and the political outfits of Chirag Paswan and Jayant Chaudhary. "We have the experience that BJP betrays the people who support it," Raut claimed.

"I hear the TDP wants to field its candidate. If that happens, INDIA bloc partners will discuss the issue and will try to ensure that all the INDIA alliance partners extend support to the TDP," he said.

The opposition should get the deputy speaker's post as per rule, the Rajya Sabha member said.

He claimed the NDA gov-



"I hear the TDP wants to field its candidate. If that happens, INDIA bloc partners will discuss the issue and will try to ensure that all the INDIA alliance partners extend support to the TDP."

ernment is not a stable regime.

Asked about recent statements made by some Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders on the BJP after the Lok Sabha polls, Raut said it is good if the RSS wants to correct 'mistakes' of the past. "We are keeping a watch over the unfolding developments," he said.

During a meeting of the National Democratic Alliance in the Central Hall of Parliament on June 7, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was elected as leader of the NDA Parliamentary Party, the BJP

Parliamentary Party and the leader of the BJP in the Lok Sabha. Raut claimed Modi was elected leader in the NDA parliamentary meeting and not in the BJP parliamentary party meet.

"The BJP parliamentary party meeting did not take place. If the issue of leadership had come in the BJP parliamentary meeting, the result may have been different. So, Modi was elected leader in the NDA parliamentary meeting. This is a serious matter," he claimed.

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Minister for MSME, SERP, NRI Empowerment & Relations Kondapalli Srinivas outlined plans to enhance industrial growth and employment opportunities across the state. Speaking to the media people here on Sunday, during his inaugural visit to the district after assuming office, Minister Srinivas highlighted key initiatives aimed at fostering skill development among youth.

Minister Srinivas outlined a pioneering initiative to develop a comprehensive skill index for the state, designed to meticulously map the diverse talents and capabilities of the youth across different regions. "The skill index will revolutionize how industries and entrepreneurs identify and harness local talent, fostering a symbiotic relationship between skill availability and industrial growth," affirmed Minister Srinivas.

Addressing concerns over stagnant industrial growth, Minister Srinivas underscored the government's unwavering



commitment to facilitating a conducive environment for industries. "We will strategically advise industrialists on optimal districts for their ventures, catalyzing economic revitalization in regions like Vizianagaram," he stated emphatically. In a bid to empower aspiring entrepreneurs, Minister Srinivas announced the establishment of a dedicated platform. This platform will serve as a one-stop resource, providing crucial information, incentives, and governmental support essential

for the establishment and growth of small-scale industries. "Our goal is to simplify access to central government incentives and facilitate streamlined loan processes through banking channels," highlighted Minister Srinivas.

Recognizing the pivotal role of infrastructure in economic development, Minister Srinivas emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to bridge existing gaps. "Infrastructure enhancements, including robust road networks and irrigation facilities in rural areas,

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Suktla Paksha

Tithi: Ekadashi: Jun 17 04:43 AM to Jun 18 06:25 AM

Nakshatram: Chitra: Jun 16 11:12 AM to Jun 17 01:50 PM Swati: Jun 17 01:50 PM to Jun 18 03:56 PM

Rahukalam: 7:23 AM to 9:01 AM

Yamagandam: 10:39 AM to 12:17 PM

Varjyam: 07:55 PM to 09:40 PM

Gulika: 1:54 PM to 3:32 PM

Amritakalam: 06:44 AM to 08:31 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:51 AM to 12:43 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 38°

Humidity: 57%

Sunrise: 5:35 AM

Sunset: 6:42 PM

Updated: June 16, 2024 5:00 PM

AP realty looks up as...

Continued from Page 1

Since the 2024 election results, real estate prices have increased by approximately 30%. Current land prices near the High Court and SRM University have soared from Rs 60,000 to Rs 70,000 per square yard and are expected to reach Rs 1 lakh soon, according to real estate businessman K Srinivas Rao. Agricultural land prices, previously at Rs 2 crore per acre, are predicted to rise to Rs 5 crore.

Similarly, the construction along the Vijayawada-Guntur highway has been revived. Flats that were previously sold for Rs 40 to 45 lakh are now on the market for over Rs 60 lakh. High-rise buildings and luxury apartments, stagnant for five years, have resumed construction, with 2 BHK and 3 BHK units now priced at Rs 1.5

crore.

In contrast, real estate in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam has seen a decline over the past ten days. Prime areas in Vizag, such as MYP Colony and Seethammadhara, have experienced a drop in land prices from Rs 1.6-1.7 lakh per square yard to Rs 1.1 lakh per square yard.

Investors are now turning their attention to Amaravati, encouraged by the state's alliance with the BJP at the centre, which is seen as a catalyst for growth across Andhra Pradesh.

CREDAI's former secretary Sudhakar noted that with CM Naidu's vision of Amaravati as one of India's top five cities, focused on green and blue energy, both domestic and foreign investors are eager to invest in the region.

Heavy rain...

Continued from Page 1

Despite the challenges, farmers expressed relief and optimism. The recent lack of rain had delayed Kharif cultivation, with no water storage in major reservoirs and no water released to canals. This year's Kharif paddy cultivation had already been postponed by a month.

However, the sudden two-hour downpour has renewed hope among farmers, who anticipate starting agricultural activities within the next two to three days.

Tenant farmer Maadu Sivaramaiah shared that the rain would enable them to prepare seed beds and begin ploughing the land. Although they had been ready to start cultivation, the lack of rainfall had stalled all agricultural work. Now, with the recent rains, farmers are preparing to ready their seedbeds for planting paddy.

EVMs in India are ‘black box’, nobody allowed to scrutinise them: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The former Congress president also tagged the post on X by Elon Musk in which he talked about eliminating EVMs. "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk had said in his post. "The opposition parties have been raising concerns over EVMs for some time now and had demanded a 100 per cent count of the VVPAT slips which was not allowed.



EVM 'UNLOCKING' Cops, poll officials deny report

MUMBAI: A poll official on Sunday said an EVM was a stand-alone system with "robust administrative safeguards" to protect it from any kind of manipulation and that there was no need of an OTP to unlock it. Vandana Suryavanshi, returning officer of Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency, was reacting to a report in newspapers about a kin of Ravindra Waikar, the Shiv Sena candidate who emerged victorious there by a wafer thin margin of 48 votes, using a mobile phone connected to an EVM during vote counting on June 4. Suryavanshi said

notices had been issued to Mid-day and Marathi daily Lokmat for allegedly publishing false news, adding they have been asked to respond within 24 hours as to why criminal proceedings under section 499 and 505 should not be initiated. As per Vanrai police, Mangesh Pandikar, brother-in-law of Waikar, was booked under Indian Penal Code section 188 (disobeying official order) on Wednesday for allegedly using a mobile phone at a counting centre in Goregaon on June 4, when results of the general elections were announced.

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ROUNDTABLE AT VIJAYAWADA

‘SCS for AP not a closed chapter’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The newly formed NDA government should strive to achieve Special Category Status (SCS) for the State, said several speakers who participated in the roundtable meeting organised by the Andhra Pradesh Pratyeka Hoda and Vibhajana Hameela Sadhana Samiti. They pointed out that this was the right time for the Central government to implement all the promises that were given during the period of State bifurcation.

The Andhra Pradesh Pratheka Hoda and Vibhajana Hameela Sadhana Samiti, led by its president Chalasani Srinivasa Rao, conducted the roundtable meeting at the Balotsav Bhavan in Vijayawada on Sunday. CPI, CPM, Congress, Jai Bharat National Party and other political party leaders attended the roundtable meeting and expressed their opinions regarding the Special Category Status and bifurcation promises.

CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna said that the BJP-led NDA government has



Caption: Leaders of various political parties speaking at a roundtable organised by the Andhra Pradesh Pratyeka Hoda and Vibhajana Hammela Sadhana Samiti in Vijayawada on Sunday

been doing injustice to the State for the past 10 years. “The entire episode is being observed by the Telugu people and they never forgot it. BJP’s Lok Sabha candidates were defeated by YSRCP candidates in the recently held general elections. However, TDP MPs are strong in the Lok Sabha while the YSRCP MPs are strong in the Rajya Sabha. Ultimately, both the ruling and Opposition MPs would be playing a key role in the Parliament,” he added.

Further, Ramakrishna demanded that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu convene an all-party meeting and advised him to take a delegation to New Delhi. “Though YSRCP had 36 MPs, former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy failed to submit a representation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi while the Union government announced its decision to privatise the Visakha Steel Plant. Jagan feared for his cases and to protect himself, he never gave any

representation to the Central government,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Left leader opined that it is time to achieve the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone, Ramayapatnam Port, and Kadapa Steel Plant. Keeping the future of the State, all MPs irrespective of politics, should mount pressure on the Central government to get all promises done, he said. Also, he said the MPs should speak in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for the Special Category Status and bifurcation assurances.

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao said that the SCS is not a closed chapter, but the problem is still alive. His party would meet the Central Ministers and MPs to discuss the matter. MPs should strive for the SCS, keeping the interests of the State in mind and for that the Opposition would give support, he assured.

The roundtable was presided over by Chalasani Srinivasa Rao, who said that the NDA government should send the earlier Assembly resolutions regarding the Special Category Status to the Central

government once again. “There is no end to the SCS concessions; even in the Eastern States these benefits have been implemented,” he added. He expressed doubt that the Union government is trying to limit the funds for the Polavaram Project Earth Cum Rockfill Dam.

Andhra Pradesh Congress Party (APCC) working president Sunkara Padmasree said that Chandrababu Naidu and former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should move forward to get the Special Category Status for the State, as this agitation has been continuing since 2014. However, Naidu continued vindictive acts, there was no difference between YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Chandrababu Naidu, she commented.

Jai Bharath Party national president V V Lakshmi Narayana, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) Andhra Pradesh State general secretary P Durga Bhavani, CITU vice-president V Uma Maheswara Rao, AITUC State president R Rabindranath, and others were present.

Cong demands CBI inquiry into alleged NEET scam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) vice-president Kolanukonda Sivaji has demanded that the Central government institute an inquiry by the CBI on the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) irregularities.

Talking to the media here on Sunday, the Congress leader lamented that the Modi led Central government is playing with the future of students. Such irregularities in NEET would be detrimental to the future of lakhs of students, he feared.

Finding fault with the Prime Minister for not taking steps to conduct an inquiry on the NEET irregularities, the Congress leader slammed that the Prime Minister had gone abroad to take part in G7 meetings while the future of



lakhs of students fell in trouble and agitations were being carried out across the nation.

Giving grace marks is not the solution to the problem, he opined. “Colluding with the coaching centres, question papers of NEET were sold. Many irregularities including appearing in the examination by someone else, instead of the student, took place in the NEET examinations. The future of over 24 lakh students, who appeared in the NEET

examination, has become uncertain,” the APCC Vice-president regretted, adding that the Modi-led government can not escape by holding the NTA responsible for the irregularities.

Kolanukonda Shivaji demanded that the National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General should be sacked immediately. The Congress leader demanded a CBI inquiry on the NEET scam under the supervision of the Supreme Court. He also demanded that compensation should be paid to the students, who have lost one academic year due to the irregularities.

The APCC Vice-president leader vehemently condemned the statement of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan stating that irregularities did not take place in the NEET examinations.

Pineapple farmers prosper in Seethampeta

Efforts of Farmer Producer Organisations and Seethampeta ITDA bear fruit

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Tribal farmers in the Seethampeta region of Parvathipuram-Manyam district are celebrating a successful pineapple harvest this year, thanks to the combined efforts of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and the Seethampeta Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA). These agencies have played a crucial role in facilitating the sale of pineapples at favourable prices in approximately 20 Rythu Bazaars across North Coastal Andhra Pradesh. This initiative has significantly improved the income of tribal farmers, who were previously forced to sell their produce at a loss in weekly shandies.

ITDA Seethampeta officials, recognizing the abundant harvest, provided essential assistance and resources to FPOs to help market the pineapple crop. This support included selecting 20 Rythu Bazaars in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, and Parvathipuram-Manyam districts, and provid-

ing necessary documentation to enable farmers to transport and sell their produce directly. Previously, farmers were forced to sell their pineapples for as little as Rs 2 to Rs 15 per fruit, leading to substantial financial hardship. With the new support system in place, they are now able to sell each pineapple at Rs 15 to Rs 40, resulting in a significant increase in their income.

Kurma naidu, a farmer from Seethampeta, expressed satisfaction with the new arrangement, saying, “We got very good yields in the pineapple crop this year. But we did not get a reasonable price at the weekly shandies. To get a better price we have been exporting them to Rythu bazaars in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, and Parvathipuram-Manyam district. The ITDA officials have been providing the necessary documents to set up a stall at the Rythu Bazaars. We have been selling each fruit at a good price.”



49% of candidates take Civils Prelims in NTR dist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Civil Services (Preliminary) examination organised by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) was held peacefully in Vijayawada on Sunday. As an average 49 per cent of candidates attended paper 1 and paper 2. NTR district collector Dr S Dilli Rao inspected several examination centres in Vijayawada.

Speaking on the occasion, collector Rao said that, out of a total of 11,112 candidates, around 5,469 appeared for

paper 1, which was 49.22 per cent of attendance. However, around 5,431 candidates attended for paper 2, which was 48.88%, he said.

Further, he stated that there were no untoward incidents reported in the district. With the cooperation of police, revenue, education, health, electricity, VMC, RTC and other departments, the Civils Preliminary exams were conducted smoothly and peacefully, he explained. He thanked all departmental officials for cooperating with the district administration.

Blood cancer most treatable: HBCHRC annual congress

Event sensitises participants about fundamental and recent advancements in treating blood cancer

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Blood cancer, particularly prevalent among children, stands out as one of the most treatable forms of cancer when addressed with timely and appropriate interventions. This optimistic message resonated strongly during the second annual congress of the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre (HBCHRC), which concluded here on Sunday.

Organised by various departments of HBCHRC Visakhapatnam, a unit of Tata Memorial Centre (Mumbai) under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India, the two-day conference under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India, the two-day conference on pathology and palliative care were conducted at the hospital on Friday. According to a statement issued by the hospital, the workshops laid a strong foundation for the discussions to follow.

The programme was formally inaugurated by prominent figures in the field, Dr. Sudeep Gupta (Director TMC), Dr. Sujatta Natti, Dr. Shyam Srinivasan (TMC), Dr. Vikramjit Kanwar (TMC), Dr. Tanuja Shet (TMC), and Dr. Lingaraj (TMC). Dr. Umesh Mahantshetty, Director, HBCHRC, Visakhapatnam, was present. The conference promised to chart new paths in the battle against blood cancers, illuminating the way with the latest scientific discoveries and medical innovations.

During the conference, the annual report of HBCHRC Vizag was released, and the Platelet Donor Registry was



published. Dr. Umesh Mahantshetty said a Platelet Donor Registry is essential for patients of cancers and will help build a reliable network of donors ensuring a steady supply of this crucial essential item. He also underscored the urgent need to create awareness and high-end setup for early diagnosis, comprehensive evaluation including molecular testing, cytogenetics, flow cytometry and a multidisciplinary multimodality specialist for these highly curable cancers. This has been set up at Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and also has planned for augmentation to create a 200-bed facility for hematology and paediatric cancer care which will benefit patients of Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring States.

Experts emphasised the significance of tailored treatment approaches based on individual patient characteristics. Discussions revolved around the integration of genomic profiling.



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Suspension of SP Bindu Madhav revoked

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The suspension of IPS officer Garika pati Bindu Madhav was repealed on Sunday. The government issued orders revoking his suspension.



the SP of Palnadu district, holding him responsible for the violence incidents, which took place after the polling in Macherla and other places. Bindu Madhav gave his explanation of the reasons for violent incidents. Satisfying his explanation, the officials revoked his suspension.

Port city grapples with vegetable price rise

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam’s vegetable markets have witnessed a substantial price hike in recent weeks. Government-operated Rythu Bazaars report a rise of Rs 30 to Rs 80 per kilogram for most vegetables, with private vendors charging nearly double these rates. Experts attribute this increase to a confluence of seasonal factors. Hot summer conditions and lower crop yields are cited as primary drivers. Tomatoes, a dietary staple, currently cost Rs 50 per kilogram in Rythu Bazaars. Similar price hikes are observed for onions (Rs 37/kg), potatoes (Rs 28/kg), and cabbages (Rs 24/kg).

Beans appear to be the most affected vegetable, with prices ranging from Rs 84 to a significant Rs 110 per kilogram. Green chillies, ridge gourd, bitter gourd, and snake gourd have also experienced price surges, currently selling at Rs 34/kg, Rs 46/kg each, and Rs 50/kg respectively. The price



Beans appear to be the most affected vegetable, with prices ranging from Rs 84 to a significant Rs 110 per kg. Green chillies, ridge gourd, bitter gourd, and snake gourd have also experienced price surges, currently selling at Rs 34/kg, Rs 46/kg each, and Rs 50/kg respectively. The price hike is expected to persist for at least the next two weeks

hike is expected to persist for at least the next two weeks. The Marketing Department cites lower production in key tomato-growing regions like

Madanapalli, Anantapur, and Chittoor. Additionally, a cyclical production pattern in Maharashtra, a major onion producer, leads to price fluctu-

ations during the summer months.

However, some vegetables are experiencing a more stable market. Brinjal prices remain stable due to adequate local supply from areas surrounding Visakhapatnam. Similarly, carrots sourced from West Bengal and Secunderabad are available in sufficient quantities. “The current price surge is a consequence of high temperatures and reduced crop cultivation, leading to a temporary shortage of vegetables,” stated G. Prasad Rao, Estate Officer of MVP Rythu Bazaar, the city’s largest farmers’ market. He expressed confidence that prices will stabilize within the coming weeks.

The rising cost of vegetables, including green leafy vegetables like coriander (currently priced at Rs 180/kg, up from Rs 80 last week), is impacting consumer spending habits. Authorities are likely to monitor the situation and explore potential solutions to mitigate the price impact on residents.

Govt urged to clear Rabi paddy dues of Rs1,657.44 crore

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Koulu Rythula Sangham (APKRS) State general secretary P Jamalaihah has asked the newly formed NDA government to take steps to pay the pending dues of the Rabi paddy procurement.

The State government should release the Rs.1,657.44 crore dues and the same amount should be credited into the farmers’ bank accounts. The previous YSRCP government failed to credit the paddy bills within 21 days after completing the procurement.

While speaking to reporters in Vijayawada on Sunday, Jamalaihah said that farmers have been waiting for the Rabi paddy bills for the past three months. Of them, 90 per cent are tenant farmers. Farmers have spent more than Rs.56,000 per acre including



tenants to cultivate the paddy, he said.

However, after procuring the paddy, the State government still did not release bills. Farmers in the State have lost severely both in the Kharif and Rabi due to the cyclone, he added. “The State government was due about Rs.250 crore for the Eluru district farmers. Also, Rs.937.57 crore for the West Godavari, Rs.202 for the

East Godavari, and Rs.271.22 crore for the Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district,” he said.

On the other hand, he commented that the government has failed to provide the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for agriculture products. Moreover, the farmers were unable to obtain debts from the private lenders as the government did not release bills at an appropriate time, he said.

Further, he alleged that the State government did not clear the pending rabi bills though the Kharif season started 16 days ago. Farmers are facing a lot of hurdles in getting financial assistance to start agricultural activities in the current Kharif season, he said.

In the recently ended Rabi season, the State government procured 12.63 lakh metric tons of paddy grains worth Rs.2,767.90 crore from 1.32 lakh farmers.

Dy CM Pawan to assume office on June 19



PNS ■ GUNTUR

Jana Sena chief and Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj

K Pawan Kalyan will take charge as Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Environment Minister on June 19. In a release here on Sunday, the Jana Sena office said that the portfolios, which were allocated to Pawan Kalyan, are relevant to the ideologies of JSP. Pawan Kalyan will assume office on June 19, it added.

Kalva promises modernisation of Tungabhadra high level canal

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Newly-elected TDP MLA and former minister Kalva Srinivasulu has promised to take steps to modernise the Tungabhadra High-Level Canal and provide irrigation water to one lakh acres.

After being elected to the Legislative Assembly, Kalva Sriivasulu came to the Rayadurgam constituency for the first time. He was accorded a warm welcome by the TDP, JSP and BJP cadres. A huge rally was taken out which lasted over three hours in the town and the activists fired firecrackers along the rally,



which began at the R&B guest house went via Bellary road and concluded at the NTR statue.

Srinivasulu garlanded the statue of TDP founder and former Chief Minister N T Rama Rao on the occasion. Addressing the cadres, Kalva Srinivasulu said that he was elected to the Assembly with a majority of 41,650 votes as the cadres worked hard and he thanked them.

He assured of launching the works to bring Krishna water to the Bairavani Thippa project. He said that the Untakallu balancing reservoir works would begin soon. "I will take steps to start the modernization works of HLC and provide irrigation water to one lakh acres," he promised.



ARTISTIC SKATING V'wada girl bags gold medal at world meet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Matrapu Jessy Raj, a student of NSM Public School in Vijayawada and a resident of Mangalagiri, excelled in World Skate Oceania Artistic Skating Championship and Pacific Cup Artistic Open Invitation Competition held at the TSB Stadium in New Plymouth, New Zealand. The 13-year-old girl won a gold medal securing 31.98 points in the World Skate Oceania Artistic Skating Championship.

She competed with children from Australia, Brazil, China, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand and other countries.

10 goats perish in lightning strikes

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Lightning struck a herd of goats in which 10 of them were killed at Indurkupet village in Devipatnam manal on Sunday.

Official sources said that lightning struck a herd of goats in which 10 of them were killed instantaneously. However, the shepherd escaped unhurt in the incident. Heavy rain accompanied by thunders and gales lashed the mandal on the night of Sunday.

Meanwhile, heavy rain brought respite to the citizens of Vijayawada on the night of Sunday. Heavy rain accompanied by the lightning lashed for about 30 minutes. Dark clouds descended and spread all over the sky blowing breezes which provided a great respite to the citizens from scorching sun heat and humidity conditions. Many thoroughfares inundated in knee deep water.

Meanwhile, heavy rain is forecasted to North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on June 18. A



weather report here on Sunday said that the trough from Rayalaseema to the central Bay of Bengal across Westcentral Bay of Bengal between 3.1 km & 5.8 km above mean sea level has become less marked.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds with speeds of 30-40 Kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next

five days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely to occur in many places or at a few places or one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. Rainfall occurred at a few places over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Dry weather prevailed over Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours.

SP asks people to be wary of cybercrime

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal has asked the people of Prakasam district to beware of the latest cybercrime in the name of part-time jobs. In a release here on Sunday, SP Vakul Jindal suggested that the people of the district should be vigilant against fraud in the name of online part-time jobs.

The district SP explained to the people of the district about the new type of cybercrime that has come to light in recent times.

Most of the people are thinking about how to earn money easily. Unemployed, students, and people are searching



online for part-time jobs because the salaries are not enough for them while women at home want to do part-time jobs when they are free.

The SP said that they are searching for jobs online and

their details are being uploaded on various websites. The cybercriminals are stealing those details and committing frauds. Cybercriminals send messages to WhatsApp numbers regarding part-time jobs and they also send a link.

When they click the link, they are made to join the Telegram group. In the group, they are given different types of easy tasks, for example, to take a screenshot of any item or like it. "If the screenshot is shared, it will be considered that the task is complete, after playing the task, a small amount of money will be deposited in the account as if they have won, and they will

think that the money has come without any investment," the SP explained.

Later, they promise that if money is invested in a small amount, they will get a large amount of money. Even if the money is invested, the fraudsters will not pay the money. The SP said that finally, the victims understand that they are cheated but by the time, the damage would be done.

The SP asked people not to share personal details with anyone to get information about the company which offers part-time jobs. The SP asked the victims to complain to 1930 or www.cybercrime.gov.in.

Two-day workshop on neuro rehabilitation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

Durga temple nets record Rs.54.09 lakh in one day

IN THE PAST THREE DAYS, THE TEMPLE EARNED AN INCOME OF RS.1.27 CRORE

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As devotees thronged the Durga temple atop Indrakeeladri during the past three days, the temple earned a record income of Rs.54.09 lakh in one day, i.e., June 16 (Sunday). Around 2,800 Antharalaya tickets were sold by 3 pm, which was another record, said Durga Temple Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao. In the past three days, the temple earned an income of Rs.1.27 crore.

According to KS Rama Rao, the temple earned Rs.54.09 lakh income by 6.30 pm, of which, Rs.33.40 lakh came from the darshan ticket sales. Of this, Rs.16.18 lakh came from Rs.500 tick-



Minister Satya Kumar Yadav and his family visited the Durga temple atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Sunday

ets (3,236), Rs.8.26 lakh from the Rs.300 tickets (2,755), Rs.9.01 lakh income from Rs.100 tickets (9,013), Rs.68,749 from Laddu

Prasadam, Rs.29,853 from the Pulihora and Rs.2.07 lakh through donations, he said. On Saturday (June 15), the temple earned an income of

Rs.33.39 lakh, of which Rs.16.82 lakh came from the darshan ticket sales, EO Rao said. Similarly, Rs.39.74 lakh income came on June 14 (Friday). Apart from the darshan tickets, Laddu Prasadam, and Pulihora sales also increased, he said. The other income was through donations received by around Rs.10 lakh, he explained.

Minister Satya Kumar and Supreme Court Judge Justice Mishra visited the Durga temple.

On Sunday, a large number of devotees including VIPs had darshan at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam. They included Minister for Health, Medical and Family Welfare Satya



One killed as bus rams stationary lorry

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

One person was killed and nine others were injured when a private travel bus rammed a stationary lorry at Kantepudi village in Sattenapalli mandal on Sunday. Police said that the Morning Star private travel bus rammed a lorry which was parked on the roadside in the early hours.

The private travel bus was going to Hyderabad from Bapatla with 30 passengers. The deceased was identified as Manikantha (24).

The injured were admitted to the GGH in Narasaraopet. The police registered a case and cleared the traffic on the highway after removing the ill-fated vehicles from the road.

Minister reviews arrangements for CM's Polavaram visit

PNS ■ ELURU

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will be visiting the Polavaram project, being constructed across the river Godavari at Polavaram village in Eluru district, on Sunday.

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Rama Naidu reviewed the arrangements for the Chief Minister's Polavaram project visit with the police and revenue officials here on Sunday.

The Minister directed the Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni, SP D Mary Prashanthi, ITDA project officer M Surya Teja and irrigation officials to complete all arrangements expeditiously for the Chief Minister's Polavaram project visit. He directed them to make fool-proof arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit to the Polavaram project.

"The Chief Minister will inspect the entire project. The engineers concerned should explain the progress of the project to the Chief Minister at the



project. Later the Chief Minister will review the progress of the project with the engineers and officials," the Minister stated.

Taking a dig at the YSRCP regime and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Minister Rama Naidu alleged that the project works had come to a standstill after the YSRCP came to power. The YSRCP's 'J' gang plundered 40% of Polavaram's funds, he slammed.

The TDP regime is giving priority to the Polavaram project and it is committed to complete the project at the ear-

liest, he made it clear.

Meanwhile, Superintendent of Police D Mary Prashanthi, accompanied by Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni inspected the security arrangements being made for the Chief Minister's visit at the Polavaram project. She reviewed the security arrangements with Polavaram DSP Suresh Kumar Reddy, SB Inspector Malleswara Rao and CI Madhubabu.

According to the officials, the Chief Minister will arrive at the Polavaram project by helicopter at around 10 am on Monday.

VSP launches innovative sales strategy amid privatisation concerns

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Amid the Central government's move to privatise Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd, the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), the plant's management is exploring new avenues to boost income and mitigate losses. The government's move to privatize is largely driven by the plant's financial setbacks. In response, workers and management are striving to steer the plant towards profitability.

In a bid to increase sales, the management of VSP has introduced a new, innovative sales approach. Traditionally, the plant has sold its steel products in bulk to various companies. However, the new strategy aims to bring these products closer to individual consumers. As part of the Digital India initiative, RINL has developed an online portal, enabling customers to book steel products from the comfort of their homes. This move has already shown promising results, with significant growth reported in the sales of hot metal, crude steel, and salable steel—over 17 per cent growth in sales.



Previously, Visakha Steel Plant's products were distributed to companies, steel trading companies, and hardware stores. Now, through the newly launched online portal, RINL aims to ensure that these high-quality steel products are easily accessible to every household. By visiting the website vizangsteel.com, customers can access the RINL link, register, and specify their product needs along with delivery details.

This system, designed to ensure timely door-to-door delivery within Visakhapatnam, is expected to further boost steel sales. Officials believe that while maintaining bulk sales to companies, direct consumer sales

will expand the market reach and enhance revenue. This initiative is seen as a potential way to reduce losses and counter the push for privatization. Employees and officials of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant are hopeful that this new strategy will contribute significantly to the plant's financial health, potentially making privatization unnecessary.

They are optimistic that increased public access to steel products will drive up income and sustain the plant's operations. This innovative shift in sales strategy signifies a crucial step towards reviving the financial stability of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

Additional Commissioner transferred

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

The official order was released on Sunday by GHMC in charge Commissioner Amrapali Kata. The order stated that Sahadeorao was relieved from GHMC with immediate effect and he is directed to report before the General Administration Department (GAD), Government of Telangana. Hemant Sahadeorao was transferred because he reportedly did not take permission from higher authorities to demolish the structures at Jagan's residence. The GHMC of Khairatabad zone demolished the structures near Jagan residence, which were allegedly constructed for security personnel.

TGSRTC condemns BRS allegations over AFCS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

On Sunday TGSRTC released a press note, where it mentioned that a tender notice was issued on January 11, 2024 with the intention of implementing AFCS as soon as possible. Digital ticketing software and online reservation have been combined in that tender. It had issued the tender

to specify the prices separately for purchase of items, software development and maintenance. Three companies participated in this tender.

The committee of TGSRTC examined the documents of the respective companies as well as the presentations on technical management capability. Since none of the companies have the capacity to satisfactorily provide all the services mentioned in the tender, the tender was cancelled by the company on February 29, 2024 without opening the commercial bid. TGSRTC management has appointed a high-level committee to implement

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

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

The press note said that the team proposed to hand over the responsibilities to providing these services to the Chalo Mobility company,

KCR must prove his innocence, says Thammineni

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPM State Secretary Thammineni Veerabhadram said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao should prove his innocence by explaining the issues raised by the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy Commission investigating the Power Purchase Agreements and the construction of the Yadadri and Bhadradi power plants.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Thammineni said that it is opportunistic for KCR to say that the government is investigating in a conspiratorial manner, as he had earlier said that an investigation should be carried out if necessary.

He also said that conducting a press meeting before the completion of the inquiry



by the Chairman of the Commission is not fair. However, Thammineni asked KCR to explain all the issues raised by the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy Commission.

He said that it is not fair on the part of KCR to mount a counterattack on the inquiry commission chairman for speaking to the media. It is also not fair on the part of KCR to say that the government had set up the inquiry commission on the power

purchase agreements due to political vengeance.

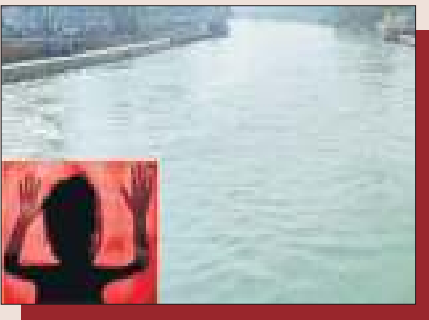
Surprisingly, KCR is demanding that the inquiry commission chairman should quit voluntarily and that the inquiry is not transparent and so he will not appear before the commission, Thammineni said, and added that KCR had endorsed the power purchase agreement with the Chhattisgarh government and the construction of the Yadadri and Bhadradi power plants during his rule.

Due to the possibility of buying electricity at a lower price from the open market, there was criticism for entering into an agreement with Chhattisgarh. People have doubts about this and the BRS leadership should clear them, he said.

INDIA CORNER

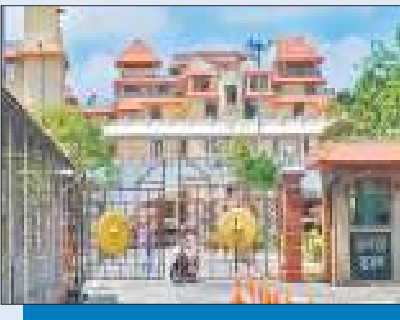
Man throws two-year-old daughter into canal

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



Assam secretariat becomes India's first eco-friendly

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



Odisha CM holds meet to review Puri Rath Yatra preparedness

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is in its decisive phase and recent incidents show that terrorism has been forced to shrink from highly organised acts of violence to a mere proxy war, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday. During a high-level meeting at the North Block here to review the security situation in the Union Territory in the wake of recent terrorist attacks there, he also directed security agencies to implement area domination and zero-terror plans in the Jammu division like they did in Kashmir to achieve success.

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



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

and ensure quick response in a coordinated manner. He also stressed on seamless coordination among security agencies, identifying vulnerable areas and addressing security concerns in these areas.

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

and Kashmir. The efforts of the government of India have yielded great positive results in the Kashmir Valley with significant reduction in terror-related incidents, he said. Shah noted that the improvement in the law and order situation is reflected in the record flow of tourists in the Kashmir Valley. The home minister appreciated the security agencies and the Jammu and Kashmir administration for the successful conduct of the Lok Sabha elections, which witnessed record voter turnout in the Union Territory. He directed the agencies to replicate in the Jammu division the successes achieved in the Kashmir Valley through the area domination plan and the zero-terror plan, the officials said. The fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is in its decisive phase and the recent incidents show that terrorism has been forced to shrink from highly organised acts of violence to a mere proxy war, the minister said.



BJP had ignored indigenous people Jharkhand: CM

Seraikela (Jharkhand), Jun 16 (PTI) Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren on Sunday alleged that the BJP had ignored indigenous people even though the party was in power in the state for a long time after it was created around two-and-half decades ago. People voted the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance to power in the state in 2019 but the saffron party did not allow the government to function and tried to destabilise it, Soren said, while addressing a programme in Seraikela-Kharsawan district. On the occasion, he inaugurated 22 development projects worth Rs 71 crore and laid the foundation.

‘No need to teach about riots, demolition in schools’

No attempts to saffronise textbooks: NCERT chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rejecting accusations of saffronisation of the school curriculum, NCERT's director has said that references to Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition were modified in school textbooks because teaching about riots "can create violent and depressed citizens." In an interaction here on Saturday, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said the textbook tweaks are part of the annual revision and should not be a subject of hue and cry. Asked about references to Gujarat riots or Babri Masjid demolition being tweaked in NCERT textbooks, Saklani said, "Why should we teach about riots in school textbooks? We want to create positive citizens not violent and depressed individuals." "Should we teach our students in a manner that they become offensive, create hatred in society or become



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

victim of hatred? Is that education's purpose? Should we teach about riots to such young children ... when they grow up, they can learn about it but why school textbooks? Let them understand what happened and why it happened when they grow up. The hue and cry about the changes is irrelevant," he said. The comments by Saklani come at a time when new textbooks have hit the market with several deletions and changes. The revised Class 12 political science textbook does not mention the Babri

masjid but refers to it as a "three-domed structure". It has pruned the Ayodhya section from four to two pages and deleted details from the earlier version. "We want to create positive citizens and that's what is the purpose of our textbooks. We cannot have everything in them. The purpose of our education is not to create violent citizens ... depressed citizens. Hatred and violence are not subjects of teaching, they should not be the focus of our textbooks," added Saklani.



Serious questions on integrity of NTA: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday said there are "serious questions" on the integrity of the National Testing Agency and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered. The opposition party hoped that when the new Standing Committees of Parliament gets constituted, it would take up an in-depth review of the NEET, NTA and NCERT. "I was a member of Parliament's Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare between 2014 and 2019 and recall broad support for NEET. But there were MPs, especially from Tamil Nadu, who had raised concerns that NEET would privilege CBSE

students and would disadvantage youth coming from non-CBSE schools," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X. "I do think now that this CBSE issue needs proper analysis. Is NEET discriminatory? Are students from poorer backgrounds being denied opportunities? Other states like Maharashtra also have expressed grave doubts on NEET," he said. There are also serious questions on the integrity of the National Testing Agency itself and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered, he said. The NCERT itself has lost all professionalism in the last decade, Ramesh claimed.

Sibal demands probe by SC-appointed officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the raging row over medical entrance exam NEET, former HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Sunday demanded a probe by Supreme Court-appointed officials into allegations of irregularities and called on the government to have a thorough consultation with all states as to how this examination is to be held in future. In an interview, the Rajya Sabha MP also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue, saying if the testing system in any examination becomes corrupt then it is "not really neat for the PM to remain silent". Sibal urged all political parties to raise the matter strongly in the upcoming session of Parliament but was not optimistic about it being taken up for discussion, predicting that the government will not allow it citing that the matter is sub-judice. "The present National Testing Agency (NTA) has really bungled and corruption has been brought to light on media platforms, such as providing solutions for question papers for something like



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

becoming a doctor," Sibal, who was the Human Resource Development (now the portfolio is Education) minister from May 29, 2009 to October 29, 2012, said. "Some of these incidents in Gujarat have perplexed me and are a matter of great national concern. I think NTA should answer some of these very serious questions," he said. Sibal said what is even more surprising and disappointing is that whenever something like this happens and there is corruption under the aegis of the present government, the "andh bhaktis" start blaming the UPA for it and that is most unfortunate because they don't seem to be fully educated before making

statements of this nature. He pointed out that the NEET regulation was introduced in 2010 by the Medical Council of India (MCI) through its board of directors. The MCI was under the ministry of health and not under the ministry of education. Sibal alleged there is rampant corruption in the manner in which examinations are being held not just in one state but throughout the country. "If 67 students have maxed and some of them belong to same centre I think the minister should be worried about it instead of saying there is nothing wrong. In this government, there would not be any minister who will admit that something wrong has been done."

‘India to become sixth country to have deep sea mission’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Earth Sciences Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said India is set to become the sixth country to have its own deep-sea mission. Chairing a meeting to discuss the ministry's 100-day action plan, Singh expressed pride and happiness on the progress of the deep-sea mission and India being among the very few nations to achieve this feat. He asked institutes to focus on achieving a resilient blue economy to empower people dependent on the ocean and its energy for livelihood.



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

He lauded the National Institute of Ocean Technology's (NIOT) efforts for the development of Matsyaayan 6000, which can dive 6,000 metres deep into the ocean. Taking stock of the progress, he directed officials to complete the first stage of the vessel's harbour trial by September and finish the subsequent ones by 2026. Singh appreciated the ministry for working in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop a "titanium hull" for the vessel that can bear extreme pressure.

Extortion rackets thriving in Bengal, says Union Minister

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar on Sunday alleged that extortion rackets were thriving in West Bengal, drawing parallels to the notorious activities of Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Rajan gangs in Mumbai during the 1990s. He claimed that instances of shootouts and dacoities in jewellery shops over the last couple of months prove that the "law and order situation in the state is not good."



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

‘Sweeping generalisation’: BJP counters Elon Musk over EVM remark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday accused billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk of making a "huge sweeping generalisation" by calling for eliminating EVMs, saying his views may apply to the US but not to India. In a recent post on X, Musk had said, "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high." Countering the Tesla CEO's criticism of EVMs, BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "This is a huge sweeping generalization statement that implies no one can build secure digital hardware.

Wrong. Elon Musk's view may apply to the US and other places - where they use regular compute platforms to build Internet connected Voting machines." "But Indian EVMs are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media - No connectivity, no bluetooth, wifi, Internet. ie there is no way in. Factory programmed controllers that cannot be reprogrammed," the former minister of state for information technology said on X. Chandrasekhar also said EVMs can be architected and built right as India has done. "We would be happy to run a tutorial Elon," he added. BJP's IT department head

Amit Malviya said Musk or whoever else thinks they can hack the EVM should approach the Election Commission of India and take a shot at it. He also took a swipe at Rahul Gandhi after the Congress leader raised Musk's comments to flag "concerns" about electoral process. Malviya said, "But why is Rahul Gandhi complaining about Indian democracy to Musk? What can Musk do? Or is crying before the world and demeaning India part of Congress's DNA? We just had an election and people of India rejected this dynast for a third time in row. But he still does not get it."

Rafale jets participate in Red Flag exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force's Rafale fighter jets carried out complex missions along with F-16 and F-15 combat aircraft at a multinational mega military exercise in Alaska in the US. The key takeaways from participating in the Red Flag exercise for the IAF included insight on interoperability with international partners and a collaborative understanding of missions in a multinational environment, the defence ministry said on Sunday. The IAF contingent participated in the exercise from June 4 to 14. Besides the Indian Air Force (IAF), the exercise witnessed the participation of the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), the UK's Royal



Air Force (RAF), the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf), the German Luftwaffe, and the US Air Force (USAF). "The transatlantic ferry of Rafale fighter aircraft was enabled by the IL-78 air-to-air refuellers while the transporta-

tion of personnel and equipment was undertaken by C-17 Globemaster aircraft," the ministry said. Red Flag is an air exercise conducted with multiple scenarios designed to provide realistic combat settings. This was the first time the

IAF Rafale aircraft participated in this exercise. The Rafale jets operated alongside F-16 and F-15 aircraft of the RSAF and the USAF respectively. The missions included Beyond Visual Range (BVR) combat exercises as a part of large force engagements (LFE) in offensive counter air-and-air defence roles, the defence ministry said in a statement. It said the IAF crew members were actively involved in mission planning and also assumed the role of mission leaders for designated missions during the exercise. "In spite of the challenging weather and almost sub-zero temperatures, the IAF maintenance crew worked diligently to ensure serviceability of all the aircraft throughout the duration of the exercise and all

assigned missions could be undertaken with more than 100 sorties being flown during the exercise," the ministry said. "Key takeaways from the exercise included insight on interoperability with international partners and a collaborative understanding of employment philosophy in a multinational environment," it said. "Experience of ferrying long distances, while undertaking air-to-air refuelling enroute, was both an enriching and thrilling takeaway, especially for the younger crew," it said. The ministry said undertaking its return journey, the contingent split enroute along with their mutual support elements to participate in exercises with air force elements of Greece and Egypt.

Heatwave crisis

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

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



Individuals with cardiovascular diseases are at increased risk of heart attacks and strokes as the body struggles to cool itself, leading to higher heart rates and blood pressure. Respiratory issues are worsening too, with higher levels of air pollutants combining with the heat to create a hazardous environment for those with asthma and other lung conditions.

It is time the Indian Govt declared a health emergency and implemented measures aimed at protecting public health and alleviating the impact of the heatwave. The government must actively disseminate information through various media channels, advising people to stay indoors during peak heat hours and drink plenty

ty of water. The office timings must be changed. Some states like Rajasthan are doing good jo. External coolers have been installed on public buses to mitigate the soaring temperatures. In response to the extreme heat, the Jaipur administration has initiated the use of artificial rain. Large water tankers have been stationed along the roads to spray water on pedestrians, adopting this method to combat the sweltering conditions. The rest of the country could take a cue from Rajasthan. Indeed, healthcare systems are under significant pressure, with hospitals and clinics witnessing a sharp increase in heat-related medical emergencies. To cope with the surge, additional medical staff must be deployed, and temporary medical facilities must be set up in some areas to handle the overflow of patients. What we are witnessing can be attributed to climate change. Urban areas must have more green spaces which help lower temperatures. Climate experts warn that such events are likely to become more frequent and severe in the coming years due to climate change, necessitating comprehensive plans to protect public health. By investing in sustainable infrastructure, enhancing healthcare system capacities, and promoting public awareness, India can build resilience against future heatwaves and safeguard the health of its population in an increasingly warming world.



Reimagining success in long-term relationships

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

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



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

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

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

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



DEEBA SALIM IRFAN

Biblical rhetoric stirs controversy

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

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



Netanyahu cared two-hoots and persisted with his onslaught, as he gambled that it allowed him time and space to do even more fear mongering, 'othering', and manufactured-outrage that could somehow justify his continuation.

Already, Israel (especially under Netanyahu) has regularly cocked a snook at the United Nations by becoming the most 'sanctioned' nation in the world. It also cares little about international condemnation. But perhaps it has overplayed its trademark belligerence for now, as the reactions from countries that were once clearly pro-Israel (e.g., the USA) or cautiously guarded (e.g. Western European nations) are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their stand, as the global outcry over Israeli excess becomes louder. While typically it wouldn't have mattered to Israel under Netanyahu – but perhaps now it does, given that it could backfire on the public mood in Israel which in any case is tiring of the bloodshed and even more wary of Netanyahu's ability to lead the nation, hereinafter.

Three Western countries i.e., Spain, Ireland and Norway have announced that they will now recognise a Palestinian State (with borders that existed prior to the 1967 war, with Jerusalem as the joint capital). It is a wholly symbolic move

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

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

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



BHOPINDER SINGH

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEMOCRATIC MATURITY

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

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

Saanvi Jain | Jamshedpur

COMBATING HEALTH MISINFORMATION

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

'Ghar Wapsi' remains a distant dream



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

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

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

Aarush Kapoor | Vijayawada

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

Vihaan Sharma | Udaipur

GOD EMPOWERS GOODNESS

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

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

Meera Rao | Raipur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

IMPORTANCE OF BREAKS IN WORK LIFE

Enhancing productivity through strategic break management



SAKSHI SETHI

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



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

The healing symphony of yoga and music



RAJDEEP PATHAK

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

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



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

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

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

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

Mushroom farming empowers women in rural Bihar

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

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



PRIYANKA SAHU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS

IIFL Finance Q4 profit falls 6% to Rs 431 cr

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



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

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



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

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



'SBI to monetise subsidiaries after scaling up their businesses'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



SH KHARA

IRMAN, SBI

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

During the year ended on

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

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

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

it of Rs 184 crore in the previous financial year.

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



stints would set the base to accelerate the process.

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

The wholesale inflation rose

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The competition in the Indian RAC market has "inten-

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

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

Factors like increasingly hot

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

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

Global trends, foreign investors' move to drive markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the absence of any major immediate domestic trigger in sight, investors would focus on global trends and trading activity of foreign investors for further cues in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and rupee-dollar trend would also guide the market.

"This week is a truncated



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

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

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

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

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

"Domestic markets would

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

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

CBIC cautions public against frauds in the name of Indian Customs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

paign that includes newspaper

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

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

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

Mutual funds industry adds 81 lakh new investor accounts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Going ahead, the outlook for mutual fund folios remains

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

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

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



SHAKIRA IS NOT KEEN ON DATING

In June 2022, Colombian singer Shakira announced her divorce from former Spanish football player Gerard Pique. Before deciding to end their relationship, the two were together for more than 11 years; this was allegedly because of the latter's adultery. Since then, there have been rumours that Shakira has dated a number of high-profile celebrities, such as Lewis Hamilton, Lucien Laviscount, and Tom Cruise.

The 47-year-old however, recently did admit that she isn't keen on dating. "I'm not considering that right now. What room do I currently have for a man?" Shakira remarked in an interview. She currently wants to put parenthood and freedom first. Even after suffering through the ugliest breakup, though, that doesn't imply she despises men.

"What can I tell you? I like men. That's the problem. I shouldn't like them with everything that's happened to me, but imagine how much I like men that I still like them," she jokingly said during the interaction. However, a formal relationship is out of the question for Shakira at the moment. "But having a formal relationship, I think my kids would have to be very prepared for that, and their emotional and psychological well-being is the priority," added the singer.

Shakira and Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton were linked earlier in 2023 when she was seen boating with him following their purported meeting at the Miami Grand Prix. The two were also seen cuddling in Barcelona a few days later. The Colombian singer, however, gained notoriety when she was spotted at the Miami Grand Prix with Tom Cruise. Shakira fuelled dating speculations later in the year when she was seen out to dinner in London with Jimmy Butler.



Guards escorted Noah Schnapp from a nightclub!

Stranger Things 5 actor Noah Schnapp has been the target of criticism on social media and has been in the news unnecessarily. He has been in the spotlight once more for his reported crude actions at a nightclub in New York City. The incident happened early on Saturday morning.

Noah's danger started after a video of him handing out stickers that said things like "Hamas is ISIS" and "Zionism is sexy" went widespread on social media during the Israel-Palestine conflict last year. Noah had to clarify himself on social media earlier this year. He expressed his concern that his ideas and opinions were misinterpreted and did not reflect his actual values. He added that all innocent parties impacted by the fighting should have peace, safety, and security.

However, it was insufficient to stop the public's animosity for the *Stranger Things* 5 star. He gets a lot of internet abuse and trolling from users. He has now sparked yet another controversy after it was reported by Page Six (via Hindustan Times) that he was expelled from a nightclub in New York City. Noah "was living it up at the palace," according to the article. The 19-year-old actor is accused of asking customers who paid for bottle service to do tequila shots with him and his friends. Because Noah is underage, the customers declined to participate, though.

This made Noah Schnapp angry, and he got so 'aggressively wasted' that the nightclub security had to escort him out around 1.30 AM ET. The media outlet also obtained footage from the night showing the *Stranger Things* 5 star seemingly intoxicated, sitting on a couch with his arm around a friend.



David Lynch takes the blame for Dune's failure

David Lynch's name always comes up when discussing some of the most talented directors in movie history. However, he has also failed in his career, and that was with the film that he thought was his most ambitious undertaking. David Lynch has spoken candidly about his 1984 film *Dune* before. Despite being the director himself, he has now claimed that the reason the movie did not turn out as planned was because he was not in charge of it.

During an interview, Lynch quickly identified his *Dune* film as the biggest failure of his career when questioned about it.

He acknowledged candidly, "My film is *Dune*. I was aware that a final cut should be obtained before committing to a film project. However, for some reason, I didn't include the final cut in my contract because I assumed everything would work out."



MATTY HEALY AND GABBRIETTE BETCHEL ARE 'EXCITED' TO GET ENGAGED

The lead singer of *The 1975*, Matty Healy, has become a regular fixture on the front pages. Because of his association with Taylor Swift in the past and his current engagement to Gabriette Bechel in the present.

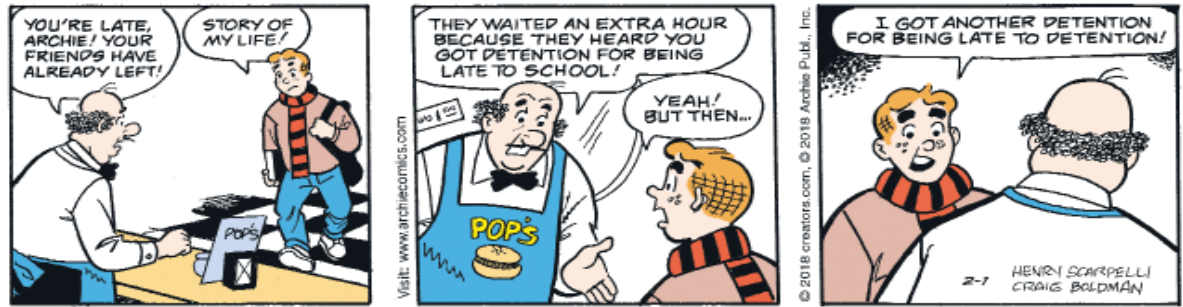
After announcing her engagement to Matty on June 11, Gabbriette shared a post and a story on Instagram. She posted a photo of the ring, which seemed unusual in comparison to other diamond rings.

The couple is "in love," according to a source and they are excited to get engaged after igniting dating rumours for just nine months. According to the insider, the *1975* singer "fell in love" with his now-fiance when they first started dating in the fall of last year. According to the insider, Gabbriette and the vocalist of *Somebody Else* had a "serious and intense" connection from the start.


"They're excited to be engaged," the source went on. They want to do things their way, and they're such a cool couple," the source said.

The insider also mentioned the engagement ring, which caused a stir when it was revealed. It had a black jewel encircled by Pavé diamonds. "The engagement ring is so her—it's perfect," the source stated. She's entertaining and unorthodox. The source also stated that everyone is "happy" for the couple and that both of them have close relationships with their families.


ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK




SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

NANCY



SUDOKU

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


DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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

Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



ACROSS

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

DOWN

- A keyboard instrument
- Leaves
- Poke this out at someone you don't like
- Two times six minus four

SOLUTION

T	R	O	U	S	E	R	S
M	A	N	G	O	A	S	
A	N	G	O	R	I	E	
G	A	R	D	E	N		
R	O	M	E				
A	C	E					
N	A	S	S	E	I		
I	N	O	R	T	H		
E	G	O	E				
C	O	M	P	O	S	E	R

Sunny Singh to star in a biopic next



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

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

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

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

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

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

SHIKHA DUGGAL

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

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

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

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

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

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



EVENT COVERAGE

Celebrating culinary mastery with Telugu MasterChefs

SHRADDHA NEWARE

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

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

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

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

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

A fan quiz session led by the anchor drew enthusiastic responses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNEARTHING BUDDING FUTURE STARS IN PARASPORTS

RIYA KOMMINENI

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

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

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

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

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

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

EVENT COVERAGE



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TEJAL SINHA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Atlee's next with Allu Arjun hits salary roadblock

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

Vishwak Sen promises to donate his organs

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

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



RAM CHARAN CELEBRATES FIRST FATHER'S DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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



Double iSmart to release on Independence Day

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

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

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

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

Mani Sharma has composed the music for the film.



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

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

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

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



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

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

Pushpa 2 release may be postponed

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

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

PIC TALK



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

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