







## Transport JAC condemns abusive comments made by JC Prabhakar Reddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Association of Transport Department Technical Officers and the AP Transport Department JAC have strongly condemned the abusive and objectionable comments made by Telugu Desam leader and Tadipatri Municipal Chairman JC Prabhakar Reddy, which insulted government officials.

AP Transport Department JAC president TD Prasad Reddy, general secretary N Jagadeesh, and other leaders expressed their strong disapproval of the inappropriate comments made by JC Prabhakar Reddy against officials of the State Transport Department. They emphasized that such language is unacceptable and does not reflect well on public discourse.

The JAC leaders clarified that all actions and decisions taken by the department are in strict accordance with the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act. They asserted that decisions are made without personal bias and that when records related to vehicles are found to be incorrect during inspections or registrations, appropriate actions, including vehicle seizures or penalties, are enforced.

The leaders reiterated that the administration of justice involves fair treatment without bias against any individual.

They urged JC Prabhakar Reddy to refrain from making personal attacks and abusive comments against government employees, emphasizing the need for respectful dialogue and constructive criticism.

# Telugu CMs face complex issues in sharing of assets

SNCN ACHARYULU  
■ HYDERABAD

After 10 years of Andhra Pradesh State bifurcation there are several issues which are not resolved between the two Telugu states. Now all eyes are on the two Telugu Chief Ministers who are known as 'guru and chela'. To resolve the long-pending issues between the two states, who will compromise; the guru or the chela? It is not easy to resolve these issues because they are linked with the people's sentiments of the respective Telugu states.

For example, since several years controversy is going on the Polavaram project and sharing of Godavari waters. In the combined Andhra Pradesh State, the problem was between the Telangana and Seemandhra. After Andhra Pradesh bifurcation the problem has become between the two Telugu states. The main controversy in the Polavaram project was its high and submerged area under this project in Khammam district of Telangana State. In 2014, the Central government merged seven villages of Khammam district in Andhra Pradesh which will effect with the construction of Polavaram project. At that time, the Prime Minister was Narendra

Modi and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister was N Chandrababu Naidu and Interestingly, now also both are in the same position. Only the change is at that time chief minister of Telangana was K Chandrasekhar Rao of the BRS and now it is A Revanth Reddy of the Congress.



KCR, till his last minute as the chief minister of Telangana, fought to bring back those seven villages to Telangana which were merged in Andhra Pradesh. Now if Chief Minister Revanth Reddy compromises on this issue, the BRS will start allegations that Revanth has compromised with Andhra Pradesh at the cost of Telangana interests and the sentiment of Telangana people. If Chandrababu compromises in handing over these seven villages to Telangana, again the problem will start in completing the

Polavaram project and Chandrababu will face the anger of Andhra Pradesh people who have given the mandate to him in record level. In the height of the Polavaram project and sharing of Godavari waters also both the Chief Ministers will face the same problem.

After Polavaram project, another major issue is sharing of the assets of the RTC. The RTC has more valuable assets including lands in and around Hyderabad city. The Telangana government under the BRS refused to share the assets of RTC, claiming that they belong of Telangana State only and AP has no right to demand sharing of these assets. Andhra Pradesh's argument was that these assets were developed by the combined Andhra Pradesh State government. But the Telangana government's argument is that these assets were developed by the Nizam government. If Andhra Pradesh gets a share in these assets, it will cost some hundreds crores of rupees. The AP government, which is starving for funds will not leave it. At the Centre, the NDA government will support the AP government because the latter is also in the NDA. In Telangana the Congress is in power, which is a political enemy of the BJP at the national level. There are some more such problems between the two Telugu states.

# Savita assumes office as Textiles Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Handlooms and Textiles, S Savita, officially took charge on Thursday. In addition to her responsibilities in the Handlooms and Textiles sector, she also assumed duties as the Minister for Backward Classes (BC) Welfare and Economically Weaker Sections.

Soon after assuming charge, Savita signed a significant skill development programme aimed at uplifting the weaving communities in Mangalagiri, Venkatagiri, Chirala, Dharmavaram, and Pulugurtha. This initiative is set to benefit a total of 180 weavers, providing them with enhanced skills and opportunities to improve their craftsmanship and economic prospects.

The Minister also launched a new collection of garments designed by the in-house Cluster Designers of the



Department of Handlooms and Textiles, in collaboration with the Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society (APCO). These designers are graduates of the NIFT and IIHT. The garments are crafted from handloom fabric and are designed to meet the demands of the younger generation, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern fashion trends.

In a gesture of support for local artisans, the Minister purchased a crochet lace cot-

ton saree from APCO and an Etikoppaka bullock cart from Lepakshi. She also examined the ODOP wall installed in the second block of the AP Secretariat, by the Department of Handloom & Textiles to promote ODOP products in the state.

The Minister emphasized her commitment to driving the growth and modernization of the handloom sector, ensuring that traditional skills are preserved while adapting to contemporary market needs.

## West Bengal Formation Day celebrated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer has participated as Chief Guest at the West Bengal Formation Day celebrations held at Durbar Hall in Raj Bhavan here on Thursday, as part of 'Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat' programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Abdul Nazeer has said 'West Bengal is widely considered as the 'Melting Pot of Cultures' and the State offers a unique flavour to the richness of India with its synthesis of various languages, religions, customs, traditions, cuisines and lifestyle. He said that the 'Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat' programme aims to forge a



strong relationship and bonding among all the people of the country, and promote mutual understanding between different States and Union Territories, through the concept of 'One Nation - One People.'

The programme commenced with a video message from Sri C.V. Ananda Bose, Governor of West Bengal, followed by group

songs by students of the National Institute of Design, and cultural dances by students from Siddhartha College of Medical Sciences. First Lady Smt. Sameera Nazeer, Students from West Bengal studying in various educational institutions in and around Vijayawada, officers and staff members of Raj Bhavan, have attended the programme.

## Govt launches new healthcare initiative for tribal students

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

In a move lauded by tribal communities, the current alliance government has launched a groundbreaking healthcare initiative for students residing in ashram schools across the district. This initiative marks a significant milestone for Women, Child, and Tribal Welfare Minister Gummadi Sandhya Rani, who has spearheaded the appointment of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) specifically for these educational institutions.

This initiative has been met with widespread approval from parents and leaders within tribal communities, who have long advocated for improved healthcare provisions in these schools. With 29 ashram schools spread throughout the district, including prominent institutions like Tribal Gurukula College, Tribal Gurukula School, and Ekalavya School, the initiative aims to benefit approximately 7,000 students residing in these facilities.



During the TDP government's tenure from 2014 to 2019, the Giri Health initiative saw the deployment of 150 dedicated health workers in ashram hostels. This proactive measure ensured regular health monitoring and swift medical responses to student illnesses, bolstering health records and offering vital support to concerned parents. Regrettably, these critical services were abruptly discontinued under the YCP administration, leaving students vulnerable during health emergencies and exacerbating healthcare disparities.

Under the previous regime, Secretariat ANMs were burdened with dual responsibilities of overseeing rural health programs and managing healthcare in hostel settings. This multitasking strained their capacity to deliver effective care, resulting in distressing incidents of student fatalities due to untreated illnesses at Bharanikota and Meliyaputti KGBVs last year. These tragedies sparked widespread apprehension and outcry among tribal communities.

Despite persistent appeals from officials and representatives of the YCP government, efforts to reinstate health workers in ashram hostels remained unfulfilled. However, the tide has turned with the current coalition government's resolute commitment to appoint ANMs dedicated exclusively to hostel healthcare. This decision has brought renewed hope and relief to students and their families, signalling a pivotal shift towards prioritizing

ing student well-being.

Savara Kumar, a prominent leader within the tribal community, lambasted the previous YCP administration for its neglect of tribal students' welfare and its dismissive stance towards urgent appeals for essential healthcare services in ashram schools. He expressed optimism regarding Minister Sandhyarani's proactive stance in tackling these pressing health challenges since assuming office under the new coalition government.

With this bold initiative, the alliance government is not only rectifying past shortcomings but also setting a precedent for proactive governance aimed at safeguarding the health and future of tribal students across the region. As stakeholders await the full implementation of these crucial healthcare reforms, expectations are high for improved student outcomes and a healthier educational environment in tribal ashram schools.

# HSL celebrates 84<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) commemorated its 84th Foundation Day on June 20th, 2024, coinciding with the International Day of Yoga. This milestone marks a legacy of 83 years of unwavering dedication and achievement in serving the nation's maritime sector.

The day commenced with a commemorative tribute to HSL's visionary founder, the legendary Seth Walchand Hirachand. This was followed by a company-wide yoga session promoting employee health and well-being.

The Foundation Day celebrations culminated a week-long series of activities held from June 14th to 20th, 2024. These activities fostered engagement with business partners, employees, and contractors, and included daily yoga sessions alongside a blood donation camp.

HSL further marked this significant occasion by unveiling a series of advancements designed to propel the shipyard



towards operational excellence and enhance employee well-being. These advancements encompass:

On this significant day, HSL unveiled new facilities and technological advancements to enhance operational efficiency and employee welfare. These include refurbished

employee quarters, an upgraded electronic testing lab, a test bed facility, a refurbished 80T crane, a new website, and a mobile app for ship weight management. Additionally, HSL released 16 publications to refine its procedures and processes.

Among the key milestones

celebrated was the steel cutting for the first Fleet Support Ship, completing maiden sea trials for the first Diving Support Vessel, and undocking a Russian-made EKM Submarine in record time. HSL also signed a major infrastructure upgrade contract with M/s L&T Geostucture to expand its capacity for building Fleet Support Ships and Landing Platform Docks.

HSL's commitment to innovation and operational excellence has been recognized with 21 prestigious awards last year, including for PSU Leadership, Best Practices, Innovation, HR Excellence, Best Ship Repair Facility, and Women Leadership, underscoring its commitment to continuous improvement.

On this occasion, HSL thanked stakeholders, partners, and MSMEs in Visakhapatnam for their pivotal roles. Looking forward, HSL is dedicated to driving reforms, embracing innovation, and fostering excellence to advance India's maritime industry.

## White Paper on Capital works...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing the gathering and media, CM Naidu criticised the previous government for allegedly destroying the capital. During his visit, he inspected the damaged constructions and expressed concern over the neglect.

CM Naidu began his tour at the Praja Vedika in Vundavalli, which was demolished by the YSRCP government shortly after coming to power. He then visited Uddandarayunipalem, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone for the capital. Naidu offered prayers there, before moving on to inspect houses built for MLAs, MLCs, All India Service officers, and High Court judges.

He also reviewed residential buildings for ministers, gazetted and non-gazetted officers, and apartment complexes for lower-level employees. The Chief Minister requested detailed information about each house, including their sizes, available facilities, and designs.

Speaking to the media at the CRDA Bhavan on Seed Access Road, Naidu praised the farmers who donated their lands for the capital, noting that their 1,631-day struggle,

despite facing many challenges, will go down in history. He remarked that the farmers ended their protest with the hope that the region would develop under the new government. "The farmers' struggle for the capital will serve as an example for future generations," the Chief Minister stated. He emphasized that Amaravati represents Andhra Pradesh and will remain the people's capital, providing employment opportunities for the youth within the state.

CM Naidu highlighted the recent victory of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the polls, noting that the people rejected the previous chief minister, limiting him to just 11 seats. "The past five years have shown us the consequences of unfit leadership," he remarked. He recalled that the Prime Minister had laid the foundation for the capital, and leaders from across the country had brought sacred soil and pure water to show their support. Naidu urged those who voted for the YSRCP to reconsider their choice and reflect on the state's future under such leaders. The Chief Minister made it clear that rowdiness will no longer be tolerated in the state.

## Youth look to NDA for employment revival amid industrial decline

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Desperation and hope define the current mood among Vizianagaram's youth. Disillusioned by the previous YSRCP administration, which they accuse of neglect and inaction, the young population now eagerly anticipates a turnaround under the NDA government. The past five years have seen this economically backward region suffer from chronic unemployment, driving its youth to migrate to urban centres like Vijayawada, Hyderabad, and Chennai in search of jobs.

Once a thriving industrial hub, Vizianagaram's economic landscape has drastically deteriorated. The collapse of key industries, including AP Fiber, Aruna Jute Mills, Uma Jute Mills, and the Bheemasingi cooperative sugar factory in Jami mandal, has left a void in the job market. Despite assurances from former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy during his padyatra to revive the sugar unit, no tangible action followed, exacerbating the unemployment crisis.

### CBN keeps his...

Continued from Page 1

Preparations for the session are complete, with Senior MLA Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary set to administer the oaths as Protom Speaker. Chief Minister Naidu will be the first to take the oath, followed by the Deputy Chief Ministers. YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will take his oath as a regular member, lacking opposition status. The oath-taking will proceed in alphabetical order.

Now, all eyes are on Kondapalli Srinivas, the newly appointed Minister for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME). The local people, particularly the youth, are hopeful that Srinivas will spearhead efforts to establish new enterprises and revitalise the job market.

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The industrial growth centre in Bobbili, initiated in 1994 during NT Rama Rao's rule, once symbolized hope for local employment. The government, under the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC), developed around 1,400 acres into an industrial park with the necessary infrastructure to support small and medium enterprises. Initially, this initiative succeeded, with around 120 small units employing hundreds of local workers. However, a lack of sustained government support led to the closure of approximately 60 units, resulting in significant

job losses and further migration of the workforce.

K. Ramesh Kumar, an engineering graduate from Vizianagaram, voices a common sentiment among the local youth: "The government should provide handholding to small entrepreneurs until they can operate independently. If this happens, the industries will definitely run without interruption, and the youth will get jobs, creating wealth."

As the youth of Vizianagaram await action, the focus now shifts to whether the NDA government can fulfil these high hopes and lead a much-needed economic revival in the district. The promise of revitalizing small and medium industries under Minister Kondapalli Srinivas could be the catalyst that transforms Vizianagaram's industrial landscape, bringing back jobs and prosperity to a region in desperate need.

## Reconnect with...

Continued from Page 1

The first session of the newly elected State Assembly is scheduled for June 21 and 22. Recently, senior TDP leader Ayyannapratrudu made a controversial remark, stating, "Jagan was defeated but not dead," which was widely circulated on social media. Responding to these remarks, YS Jagan said, "Someone says that Jagan has lost but not dead. Another says that he should be beaten to death." Likening TDP leaders to "Kauravas," YS Jagan expressed doubt that the ruling party would heed his words. However, he affirmed his commitment to fight for people's rights and raise their issues on the Assembly floor.

YS Jagan criticised Chandrababu Naidu for TDP members' aggressive actions against unnamed YSRCP supporters, suggesting that karma would soon catch up with them.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General Public are hereby informed that my client **SUNEETHA PANDULA RAVINDRA BABU, W/o PANDULA RAVINDRA BABU**, Age 67 Years, R/o Flat No. 102, Prasanthi Sai Apartments, Ocean Layout Beach Road, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh 530003 has lost her Regd. original Sale Deed bearing Document No. 4425/1993, Regd. at Joint Subregistrar 2, Banjarahills (R.O), Hyderabad while travelling in Mothugudem PS limits and all efforts to trace out the lost original document have been futile. My client has also lodged complaint with PS Mothugudem and obtained Certificate from the PS Mothugudem, Dt: 11.06.2024 about the lost document and the same being could not be traced out so far. It is therefore cautioned and requested to the General Public that, if any person possessing the custody of the Original Document pertaining to my client, may handover the same to her at above address within 10 days from the date of this PUBLIC NOTICE. If any person or persons misuses or abuses such document for malicious intention the same would not bind my client as the is the lawful owner and possessor of the same. Hence this Public Notice.

**Sd/- J. SUSHEEL KUMAR, Advocate**  
Flat No. 1-A, Sushel Residency Apartments, Street No. 9, Road No. 11, West Narasipaty, Secunderabad-500026, Mob: 9848699335



# TTD EO reviews monsoon preparedness at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Officer J Syamala Rao reviewed the monsoon preparedness by the Engineering department here on Thursday evening.

During the meeting, the officials explained how the second ghāt road was restored when it was affected by the falling of boulders due to heavy rains in the years 1996, 2004, 2005, 2015 and recently in 2021 through power point presentation.

Later, they also explained to him about the five dams in Tirumala which are the main sources of water to the pilgrims besides Kalyani Dam in Tirumala.

The EO instructed the Engineering officials to have a Disaster Management Plan to counter such incidents if any with preparedness in future. Later, the EO also reviewed the procurement and warehousing departments.

In the review meetings, JEOs Ms Goutami, Veerabrahmam, Chief Engineer Nageswara Rao, DE Electrical Ravishankar Reddy, GM (Procurement) Murali Krishna, Dy EO (Warehouse) Ms Padmavati and others were also present.

## Show-cause notice issued to sanitation official



PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD EO J. Syamala Rao inspected Narayanagiri Sheds on Thursday to review the facilities.

As part of his inspection, he visited the queue lines for Sarva Darshan, Slotted Sarva Darshan, and Special Entry Darshan, leading to the

Vaikuntham Queue Complex.

He provided valuable suggestions to the Engineering and Vigilance officials to ensure hassle-free darshan for pilgrims.

Expressing serious concern over the untidy premises, dumping of chappals, and improper sanitation

measures at Narayanagiri Sheds, he instructed that a show-cause notice be issued to the responsible officer.

JEOs Smt. Goutami and Veerabrahmam, along with CVSO Narasimha Kishore, CE Nageswara Rao, SE2 Jagadeeshwar Reddy, and other officials, were also present.

# CDMA website crash hits transactions

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Property owners in Visakhapatnam are facing a major hurdle in paying their taxes as the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's (GVMC) CDMA website, crucial for online tax transactions, has been down for the past three days. This outage has thrown a wrench into tax collection efforts, leaving many residents frustrated and worried over potential penalties.



The GVMC oversees a massive tax base, with over 5,72,000 property assessments and an annual collection target of Rs

450 crore. While Rs 456 crore has been collected so far in the current fiscal year, the deadline for the first half-yearly installment (April 1 to September 30) is fast approaching on June 30. Delays beyond this date will result in a penalty of Rs 2 per day.

To streamline tax collection, 'facilitation' centres have been strategically set up at the GVMC head office and various

zonal offices, ensuring direct contributions to the municipal treasury.

Furthermore, recognising the convenience, property tax collections have expanded to 573 ward secretariats over the past two years.

However, this expansion hinges on the operational integrity of the CDMA website rather than GVMC's own platforms.

## Residents worried over potential penalties

## Mudragada changes his name

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Veteran Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham has changed his name to Mudragada Padmanabha Reddy, keeping his word to do so if he failed to defeat Jana Sena Party leader K Pawan Kalyan in Pithapuram Assembly constituency. A notification in this regard was published in Andhra Pradesh Gazette.

Mudragada, who had joined YSRCP in March this year, had thrown a challenge to actor-politician Pawan Kalyan that he would change his surname to 'Reddy' if he failed to defeat him.

Pawan Kalyan won the Pithapuram seat in the Kakinada district, defeating seasoned politician and former MP Vanga Geetha of the YSR Congress. The actor-politician defeated Geetha by over 65,000 votes.

Pawan Kalyan, whose party

is part of the National Democratic Alliance which stormed to power at the Centre, became the Deputy Chief Minister of AP. Like Pawan Kalyan, Mudragada is from Kapu community.

During the poll campaign, Mudragada had slammed Pawan Kalyan for not showing up in support of the agitation demanding reservation for the Kapu community.

After the election results were announced on June 4, Mudragada said that he would change his name to Padmanabha Reddy in keeping with his word.

He had also said that he was clueless as to why people have not accepted Jagan Mohan Reddy despite the YSRCP government spending crores of rupees on the welfare of the poor. The veteran leader, however, made it clear that he will remain with the YSR Congress.

# Vizag girl Shabnam Shakil added to Indian squad for SA series

She was part of the team that won inaugural Women's U-19 T20 World Cup in 2023

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)'s Women's Selection Committee has selected young pacer Shabnam Shakil in the Indian squad for the ongoing IDFC First Bank women's series against South Africa.

Shabnam, who has played for the U-19 Indian women's cricket team as a bowler, was part of the India team that won the inaugural Women's U-19 T20 World Cup in 2023. This announcement marks a pivotal moment in Shakil's career, as she joins the ranks of India's formidable squad across all three formats of the game.

Shakil's inclusion comes as a strategic move by the selectors, highlighting her prowess with the ball and her potential

to make a substantial impact on the series. Known for her ability to swing the ball effectively, Shakil adds depth and variation to India's bowling attack, which will prove crucial against a competitive South African side.

Growing up in Visakhapatnam in a middle-class household, Shabnam developed an early passion for fast bowling, influenced by her father, who was a club cricket pacer. At the age of eight, she began her cricket journey at the NAD Academy in Visakhapatnam, under the mentorship of coach Nagaraju. Additionally, she honed her skills at the Visakhapatnam District Cricket Association (VDCA) grounds, receiving valuable guidance from Satish Reddy and Krishna Rao.

Shabnam made her debut



for Andhra Pradesh in the Under-19 category in 2021 and later joined the Zonal Cricket Academy, where she prepared extensively for zonal matches.

Her ability to bowl at 110 kmph caught the attention of

Indian selectors, leading to her attendance at a camp at the National Cricket Academy with 25 other girls. In 2022, she was included in the India U-19 women's squad for a five-match T20 series against New Zealand and later participated in the Women's U-19 T20 Quadrangular Series. In 2023, she played in two matches of the U-19 T20 World Cup.

Shabnam, a fan of Indian cricketers Jhulan Goswami and Jasprit Bumrah, was sold to the Gujarat Giants for Rs 10 lakh in the inaugural WPL auction in February 2023. Shabnam's inclusion is expected to bolster the squad's pace attack across all formats, offering additional depth and versatility as India continues its campaign against South Africa. The residents of Vizag are united in their belief that

Shakil's inclusion in the squad demonstrates the selectors' trust in her skills and her strong track record in domestic cricket.

Her selection not only highlights her diligence and commitment, but also emphasises the increasing avenues available for talented women cricketers in India.

Shakil's journey to the national team serves as an inspiration to aspiring cricketers across the country, particularly in the wake of efforts to expand and strengthen women's cricket at all levels. Furthermore, the Andhra Cricket Association has also celebrated a proud moment with the selection of one more player for the senior Indian women's team, emphasising the association's role in nurturing cricketing talent.

# East Coast Railway GM inspects key corridors



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to bolster efficiency and passenger experience, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) General Manager, Parmeshwar Funkwal, conducted a comprehensive inspection across the vital Vizianagaram-Rayagada and Rayagada-Koraput sections on Thursday. Flanked by senior officials including Divisional Railway Manager

Saurabh Prasad, Chief Track Engineer K Dhananjaya Rao, and Chief Freight Transport Manager Dibbanjan Roy, Funkwal's inspection focused on revitalising infrastructure, expediting ongoing projects, and streamlining traffic management. He emphasised the importance of these initiatives for enhancing both passenger and freight movement.

The inspection included detailed assessments of traffic

flow in the Rayagada region, reviews of infrastructure projects aimed at smoother train operations, and meticulous scrutiny of stations like Vizianagaram, Bobbili, Parvathipuram, Rayagada, and Damanjodi. Funkwal's focus extended to passenger amenities, including innovative One Station One Product stalls, rest facilities, waiting halls, and pedestrian infrastructure. He also interacted with vendors to

gather valuable feedback for future station development plans. A separate inspection window focused on crucial infrastructure projects like doubling works, improvements to curves, bridge and tunnel upgrades, and stringent safety measures. Funkwal's emphasis on adherence to timelines and safety protocols underscores ECoR's commitment to robust infrastructure development.

# 'Create scientific temperament among rural kids'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The officials of the Andhra Pradesh State Department of Science and Technology were suggested by Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan to work towards developing interest in science among children in rural areas. As part of a series of reviews on the departments assigned to him, Pawan Kalyan held a meeting with the officials of the State Science and Technology Department on Thursday evening.

On this occasion, Pawan Kalyan made it clear that following the Central Government's Vision 2047, the effort to train children with appropriate skills per future innovation should proceed rapidly. He suggested going ahead in a planned way to make children interested in sci-

ence and technology. He further suggested that children in rural areas should be prepared to organize huge scientific exhibitions to bring out their talent in science and technology.

Pawan Kalyan said that the government is ready to provide all necessary encouragement to the children not only to make them fully skilled but also to become scientists. He said that from the village level to the national level, scientific exhibitions should be held on a full scale so that passion for science will increase in the coming generations.

The officials explained that Rajahmundry SRSC Regional Science Center is ready to start. The Deputy Chief Ministers said that the centre should be opened soon and made available to the people.

## IAS couple meet Pawan



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao and Agricultural and Marketing Department Commissioner P Prasanthi met Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development,

Forest, Science and Technology K Pawan Kalyan at his camp office on the premises of the Irrigation Compound in Vijayawada on Thursday. They congratulated Minister Pawan Kalyan on the occasion.

# KGH patient nutrition programme in disarray

Mismanagement, graft resulting in delivery of inadequate and substandard meals

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

King George Hospital (KGH), a vital healthcare facility for North Andhra, is facing a scandal of alleged mismanagement and corruption surrounding its patient nutrition programme. Despite special funds from both Central and State governments intended to provide nutritious food to hospitalised patients, mismanagement and corruption are leading to inadequate and substandard meals.

A shocking revelation points towards political interference and favouritism as the root cause. YSRCP leaders from Rayalaseema, operating in Visakhapatnam, have been accused of influencing hospital supply contracts to benefit their associates. Reports indicate that a hospital official, allegedly under political pressure, approved a hefty contract worth Rs 2 lakh per day (translating to Rs 60 lakh monthly and Rs 7.2 crore annually) for food services. This two-year contract was conveniently divided amongst four followers of the YCP leader, raising serious concerns regarding



transparency and fairness in the tender process.

KGH caters to 1,600 to 1,800 patients daily with breakfast and two meals. Additionally, lunch is provided to roughly 200 doctors and postgraduate students. The government allocates Rs. 80 per day for each patient in the general ward and Rs 100 for pregnant women and new mothers under the Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK). Despite these allocations, the quality and variety

of food served have significantly deteriorated.

A Chennai-based contractor currently manages the hospital's diet programme. However, there have been frequent complaints regarding the abysmal quality and insufficient quantity of food provided. Patients have consistently reported receiving the same watery upma for 10 straight days, a consequence of a broken idli machine that remains neglected. The prescribed variety of meals,

including kichadi, is often missing from the menu, and portion sizes are consistently inadequate.

The deplorable situation has resulted in numerous grievances from patients and their families. Madhu from Seethampeta expressed her frustration, stating that her daughter in the gynaecology ward has been served watery upma every day for a week. The upma is of such poor consistency that it resembles sambar and is inedible. Requests

for any variation in the meal plan have been futile. B. Rani from Salipeta echoed similar sentiments, highlighting the constant watery upma served in the gynaecology ward. The runny consistency makes it impossible to consume with utensils, and the complete lack of taste and variety is unacceptable.

These firsthand accounts expose the ongoing neglect and blatant mismanagement of patient nutrition at KGH, demanding immediate intervention. Despite repeated complaints, the hospital administration and authorities have demonstrably failed to address these critical issues effectively. The alarming state of affairs at King George Hospital underscores the urgent need for stricter oversight and robust accountability mechanisms to ensure that the nutritional needs and overall well-being of patients are prioritised.

Immediate steps are required to rectify this situation, restore the quality of meals served, and eliminate the corruption that jeopardises healthcare services meant for the most vulnerable.

# Kodali slams TDP for propaganda



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) made serious allegations against the ruling TDP-led NDA government in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking to the media on Thursday at Tadepalli, he stated that they are not intimidated by the TDP's attacks.

Kodali Nani claimed that Chandrababu Naidu came to power by making false promises to the people of Andhra Pradesh during the elections. He further alleged that the TDP is spreading misinformation about Rushikonda in Visakhapatnam.

The former minister demanded that the ruling party explain to the people of the state when the "Super-6" projects promised during the elections will be implemented. He also highlighted the issue of the Rs 3,000 stipend for unemployed youth in the state. Nani stated that false information is being circulated about the furniture provided for visitors in the Chief Minister's camp office and urged the public not to believe this misinformation.

Kodali Nani accused the TDP leaders of staging daily dramas to divert the public's attention from the promises made by Chandrababu Naidu during the elections. He emphasized that the buildings in Rushikonda are government property, not YS Jagan's. He argued that if buildings are constructed for VIPs, they will generate revenue. He also accused the pro-TDP media of spreading lies.

## CISF to take over security at Gannavaram airport from July 2

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Since the TDP-led NDA government formed the government in Andhra Pradesh, it has been taking drastic steps pertaining to security aspects.

As K Ram Mohan Naidu assumed office as Minister for Civil Aviation, he took measures to beef up security at airports.

The Airport Authority of India has written to the AP DGP that the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will take over the security of the Vijayawada International Airport in Gannavaram.

The letter stated that the airport security will be taken over by the CISF from July 2. In the letter, the Airport Authority has made it clear that the States' Special Protection force (SPF) unit, which is on security duty, shall withdraw as soon as the CISF comes under its control.

The Airport Authority has also asked the DGP to vacate the barracks for the CISF personnel who will take up the security duties from July 2.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General Public are hereby informed that my client **SUNEETHA PANDULA RAVINDRA BABU, W/o PANDULA RAVINDRA BABU**, Age:67 Years, R/o Flat No. 102, Presently Sai Apartments, Ocean Layout Beach Road, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh 530003 has lost her Regd. original Sale Deed bearing Document No. 186/1997, Regd. at Joint Subregistrar 2, Banjarahills (R.O.), Hyderabad while travelling in S Rayavaram PS limits and all efforts to trace out the lost original document have been futile. My client has also lodged complaint with PS S Rayavaram and obtained Certificate from the PS S Rayavaram, Dt: 19.06.2024 about the lost document and the same being could not be traced out so far. It is therefore cautioned and requested to the General Public that, if any person possessing the custody of the Original Document pertaining to my client, may handover the same to her at above address within 10 days from the date of this PUBLIC NOTICE. If any person or persons misuses or abuses such document for malicious intention the same would not bind my client as he is the lawful owner and possessor of the same. Hence this Public Notice.

**Sd/- J. SUSHEEL KUMAR, Advocate**  
Flat No. 1-A, Sushel Residency Apartments, Street No. 9, Road No. 11, West Narandipally, Secunderabad-500026, Mob: 9849699315



# Central team urged to ensure compensation for farmers

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy appealed to the Central team to submit their report at the earliest and ensure the affected farmers are disbursed crop loss compensation while Collector Dinesh Kumar said Rs 6,201.08 crore required to the drought-affected 31 mandals.

A Central team comprising Mannu G Upaday, SC Kashayam, Madan Mohan Mourya and B Anuradha visited the district to assess the crop loss due to drought and the drought situation. The Central team members watched the photo exhibition set up by the officials to explain the enormity of the drought situation. The officials of various departments illustrated to the Central team members the severity of the drought situation. Later the Central team members held a meeting with the Minister and officials including the district Collector.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Veeranjanya Swamy told the Central team that acute drinking water scarcity prevailed in many areas and people were struggling to get drinking water to quench their thirst. Drinking water is being supplied through tankers to some of the areas. "The process and formalities should be com-



The Central team members watched the photo exhibition set up by the officials to explain the enormity of the drought situation. The officials of various departments illustrated to the Central team members the severity of the drought situation.

pleted at the earliest and crop loss compensation should be paid to the affected farmers," the Minister pleaded with the Central team.

Collector A S Dinesh Kumar explained the drought conditions to the Central team members through a PowerPoint presentation. He told the team that out of the total 38 mandals in the district, 31 mandals have been identified as drought mandals out of which 20 mandals including Yerragondapalem, Dornala, Kurichedu, Mundlamuru, Darshi, Podili, Marripadu, Peddaravidi, Markapuram, Kambham, Tarupadu, H.M. Padu, Veligandla,

Pedacherlopalle, CS Puram, Pamuru, SM Padu, Ongole, Kothapatnam, Pullacheruvu were identified as severe drought affected mandals.

The NDRF identified 11 mandals including Donakonda, Konakanamilla, Ardhavedu, Bestavaripeta, Racharla, Giddalur, Komarolu, Kanigiri, Cheemakurti, Kondapi and NG Padu as moderately affected, the Collector told the Central team.

In all 31 mandals, 36,147 farmers in 29,713.64 hectares, lost their crops such as rice, pulses, groundnuts, millets and pulses. To support them, proposals were formulated

pegging the crop loss at Rs 25.54 crores under the NDRF norms and Rs 29.40 crores under the SDRF norms for disbursement of input subsidy to the affected farmers, the Collator explained to the Central team.

The Collector said that crop loss was more than 50 per cent since the rainfall was less than average rainfall in 31 mandals.

Collector Dinesh Kumar told the Central team that Rs 6,201.08 crore is required to do away with drinking water scarcity, provide fodder for the livestock and protect the drought-affected farmers in 31 mandals.

The Collector appealed to the Central team to submit their report to the Central government at the earliest so that the farmers would get compensation. Sub-collector Rahul Meena, P CEO Madhuri and a host of other officials attended the meeting.

# White Paper will be released on corruption in Polavaram project: Irrigation Minister

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu has said that a white paper will be released on the corruption that took place in the Polavaram project construction during the erstwhile YSRCP-led government.

Nimmala Ramanaidu took charge as Mister for Water Resources Development on Thursday in the fourth bloc of Secretariat in Amaravati near here. Irrigation Department Secretary Seshibhusan Kumar, Special Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad and other officials congratulated and conveyed their wishes to Ramanaidu on the occasion.

Talking to the media on the occasion, the Minister alleged that the Jagan Mohan Reddy-headed government had neglected the irrigation projects and disabled the irrigation system in the state.

The Jagan Reddy-headed previous government did now show any interest in completing the Polavaram project, being constructed across the River Godavari. The Polavaram project is considered to be the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh.

"The Polavaram project construction would have been completed by one year, if the Jagan Reddy-headed government had continued the works when it came to power in 2019. Due to the utter indifference of the YSRCP government, the Polavaram project is



in doldrums now," he lamented.

The YSRCP government diverted the funds, reimbursed by the Central government, meant to be spent for the Polavaram project works, to other purposes, resulting in the Polavaram project works coming to a halt, the lashed out. The Minister recalled that N Chandrababu Naidu within a few days of taking charge as Chief Minister of AP inspected the Polavaram project works, studied them and reviewed with the officials and engineers on how to proceed.

The Hyderabad IIT experts studied and submitted a report

**Talking to the media on the occasion, the Minister alleged that the Jagan Mohan Reddy-headed government had neglected the irrigation projects and disabled the irrigation system in the state.**

Minister has to spend Rs 400 crore. Now the new government has to decide whether to construct a new diaphragm wall or carry out repairs to damaged one," the Minister made it clear.

Nimmala Ramanaidu stated that he had ordered the officials to strengthen the embankments of rivers, rivulets and canals and carry out required repairs to the crest gates of various projects. The Minister said that he had made his first sign as a Minister on a file for the removal of hyacinth and other creepers from the irrigation canals to ensure that water flowed freely.

# 13 red sanders logs seized; Two smugglers arrested



PNS ■ KADAPA

The Task Force police team seized 13 red sanders logs and arrested two smugglers at Rayavaram village in the forest area in Annamayya district.

Police said that on the directions of SP P Srinivas and under the supervision of DSP Chenchu Babu, a task force police team led by RI Suresh Reddy conducted combing in the forest area.

The team conducted a

checking of vehicles. The police noticed three persons, who were going on two motorcycles, trying to escape after noticing the police. In the melee, one of them fell from the bike and suffered injury. The police could apprehend one more person also.

The smugglers who were in a car which was following the bikes, noticed the police apprehending the smugglers, who were piloting the car. They stopped the car and fled.

The police found 13 red sander logs in the car.

The police arrested Sharat Kumar and Devaraj Govinda Swamy who belonged to Tamil Nadu state. The arrested smugglers told the police that there were 12 smugglers in their group. The arrested smugglers were brought to the task force police station in Tirupati and registered a case. SP Srinivas recommended rewards to the task force police team.

# Revenue officials lauded for dedication

Revenue Day celebrations organised

PNS ■ PADERU

District Collector M Vijaya Sunitha has emphasised the deep-rooted trust the community places in the Revenue Department, highlighting the honour felt by its members to serve with integrity. Speaking during the Revenue Day celebrations held here on Thursday, Sunitha, who was the chief guest, praised the unwavering dedication of revenue officials.

Sunitha commended their selfless commitment, particularly their crucial role in ensuring the seamless conduct of the recent general elections. She expressed pride in the department's preparedness and exceptional performance, contrasting it with other sectors where requests for exemptions were commonplace during the elections, yet none



were sought from the Revenue Department.

Despite facing health challenges, Tehsildar Kalyana Chakraborty epitomised this dedication by fulfilling duties without taking leave, underscoring the collective effort that contributed to the election's success. Highlighting the extensive range of services provided, totaling 517 different offerings to the public, the Collector urged continued efforts to advance the district's prosperity through enhanced service delivery.



# Major fire: Girl charred to death; 14 houses gutted

PNS ■ NELLORE

In a devastating fire accident on Thursday, a 12-year-old girl lost her life and 14 houses were destroyed in the Barma Gunta area near the railway station.

Police reported that the fire started in one house and rapidly spread to neighbouring homes. The deceased,

Nagalakshmi, was a differently-abled girl who was unable to escape the flames.

District Collector M. Harinarayana visited the site and assured the victims of comprehensive assistance. Nellore MLA and Minister for Municipal Administration P. Narayana expressed his shock over the tragedy.

The Minister instructed officials to provide all necessary support to the victims and announced immediate aid of Rs 15,000 for each affected family. Despite the efforts of three fire tenders, which rushed to the scene, the fire had already claimed 14 houses and the life of the young girl by the time it was brought under control.

# Visakha Coop Bank exceeds target by Rs 87.79 cr in 2023-24

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chalasani Raghavendra Rao, Chairman of Visakhapatnam Cooperative Bank Ltd. (VCBL), a prominent Multi-State Cooperative Bank and Director at National Federation of State Cooperative Banks Ltd. (NAFSCOB), proudly announced that VCBL has secured a place among the top 10 urban banks out of 1,502 nationwide. With steadfast support from its members, VCBL has consistently reported a surplus each financial year, achieving an impressive surplus of Rs.87.79 crore for 2023-24.

VCBL has significantly expanded its footprint with approximately 50 branches across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. In the current fiscal year, the bank plans to inaugurate five additional branches in Andhra Pradesh. The bank's Annual General Body Meeting is scheduled for June 23 in Visakhapatnam.

Chairman Chalasani Raghavendra Rao shared with 'The Pioneer' that VCBL ranks as the fourth largest urban bank, boasting a membership of 104,865. Unique in its structure, VCBL operates where depositors and borrowers alike are shareholders. Raghavendra Rao emphasised that VCBL stands as the sole urban bank in the country effectively implementing the Cooperative Act.

He further disclosed plans to

distribute dividends among members from the surplus, pending finalization at the upcoming AGM. Since assuming leadership in 1983 under Manam Anjaneyulu, VCBL has embraced innovative policies and technological advancements.

As of March 31 this year, VCBL reported deposits totalling Rs.4,150 crore and loans amounting to Rs.3,200 crore. Notably, the bank's share capital stands at Rs.352 crore, unrivalled among urban banks. Despite achieving a surplus crossing Rs.100 crore, VCBL paid Rs.25

crore in Income Tax as per RBI guidelines, resulting in a final surplus of Rs.87.79 crore. Raghavendra Rao affirmed VCBL's commitment to serving its members, primarily comprising the poor, middle-class, labourers, and working class. He highlighted the bank's egalitarian dividend distribution policy, where all members receive equal shares, and underscored a recent AGM resolution capping individual shareholdings at Rs.2 lakh.

Assuring members of VCBL's financial strength with assets nearing Rs.600 crore, Raghavendra Rao outlined the bank's initiatives, including health schemes and compensation for bereaved families. In the fiscal year 2023-24 alone, VCBL allocated Rs.5.51 crore for welfare schemes, totalling Rs.35.55 crore over the past decade.



# KTR warns private firms against taking part in auction of coal mines

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS working president KTR accused both the BJP and the Congress and their Central and state governments of undermining SCCL by deciding to auction the coal mines in Telangana instead of allotting them directly to SCCL. Addressing a press conference at the Telangana Bhavan on Thursday, KTR criticized the Congress government for taking part in the coal mine auctions instead of demanding direct coal allotment to SCCL. KTR also said that even if private companies participate in the auction and get mining rights, the BRS would cancel those leases if it came to power after four and a half years. He assured that the BRS would try to safeguard SCCL by taking direct action against the Central move to auction SCCL mines.

The Centre is auctioning around 60 coal mines in the country starting Friday. The TG government's participation in the auction contradicts its previous stance of opposing the auc-

tion and seeking direct allocation from the Centre to SCCL, KTR said.

He also reminded the public that the Chief Minister who was then TPCC President had written a letter to the Centre asking for the cancellation of the SCCL mines auction and requested direct allocation to SCCL.

KTR questioned Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's silence over the Centre's move to auction coal mines in the SCCL area. He doubted the Chief Minister's silence on this issue, considering his previous opposition when he was not in power. KTR said the BRS and its government stalled the auctioning of coal mines in Singareni for the last nine years to protect SCCL.

With 16 MPs, AP Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is trying to stop the privatization of the Vizag Steel Plant. But the 16 MPs from Telangana from the Congress and the BJP are remaining silent despite the Centre's attempt to harm the SCCL by auctioning the coal mines, he said.

# 1,000 TIDCO houses to be distributed by Sankranti

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathi has announced that 1000 TIDCO houses would be handed over to the beneficiaries in Nuzvid by the Sankranti festival.

The Housing Minister inspected the TIDCO houses at MR Appa Rao colony here on Thursday. The officials explained to him the present status of the houses. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the TIDCO houses exposed how the State would be destroyed if the government lacked vision.

The Minister made it clear at least 1000 TIDCO houses would be handed over to the beneficiaries by the next Sankranti festival in Nuzvid town. He stated that during the TDP regime in 2014-2019, the construction of TIDCO houses began and 90 percent of construction had been completed till 2019. After completing the minor works, the houses had to be handed over to the beneficiaries but the YSRCP government did not do that, the minister criticized. "The YSRCP government's unwise act resulted in the squandering of hundreds of crores of public money. The YSRCP government could not tell why they stopped carrying out remaining works to the TIDCO houses and hand them over to the beneficiaries," he slammed.

# SP commends cops, swimmers for saving lives of 11 tourists



PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal has appreciated the police personnel and swimmers who saved the lives of 11 tourists when they drowned in the sea at Surya Lanka beach in separate incidents. The SP appreciated them for their immediate response of duty and for saving the lives of tourists who were drowning in the sea.

Head Constable Mastan Rao, Constable N Nagaraju, Home Guards N Srinivasa Rao, P Ramesh, K Ashirvadam, K Venkata Narayana, Trained swimmers K Subba Rao, S Siva Gopal, K Rama Krishna, K Bala Koteswara Rao, S Suresh, S Anjaneulu, and Marine SI Naib Rasool saved the lives of 11 tourists who were drown-

ing in the sea in giant waves at the Surya Lanka beach in separate incidents in the last two days.

The SP felicitated them at the camp office on Thursday, and personally presented the letters of appreciation. Later, speaking on the occasion, the SP said that tourists come in large numbers to the Suryalanka sea beach. The tourists who often go deep into the sea should be constantly warned, the SP told the police personnel.

He lauded that it is commendable for his timely response in the performance of their duty and bravery and commitment to their duties by going into the sea and saving the lives of 11 tourists when they were drowning in the sea.

The police personnel should perform their duties with the

same spirit in the coming days as well, the SP exhorted, adding that other police personnel in the district should take them as an inspiration and carry out their duties with commitment and dedication and bring good name to the police department.

Addressing the public, the SP said that strict security measures were taken for the protection of tourists coming to the beaches of Bapatla district. He said that patrolling along the coast has been increased and lifeguards have been arranged along the sea coast to protect the lives of the pilgrims.

Tourists who come to the beach must follow the instructions of the police, he said and warned that no one should enter the sea after consuming alcohol.



INDIA CORNER

French journalist leaves India, claims MHA revoked work permit

French journalist Sebastien Fracis on Thursday claimed that he was "forced to leave" India after the Union Home Ministry refused to renew his permit. "After 13 years working as a correspondent in India, the authorities have denied me a permit to work as a journalist. I have thus been forced to leave the country," Fracis said on 'X'. Fracis was the South Asia correspondent for Radio France Internationale, Radio France, Libération and the Swiss and Belgian public radios. "On June 17, I was forced to leave India, a country where I had lived and worked as a journalist for 13 years, as a South Asia correspondent for Radio France Internationale, Radio France, Libération and the Swiss and Belgian public radios," Fracis said in a post on 'X' on Thursday. In February, French journalist Vanessa Dougnac left India after the government revoked her Overseas Citizen of India card.



Tripura: 30 girl students fall ill after having meal in hostel

At least 30 girl students fell ill after having a meal at a hostel run by an NGO in West Tripura district on Thursday, an official said. The state government ordered an inquiry into the suspected food poisoning of girl students of Bodhjung Higher Secondary School and Maharani Tulsibati School, West Tripura District Magistrate Vishal Kumar told reporters. The girl students of the two government schools resided in the NGO-hostel in Indranagar area and had the meal before going to their respective institutions. "Two girls first complained of stomach pain and soon, more students reported the same issue. The students were taken to GBP Hospital," he said. "Food samples were collected from the hostel for scrutiny. We will take appropriate steps if anything adverse is found in the food served to the girl students by the hostel authorities."



Delhi water crisis: Atishi to sit on indefinite hunger strike from today

Delhi Water Minister Atishi said she will sit on an indefinite hunger strike at Bhogal in South Delhi from Friday noon to press on her demand for getting 100 million gallons of water per day from Haryana. At a press conference, Atishi said she will first visit Rajghat at 11 AM on Friday to pay tributes to Mahatma Gandhi whose path of Satyagraha was the only option available as no water was provided to Delhi. "Delhi requires 1,005 MGD of water out of which 613 MGD comes from Haryana. Since the last two weeks, Haryana has reduced this to 513 MGD. The 100 MGD less water has caused around 28 lakh people in the city to crave for every drop of water," she said. The minister said Haryana has refused to release water and her letter to the Prime Minister also did not help so she was forced to sit on the hunger strike for the rightful share of Delhi's water and 28 lakh affected people in the city.



India, Australia, France to work for rules-based Indo-Pacific

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India, Australia and France have vowed to jointly work towards a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific amid China's growing muscle-flexing in the region.

The overall situation in the Indo-Pacific came up for detailed deliberations at the third 'India-France-Australia trilateral focal points' meeting that took place in Delhi on Wednesday.

"The three sides reviewed the progress made under the three pillars of trilateral cooperation: maritime safety and security, marine and environmental cooperation, and multilateral engagement," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

It said the meeting identified new proposals for furthering the trilateral cooperation, including under the



framework of the Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) mechanisms.

"India, Australia and France reaffirmed their commitment to advancing their shared values and working together

towards a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific," the MEA said in a statement.

The IPOI is an open, inclusive, non-treaty based, global initiative that was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 14th East Asia Summit in

November 2019 to promote collaborative efforts among like-minded nations to better manage, conserve and secure the Indo-Pacific maritime domain.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an inter-governmental organisation aimed at strengthening regional cooperation.

The Indian side at the trilateral was led by Piyush Srivastava, joint secretary (Europe West) and Paramita Tripathi, joint secretary (Oceania and Indo-Pacific) at the MEA.

The French side was headed by Benoît Guidé, Director (Asia and Oceania) in French foreign ministry.

The Australian delegation was led by Sarah Storey, a first assistant secretary at Australian foreign ministry's South and Central Asia Division.

Lok Sabha results indicate people's mood: Pawar

PNS ■ PUNE

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday said the Opposition MVA alliance outperformed the ruling coalition in 155 assembly segments in Maharashtra in the Lok Sabha elections, and it indicated the people's "mood" as state polls are around the corner.

Assembly elections are due in the state in October. The Maha Vikas Aghadi allies NCP (SP), Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress together contested all 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra and won 31, Pawar said, speaking to reporters here.

"The outcome reflects the people's wishes...if you see (voting patterns in) assembly constituencies within these 31 seats, we secured victory in 155 assembly segments."

The outcome reflects the mood of the people for assembly elections," he said.

Saini govt in 'minority', Haryana Cong tells governor

Seeks dissolution of Assembly

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A delegation of the Haryana Congress met Governor Bandaru Dattatreya here on Thursday, claiming the Nayab Singh Saini government is in the "minority" and demanded dissolution of the Assembly and holding fresh polls.

A party delegation headed by Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda met the Governor at the Raj Bhavan here in the evening and submitted a memorandum to him.

Later interacting with reporters, Hooda said, "The government does not have the moral right to stay in power... We have demanded that the House should be dissolved and fresh elections should be held." In the memorandum to Dattatreya, the opposition party claimed that if the pre-



sent government lacks a majority in the House "unless it indulges in horse-trading or use of unconstitutional means".

"To stop horse trading, which will bring a bad name to the state, the assembly should be dissolved. This is what we have urged (the governor)," Hooda told reporters.

He said in the 90-member Assembly, which currently has an effective strength of 87, BJP has 41 MLAs and has the support of the lone legislator of the

Haryana Lokhit Party and Independent member Nayan Pal Rawat.

"This makes it amply clear that the present government is in the minority. According to the Constitution and democratic norms, the BJP has no right to continue in the government."

To avoid horse trading and ensure the survival of democracy, this minority government of the BJP should be dismissed immediately," the

People living in K'taka should learn Kannada: CM Siddaramaiah

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday urged people to take pride in speaking their mother tongue and said it is the responsibility of every Kannadiga to protect the Kannada language, land and water.

He noted that people living in Karnataka should learn Kannada and stressed the need to create a "Kannada atmosphere" in the state.

Speaking after performing 'bhoomi puja' for the construction of a 25-feet-tall bronze statue of Nada Devi Bhuvaneshwari on the premises of Vidhana Soudha here, the CM said speaking our mother tongue should be a matter

of pride.

"A vow must be made that no language other than Kannada is spoken in the state. Kannadigas are generous. That is why there is an environment in Karnataka where even those who speak other languages can live without learning Kannada. The same situation cannot be seen in Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Kerala. They speak only in their mother tongue," he pointed out.

Calling on Kannadigas to speak in their mother tongue, Siddaramaiah said there is no need to feel inferior about it.

"We also have to speak in our mother tongue. That should make us proud..." he added.

Delhi sees 22 heat-related deaths in 24 hrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 22 fatalities due to suspected heat-related illnesses have been recorded at Delhi's RML and Safdarjung and LNJP hospitals in the last 24 hours, officials said on Thursday.

Delhi has been battling searing heatwave conditions over the last few days. It got some relief on Thursday morning due to light rain.

Hospitals in Delhi have seen a rise in the number of casualties and patients owing to heatstroke.

According to officials at the Safdarjung Hospital, 33 patients suffering from heat-related illnesses were admitted. Of them 13 died in the last 24 hours, they said.



The Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital received 22 patients with a suspected heatstroke in the last 24 hours out of which four have died, a hospital source said.

The Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital has 17 patients admitted to its casualty ward while five patients succumbed

in the last 24 hours at the ward, an official source said.

Meanwhile, at the city's main crematorium -- Nigambodh Ghat -- the number of cremations has seen a spike. Officials, however, could not confirm if the deaths were related to heatstrokes.

On Wednesday, 142 corpses

were brought to the Nigambodh Ghat for cremation, which is nearly 136 percentage points higher than the daily average of 50-60 bodies, Suman Gupta, general secretary of the Nigambodh Ghat Sanchalan Samiti, which manages operations at the crematorium, told PTI.

The number was higher on Tuesday as well when 97 bodies were cremated at the city's oldest and largest crematorium.

"Usually, around 50-60 bodies are brought in here daily for cremation. The number has been higher in the last few days. Today, 35 cremations have taken place since morning and the number may go up by the end of the day," Gupta said.

Bangladesh PM Hasina begins state visit to India from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will pay a two-day state visit to India beginning Friday to further expand the already close ties between the two countries.

It will be the first incoming bilateral state visit by a foreign leader after the formation of the new government in India following the Lok Sabha elections.

Hasina was among seven top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union council of ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on June 9.

Modi and Hasina are scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks on Saturday during which both sides are likely to firm up a raft of agreements providing for cooperation in several sectors.

"At the invitation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina will pay a state visit to India on June 21 and 22," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"This will be the first incoming

bilateral state visit after the formation of the government in India following the 18th Lok Sabha elections," it said.

Apart from holding bilateral consultations with Modi, the visiting leader is scheduled to call on President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, the MEA said in a statement.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is scheduled to call on Hasina on Friday evening.

The talks between the two prime ministers are expected to focus on taking the bilateral ties to new heights, said a source.

The overall strategic ties between India and Bangladesh have been on an upswing in the last few years.

Bangladesh is an important partner for India under its "Neighbourhood First" policy and the cooperation extends to areas of security, trade, commerce, energy, connectivity, science and technology, defence and maritime affairs among others. The achievements in the connectivity sector included the inauguration of the Maitri Setu bridge over river Feni in Tripura and the rollout of the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link.



Sensitivity and inclusivity deeply rooted in our culture : Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu emphasized that sensitivity and inclusivity are the core values deeply rooted in India's culture and civilization and are measures for the progress of a society.

Murmu visited the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities in New Delhi. She engaged with PwD children and students.

She also toured the newly renovated Prosthesis and Orthosis Centre, where she interacted with patients and observed the advanced facilities aimed at enhancing the lives of those with physical disabilities.

In her address to the gathering, President Murmu highlighted the importance of sensitivity and inclusivity in measuring the progress of a society. She emphasized that these values are deeply rooted in India's culture and civilization.

"No physical condition can be a barrier to living a normal life when our efforts are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of Divyangjan," she stated, underscoring the achievements of individuals such as athletes Deepa Malik, Arunima Sinha, and Avani Lekhara, and social worker K.S. Rajanna, who have exemplified how dedication and determination can overcome physical limitations.

NEET row: Rahul Gandhi doing petty politics, alleges BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of indulging in petty politics over alleged irregularities in NEET as it asserted that the Centre is looking into the matter "very sensitively" and justice will be done with every student who appeared for the medical entrance test.

The ruling party also alleged that the Congress is trying to mislead the country by spreading lies on the issue "under a conspiracy" to discredit the government's efforts made to streamline the examination system and also to divert the "link" of its ally RJD with the prime accused arrested in connection with the NEET "paper leak" case in Bihar.

The BJP's charges came after Gandhi on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Centre over the alleged irregularities in NEET and cancellation of UGC-NET and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "psychologically col-

lapsed" post-elections and will struggle to run a government like this.

Hitting back, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi termed Gandhi's remarks as "sad" and said the Congress leader is playing politics on the issue as he has nothing to do with the future of the students.

"The government is fully sensitive and alert with regard to the NEET exam. It is also committed to ensure that no student faces any injustice and strict action is taken against those involved (in paper leak)," he told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

"But the opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi, who could not pass even with third division in his third attempt and got just 100 seats (in Lok Sabha polls) is trying to declare himself leader of the bright students," he charged, adding that after Gandhi's press conference it became clear that there is no "seriousness and maturity" in the character of the Congress.



'No complaints against UGC-NET; exam cancelled to safeguard students' interest'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the UGC-NET was cancelled, Education Ministry officials Thursday said no complaints were received about the exam but a suo motu action was taken on the basis of inputs available with them to protect students' interest.

Education Ministry Joint Secretary Govind Jaiswal said the details of the inputs cannot be shared as the matter has been referred to the CBI and is currently under investigation.



"No complaints were received but the inputs we received from agencies indicated that the integrity of the exam has been compromised. The action was taken suo motu to

safeguard interests of the students," he said.

"A fresh date for the exam will be announced soon," Jaiswal told reporters.

The ministry on Wednesday cancelled UGC-NET conducted by the National Testing Agency following inputs that the integrity of the examination may have been compromised.

The decision by the Ministry comes amid a massive row on the medical entrance exam NEET over alleged irregularities, with the issue now before the Supreme Court.

Regular walk effective in relieving low back pain

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The simple exercise of walking is enough to bring relief to those having a history of low back pain, according to a research published in 'The Lancet' journal.

Following around 700 adults who had recovered from a recent episode of low back pain, researchers divided the participants into three groups - a personalised walking program, physiotherapy sessions over six months and no intervention.

The team of researchers, including those at Macquarie University, Australia, found that the walking group experienced greater relief, with a longer pain-free period before

recurrence.

"Walking is a low-cost, widely accessible and simple exercise that almost anyone can engage in, regardless of geographic location, age or socioeconomic status," said senior author Mark Hancock, a professor of physiotherapy, adding that the findings could profoundly impact how low back pain is managed.

"Our study has shown that this effective and accessible means of exercise has the potential to be successfully implemented at a much larger scale than other forms of exercise," said lead author Natasha Pocovi from Macquarie University.

Physiotherapy sessions needing close expert supervi-



sion and expensive equipment can make it "much less accessible to the majority of patients," said Hancock.

However, the researchers were not exactly sure why walking was more effective in relieving pain, but they think it might be due to the gentle movements and strengthening of spine, along with its relaxing

effects and the release of "feel-good" endorphins (happy hormones).

"And of course, we also know that walking comes with many other health benefits, including cardiovascular health, bone density, healthy weight, and improved mental health," said Hancock.

According to the World

Health Organization (WHO), low back pain is the single leading cause of disability, affecting quality of life. About 62 crore people around the world were affected by the condition in 2020, and cases are estimated to swell to over 84 crore by 2050, it said.

A 2022 study by researchers, including those from the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare and QI Spine Clinic, New Delhi, found that low back pain was more prevalent in India, compared to the world.

About 66 per cent of Indians were estimated to be enduring the condition for a lifetime, with women, rural population and manual labourers being affected the most.



# Pacifying farmers

Cabinet approves MSP for 14 Kharif season crops amid rising farmer unrest, but is it enough?

In one of its first major decisions, the Modi Government has decided to assuage the farmers by increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP). The Union Cabinet has approved the MSP for 14 Kharif season crops. This decision reflects the Government's attempt to ensure that farmers receive fair and remunerative prices for their produce, thereby helping them cope with rising input costs and inflation. Whether the farmers would welcome it, is doubtful. But it would indeed be some relief for the farmers. The approved MSP rates for Kharif crops indicate a substantial increase over the previous year. For instance, the MSP for paddy, the staple Kharif crop, has been raised by Rs100 per quintal, setting the new price at Rs 2,180 for the common variety and Rs 2,200 for the Grade A variety. Similarly, the MSP for maize has been increased by Rs 75 per quintal to Rs 2,130. These adjustments are part of a broader effort to cover a range of crops including cereals like rice and maize, pulses such as moong



and tur and oilseeds like soybeans and groundnuts. The recent surge in farmer protests underscores the presence of deeper systemic issues that extend beyond mere price support. High input costs, inadequate procurement infrastructure, mounting debt and the impacts of climate change are among the key factors driving farmer dissatisfaction. Many farmers struggle to access the benefits of the MSP due to insufficient procurement mechanisms and delays in payments. Moreover, the cost of essential inputs like seeds, fertiliser and pesticides has escalated, diminishing the net gains from the increased MSP. The pervasive issue of debt, compounded by crop failures and unpredictable market prices, further exacerbates the financial instability of farmers. These factors underscore the need for interventions that go beyond MSP hikes to address the underlying challenges faced by farmers. While the MSP increase is a positive step, it alone is unlikely to resolve the multifaceted issues confronting the agricultural sector. Comprehensive reforms are essential to ensure sustainable improvements in the livelihoods of farmers. To achieve this, the Government must consider a holistic approach that includes enhancing agricultural infrastructure, improving access to credit and providing insurance against crop failures. Encouraging crop diversification and improving market access can also help mitigate risks associated with price volatility and reduce farmers' reliance on a few staple crops. Strengthening procurement systems to ensure timely procurement and fair pricing is crucial to making the MSP more effective. The Cabinet's approval of increased MSP for 14 Kharif crops, though inadequate, is a welcome development that reflects the Government's recognition of the pressing challenges faced by the agricultural sector. A concerted effort to implement systemic reforms alongside fair pricing mechanisms is essential for the advancement of India's farmers and the agricultural sector as a whole..

## PICTALK



People use umbrellas to shield themselves during rains, in Kanyakumari

PTI

# Benefits of integrating offline and online channels

As offline and online channels converge, businesses must adapt to ensure a seamless customer journey across all touchpoints

Expertise in channel management-as indeed in other fields-can often be self-referential. The conversations on universal principles for the management of the offline channel typically have little or no intersection with those for the online channel. While a number of these principles-developed in their silos-are indeed extremely useful, the consumer is (still) a person. Even in B2B businesses, the key decision-maker is a person or a group of persons. It is the 'people-ness' of these people (consumers, customers) that creates a case for integrated thinking. Consistency of what a brand is saying is important essentially because of the much-cited phenomenon of short attention spans. However, consistency is not sufficient-condition to get some of the scarce attention that's essential at the very top of the funnel (attention-> interest-> decision-> action, or AIDA, the old marketing reliable). For instance, the individual seeking a new smartphone is probably going to visit a big retail outlet, where they might interact with a brand repre-



sentative and try out a demo unit. They might come across an Instagram post highlighting a new model. If this person is inclined towards gathering information and may have also read some reviews online and watched a YouTube influencer comparing different models. A few years ago, the number of people who have both offline and online dimensions in their purchase decision might have been very small, but this cohort is quite salient now. The challenging aspect in this customer journey is that the last A in AIDA, 'action' (purchase) might happen offline or online. Therefore, segregated structures for offline and online channels are not sustainable in the long term. It is clearly in the brand's interest that offline and online channels are,

"telling the same story." Whether this story is of a new feature or a new colour, whether it be a story told in a YouTube video or by an in-store demonstrator. Integration of offline and online channels is, therefore, essential for a coherent conversation with the consumer. No smart manager starts with making a case for unintegrated offline and online channels. This situation arises because of some recurring, largely structural issues. The offline channel is often managed through a command-and-control structure that has evolved over decades, while the online channel is relatively more nascent. Companies taking the latter lightly is of course rarely the case now but there's still much to learn about its dynamics. The narrative of D2C (direct-to-consumer) models being unviable that has set in among many minds after the boom and bust in the fortunes of D2C startups may delay integrated efforts, but will not stop the growth in the salience of online channels. Managerial specialisation is another reason for offline and online channels not being

integrated. Individuals who have acquired expertise through experience on offline channels are not necessarily the ones best suited to build or develop online channels, but with time this will change. Online and offline channels sometimes end up being unintegrated because of the list (or checklist) approach to channel execution. In this approach channel management is essentially a set of activities to be completed in a particular order. While the list approach is a hallmark of the manager who is strong at execution, it is not ideal for capturing strategic thinking. The choice of a metaphor that represents strategic thinking is essential for the integration of offline and online channels. Interconnected funnels might be a good, safe choice of metaphor in case a manager is struggling to find the ideal one for her context. Structural adjustments and readjustments will continue to happen, but integrated channel thinking is inevitable, because of its direct impact on customer experience. (The writer is Co-Founder of Channelplay; views are personal)



SUHAS MISRA

Raging wildlife fires in Uttarakhand have made headlines during the last month. These forest fires are a grim environmental reality and also a reflection of human faults in a society riddled with romanticism and unbridled freedom. Adding to this the situation of indiscipline and scant respect for the law, the disconcerting picture is complete. The incidents of resource-destroying wildlife forest fires in the green hilly State of Uttarakhand are due to three factors as obliquely indicated above. These are — faulty living paradigms resulting in environmental pollution, a growing culture of unrestrained freedom among the youth and a weak administrative system that is unable to enforce existing laws. Global warming due mainly to the huge use of hydrocarbon aviation fuels is the big reason for wild forest fires the likes of which are regularly observed in Australia and the USA. The forest fires of Uttarakhand were quite similar to the fires in these countries. The naturally growing *Chir Pine* trees in this State are stated to be susceptible to fires. However, the triggering cause of the fire is atmospheric warming due to vehicular and industrial pollution.

Uttarakhand has a vast belt of pollution causing the pharmaceutical industry of the modern allopathic school which makes extensive use of chemical raw materials. The other cause is mischief-mongering by delinquent youngsters as evident from the news that 3 persons hailing from Bihar were arrested for setting forest tracts in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on fire to get more social media views. Finally, flagrant violation of environmental protection laws of the land through illegal tree felling and construction practices constitutes the third reason. The sorry fact is that the media provides detailed coverage of such incidents but gives very empirical and glib explanations as to the causes of incidents. It doesn't provide any in-depth analytical reports on such incidents which will throw light holistically on their occurrence and prevention. Wildfires are a regular phenomenon in Australia and the USA as well as in some European countries. And they are intriguing. Geologists and Meteorologists in those supposedly developed and well-



THE MAIN REASON BEHIND THE OCCURRENCE OF WILDFIRES IS THE PRODUCTION OF EXCESSIVE HEAT AND DISTURBANCE OF WATER BALANCE IN THE ENVIRONMENT DUE TO EXCESSIVE HYDROCARBON BURNING

administered countries have neither complete nor correct explanations for these phenomena. But it is not difficult or impossible to arrive at the actual complete, scientific explanations. And that is possible only through the application of the scientific principles expounded in Vedic Physics. Through Vedic Physics, we can understand and explain all phenomena in nature precisely and perfectly. This is because; Vedic Physics provides a holistic exposition of natural phenomena. Its ambit covers the five primordial elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. This exposition goes from outwardly perceptible physical events to the innermost levels of subtle material existence. The Modern Physics of Western academia explains physical phenomena only to the extent of measurement of visible, audible or otherwise measurable physical phenomena. It has no concept of sub-nano material entities- mind (Anastasia) intellect (mahatva) and divinely originating rays (rashmiyan). Also, it has very little or virtually no understanding of ether.

Discourse of our Sanatan scientific literature dating back to 15000 years ago unfolds the mysteries of material nature comprehensively. Some of these texts are Aitreya Brahman and Shathpath Brahman. Picking out threads of core scientific precepts from these texts will enable us to refine our living paradigms and technologies in line with Vedic sciences. It will enable us to make environment-friendly construction practices and prevent natural disasters and catastrophic events like wildfires. The main reason behind the occurrence of wildfires is the production of excessive heat and disturbance of water balance in the environment due to excessive hydrocarbon burning. The primordial water element is the antidote to the primordial fire element. Vedic sciences provide all the solutions. Scientists of the Western, modern school have none. We must turn to our rich traditional Sanatan scientific literature of the yore to bring safety, stability and sustainability to the world before it is too late. (The author is a management consultant; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Modi's diplomatic engagements



Propos the news story "India's foreign policy under Modi 3.0," published on June 20, this is my response. In less than a week of assuming office as the Prime Minister for the world's largest democracy, Mr. Modi is back where he excels—on the global stage. His visit to Italy for the G7 meeting, coupled with several bilateral discussions, underscores his commitment to reinforcing India's international

presence. This trip marks Modi's first abroad after being re-elected for a third term, a testament to his enduring influence and the resilience of India's democratic process. Despite not securing an outright majority, Modi's leadership is strengthened by a robust opposition, showcasing India's vibrant democracy amidst global democratic uncertainties. His experienced diplomatic team, led by seasoned External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, continues to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes. PM Modi's visit highlights India's strategic balancing act, especially regarding sensitive issues like the Ukraine conflict and Israel's security situation. As global dynamics evolve, India's role remains pivotal, further cemented by Modi's diplomatic engagements and the nation's unwavering democratic principles.

Aarohi Sharma | Jammu

Additionally, the Jammu and Kashmir Police have made progress in combating terrorism by arresting an accomplice involved in a recent attack on a pilgrim bus. This demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing security threats. The Prime Minister's schedule includes inaugurating development projects and participating in International Yoga Day, reflecting his commitment to promoting health and unity. The event promises to bring together thousands, emphasising the global impact of yoga.

Reyansh Tiwari | Tirupati

### NAM FACES MYRIAD CHALLENGES

Madam — Apropos the news story "NAM faces challenges of neo-colonialism," published on June 20, this is my response. Churchill's warning that "those who forget history are condemned to repeat it" remains relevant. Reflecting on his 1948 speech, it's evident he criticised the colonial past while paradoxically supporting its continuation in Asia and Africa post-World War II. This paradox underlines the complex legacy of colonialism, still echoed

today. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in 1955 with India as a key player, sought to protect nations' sovereignty from colonial influences. NAM became a significant force, advocating for neutrality and independence during the Cold War. However, its relevance has waned post-Cold War as new forms of neo-colonialism—via economic and media control—emerge. Recent actions by France, maintaining economic dominance in African countries and interfering in geopolitical issues like Nagorno-Karabakh, highlight ongoing neo-colonialism. NAM's resurgence under Azerbaijan's leadership signals a renewed commitment to combating these modern threats. With Uganda set to lead NAM, it's crucial for member nations, including India, to unite against neo-colonialist pressures and uphold the movement's founding principles to ensure global sovereignty and peace.

Shravy Patel | Rourkela

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FIRST COLUMN

G7 SUMMIT AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Summit acknowledged the critical role of the Global South



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE


The recent G7 meeting held in picturesque Apulia, Italy, had several pointers on the recent geopolitical shifts and changing equations between some of the most powerful nations in the world. Yes, the meme-worthy, Pictures of Stares, Namaskars and Parachute Landings, kept the social media alive and brought energy to an otherwise, boring round of meetings and dinners of world leaders, discussing topics of shared interest, the underlining points were not missed. First, the clear focus of the meeting, as highlighted in the joint communique was Ukraine to send some tough messages to China and other parties working covertly with Russia. In a not-so-veiled message and directly naming China the Joint Statement read “We will continue taking measures against actors in China and third countries that materially support Russia’s war machine, including financial institutions, consistent with our legal systems and other entities in China that facilitate Russia’s acquisition of items for its defense industrial base. We reiterate that entities, including financial institutions, that facilitate Russia’s acquisition of items or equipment for its defense industrial base are supporting actions that undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Accordingly, we will impose restrictive measures consistent with our legal systems to prevent abuse and restrict access to our financial systems for targeted individuals and entities in third countries, including Chinese entities, that engage in this activity. “The message to China was, don’t keep playing with fire, as one day, it may singe you. It may be worth mentioning that the US has undertaken several export control measures to prevent the transfer of high-tech equipment to China, which have dual-purpose utilities, i.e. can be used for making precision weapons as well as cyber surveillance tools. China was the only large economy, (not so direct a party to the Russia-Ukraine war), which was absent from the G7 summit. Recently Chinese President Xi Jinping undertook a tour of several European countries to ease the tariff-related issues, imposed by several European nations, against Chinese electrical vehicles. While some nations in Europe are committed to the US-led vision of hard measures on China, several others are on the fringe, tilting towards China.



Meanwhile, this G7 summit, in a backhanded compliment of sorts, for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of inclusion of Global South countries in world affairs, reiterated the importance of African nations and pledged several measures to boost the economic prosperity of the region. The Joint Statement Stated “We endorse African countries’ call for greater voice in international bodies and welcome the AU’s participation in the G20 as a permanent member and the creation of a third Chair for sub-Saharan Africa at the IMF Executive Board in November. We reiterate our support for the G20 Compact with Africa, as a tool to increase private sector investments, promote structural reforms and local entrepreneurship support and enhance cooperation, including in the energy sector.” PM Modi who was also in Apulia, as a special invitee, in his brief outreach session addressed highlighted the preeminence of Global South countries. He said “The countries of the Global South are bearing the brunt of global uncertainties and tensions. India has considered it its responsibility to place the priorities and concerns of the countries of the Global South on the world stage. We have given high priority to Africa in these efforts. We are proud that the G-20, under India’s chairmanship, made the African Union a permanent member. India has been contributing to the economic and social development, stability and security of all African countries and will continue to do so.” A new world order with multiple voices opining on global matters, at a time when existing political structures are being challenged domestically, was one clear message from the G7 meeting in Italy. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

# UGC set to revolutionise higher education in India

## The University Grants Commission has introduced a transformative policy that is expected to align India with global educational practices



MANOJ VARGHESE

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in its recent decision has allowed Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which offer programs in regular mode, to admit students twice a year, from the coming academic year. This option would be made available only in those HEIs that intend to increase their student intake and offer new programmes in emerging areas. Earlier, the UGC had decided in its 571st commission held on 25 July 2023 to permit biannual admissions under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online modes in January and July during an academic year. Last year, after the UGC had permitted two cycle admissions in a year for ODL and Online modes, in addition to

countries this biannual mode of admissions exists for the diploma, degree and post-graduation courses after the senior secondary education. It will enhance international collaborations and student exchanges from foreign countries. As a result, the global competitiveness will improve and will be in alignment with the global educational standards. The biannual university admissions will help students who missed an entrance owing to a delayed result or health reasons, as they do not have to wait for one another year. Most of the institution heads have welcomed the step, owing to the official directive and secondly as the intake will bring in extra revenue to their institutes. Some of them want to

test the water by introducing it in some selected courses. On the other side, some of them expressed concern over the additional space, infrastructure and faculty required to handle this extra burden of students. Enhancing the quantity is good, but the cost of the quality is what some educational experts fear. Recently, a German IT professional was travelling from Delhi to Dehradun on a Shatabdi train. He was on his vacation trip to India after a six-month long professional hard work. He narrated how the Germans work, “When they work, they work and then spare a few months to upgrade their skills and also go in a hibernation mode of rest for reviving themselves.” Whereas, we Indians, either

work throughout the 12 months of spring, winter, rainy and summer seasons; or follow a lacklustre attitude and take a back seat. In India, many scholars pursue a doctorate for the sake of procuring a PhD degree after their post-graduation. Whereas, in European countries like Germany, students while pursuing their secondary education develop the flare for a particular vocational course and practice it on grounds. After a while, they return to learn more about that particular profession through higher studies. No doubt, many of them do their PhD in plumbing or automobiles and add value to their profession. In countries like Germany, education is a lifelong learning process and addresses the

ever-changing demands of the labour market. The learning is procured through adult education, professional development, recognising prior experience, flexible learning pathways and providing opportunities for seniors to pursue personal interests. The ongoing learning and training is imparted through Evening classes, Workshops, Vocational courses and Non-formal educational programs tailored to adults seeking to acquire new skills or qualifications. These educational opportunities are provided by diverse entities, including municipal and private institutions, religious organisations, trade unions, industry and commerce chambers, associations, political parties, businesses, Government agencies, academies, family education centres, vocational schools, as well as media outlets like radio and television. In India, the recently introduced vocational degree courses like BVoc and MVoc have failed to take off and get the desired results as expected. The adult mindset is different here, as they prefer a white-collar job. But the reality is different. One of the ITI pass out in the AC stream, Mr Khatri, an entrepreneur was recently awarded for his turnover of over Rs 10 crore per year. It is not the Degrees, but the determination and expertise in their profession, that makes a person successful. In most of the developed countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK and Germany, college stu-

dents while pursuing their higher studies work and earn. The literacy campaign and the efforts to bring back the school dropouts in India have yielded good results. The missing link is the flare for a particular vocational course, hands-on training, experience in the respective field and the confidence to be of their own. A change in the mindset of senior secondary-level students towards their career perspective can make a difference. Adopting the worldwide model of universities is good, but engaging them after this biannual mode of education is what the policymakers need to ponder upon. (The writer is a former editor and former media advisor to the Delhi Government; views are personal)



# The unseen burden of women’s unpaid labour

## Globally, women spend significant time on unpaid care work, limiting their participation in the labour market and affecting economic stability



ARCHANA DATTA



In the early 60s when Canadian short story writer, Alice Munro, who died recently, earned some success, a newspaper ran a piece on her, which had a condescending headline the ‘housewife who finds time to write short stories’. The banter fell through Alice and she went on to win a Nobel in literature in 2013. While another Nobel winner in Economics in 2023, Claudia Goldin, explained in her research that a woman’s vocation is not always guided by her choice, but, more often by the ‘long-standing societal trends’, which build a ‘cult of domesticity’ around her, idealising her role as an unpaid caregiver. Not surprising that women spend almost 76.2 per cent of total hours, three times more than men, on unpaid care work (ILO). Of all regions, the Pacific and Asia present the worst scenario, with men performing the lowest share of unpaid care work (1 hour and 4 minutes). In 2018, 606 million working-age women expressed disappointment that they failed to enter the labour market because of the burden of unpaid care work, which was the case for only 41 million men. In terms of monetary value, women’s unpaid work may exceed up to 40 per cent of GDP in some countries (ILO). Social scientists contend that child-bearing, as well as the age and number of children, more than marriage, impede women’s entry into the labour market. Women (aged 25-54) face a wide disparity in labour force participation rate (LFPR), which remains only 61.4 per cent, as against men’s 90.6 per cent (World Bank, 2022). While, in the lone women households, with at least one child under 6, economic compulsion lifts women’s LFPR to about 65.8 per cent, but, it goes down to 48.7 per cent, when mothers live with a partner and a young child, as the ‘male breadwinner’ syndrome prevails (UNWomen). Notwithstanding, the ‘breadwinner moms’ also bear a heavier load at home,



IT IS HIGH TIME NOW THAT THE WORLD FULFILS ITS SDG 2030 COMMITMENTS AND ENSURES WOMEN’S ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND EQUALITY, WITH APPROPRIATE POLICY FORMULATIONS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS

even if they out-earn their husbands’ (Pew Research Centre). While, the ‘motherhood penalty’ is very much persistent in the USA (Harvard, 23). ‘Moms were six times less likely than non-mothers and 3.35 times less likely than child-free men to be recommended for a hire...and are 114 per cent more likely than dads to take a career pause (Mom Project, US, a career-resource platform for working mothers). ‘If a kid is sick,..... it’s going to be the woman to take time off, because they are paid less, which makes more economic sense’ (PNAS, 2023). While, a report by the British trade union association ‘TUC’, said that ‘men do not face a penalty as parents at all, rather, fathers who work full time, experience a wage bonus, when they have children, earning 22 per cent more’. ‘The disparity arises not because mothers actually become less productive employees, or fathers work harder becoming parents, but, because employers expect them to be so, indicating a clear-cut culture bias about gender and work’, said Michelle Budig, a sociology professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her research further revealed that on average, men’s earnings increased by more than 6 per cent when they had children, if they lived with them, while, women’s decreased by 4 per cent for each child they had (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, US, 1979 to 2006). In India, childbirth impacts women’s entry into the labour market, but, differently, in the context of urban and rural. A study, collecting the Life History Calendar (LHC) data from the

States of Karnataka and Rajasthan, suggested that motherhood may not be accompanied by a penalty in terms of labour market participation for rural women because of the predominance of informal and flexible employment, which are more conducive for childcare responsibilities than work in an urban or more formalised setting (Gautham 2021). The analysis of data from the Employment-Unemployment Schedule (EUS) of the NSS from 2004 to 2012 revealed that rural motherhood wage penalties are close to zero, whereas, urban women pay a large penalty of about 18 per cent of total wages and highly educated women, or women in regular or salaried wage work, incur a larger wage penalty after motherhood than their less educated or casual wage counterparts (Wilde et al. 2010). However, first-time fathers, both rural and urban, experience no negative wage effects following the birth of children. The lack of childcare facilities is one of the most significant impediments to gender equality in job markets (UNWomen). A macro-econometric analysis of childcare policies in 18 OECD countries (1980-2007) commented that measures like high levels of employment protection and longer paid leave are crucial for the survival of working mothers (Thévenon, 2013). In 2016, an analytical study (ITUC) in seven high-income OECD countries, appraised that an investment of two per cent of GDP in the care industry, could create nearly 13 million new jobs in the US, 3.5 million in Japan, nearly 2 million in Germany, 1.5 million in the UK, 1 million in Italy, 600,000 in

Australia and nearly 120,000 in Denmark and boost women’s employment rate by 3.3 to 8.2 percentage points, as against men’s 1.4 to 4.0 percentage points. Subsequently, similar research (ITUC) in emerging economies such as Brazil, Costa Rica, China (People’s Republic), India, Indonesia and South Africa, also substantiated that the same amount of investment in the health and care sector would bolster nearly 24 million new jobs would in China, 11 million in India, nearly 2.8 million in Indonesia, 4.2 million in Brazil and over 400,000 in South Africa and 63,000 in Costa Rica. While, the ILO’s recent global ‘Care at Work’ report exhorted that to reducing the gender gap in employment by 7 percentage points and the monthly earnings gap to 1.8 per cent by 2035, a sustainable annual investment of over \$204 billion, an average of 5.8 per cent of GDP per country, should be invested for universal childcare and long-term care services. While, feminist economists (Elson et al.) and proponents of the Purple Economy (Ilkkaracan), vouched for recognising care as ‘an indispensable component of human well-being’ and called for a ‘caring and gender equal economic and social order’, by sharing caregiving responsibilities between the State and households and women and men. It is high time now that the world fulfils its SDG 2030 commitments and ensures women’s economic justice and equality, with appropriate policy formulations and resource allocations. (The author is former Director General, Doordarshan & All India Radio, views are personal)



MONEY MATTERS

## EPFO adds record 18.92 lakh net members in April

Retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) added a record 18.92 lakh net members in April, payroll data released on Thursday showed. The addition during the month is the highest since the first payroll data was published in April 2018, a labour ministry statement said. An increase of 31.29 per cent was registered in net member addition during April as compared to March 2024, it stated. According to the statement, EPFO's provisional payroll data released on Thursday highlights that it has added 18.92 lakh net members in April. Further, the year-on-year analysis reveals a growth of 10 per cent in net member addition. The surge in membership can be attributed to various factors, including increased employment opportunities, a growing awareness of employee benefits, and the effectiveness of EPFO's outreach programmes, the statement said. The data indicates that around 8.87 lakh new members have enrolled during April 2024.



### UNSECURED LENDING

## Not acting on it could have created bigger problem: Das

PNS ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said not acting on unsecured lending could have created a "bigger problem", and RBI's actions on such practices have had the desired impact of slowing down growth in the riskier segment.

Addressing an international conference on financial resilience at the RBI's College of Supervisors here, Das said restrictions on unsecured lending were the result of a view that there could be a potential problem in the credit market because of growth in unsecured lending.

The overall headline parameters were looking good, but there was "clear evidence" of dilution of underwriting standards, lack of proper appraisals and a mentality to join the bandwagon for driving up the unsecured lending among some lenders, he added.

"We thought if left unat-



**Addressing an international conference on financial resilience at the RBI's College of Supervisors here, Das said restrictions on unsecured lending were the result of a view that there could be a potential problem in the credit market because of growth in unsecured lending.**

tended, these vulnerabilities can become a bigger problem. So, we thought it is better to act in advance and slow down the credit growth," Das said.

He expressed satisfaction that the RBI's action has had the desired impact, as the growth in unsecured lending has indeed slowed down.

## Gold jumps Rs 120; silver surges Rs 900 amid strong global cues

Gold prices jumped Rs 120 to Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid strong trends globally, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had ended at Rs 72,430 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also surged Rs 900 to Rs 92,300 per kg. It had settled at Rs 91,400 per kg on Wednesday. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams, up by Rs 120 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,332 per ounce, up USD 5 from the previous close. "Gold prices remained positive, as US participants returned from the Juneteenth holiday with a buying sentiment. This was driven by weak retail sales data and lower inflation figures. "Expectations for a rate cut in September are growing, but if any US Fed members hint at a delay beyond September, profit booking in gold is likely," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.



## SEA seeks govt push for oilseed output boost

Edible oils industry body SEA has urged the government to prioritise agriculture and launch a national mission with adequate financial support to boost oilseed production in the upcoming 2024-25 Budget. In a pre-budget memorandum, the Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said increasing domestic oilseed output was crucial to reducing India's rising dependence on expensive imports of edible oils. The body also demanded the correction of an inverted duty structure on imports of refined oil and finished products like stearic acid that put local manufacturers at a disadvantage. India meets over 60 per cent of its edible oil demand through imports, making it one of the world's biggest importers. SEA also asked the government to not extend a ban on exports of de-oiled rice bran beyond July 31. The new government has included an "Oilseed Development Programme" in its first 100-day agenda.



## Indians' funds in Swiss banks plunge 70 pc to hit four-year low of Rs 9,771 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/ZURICH

Funds parked by Indian individuals and firms in Swiss banks, including through local branches and other financial institutions, fell sharply by 70 per cent in 2023 to a four-year low of 1.04 billion Swiss Francs (Rs 9,771 crore), annual data from Switzerland's central bank showed on Thursday.

The decline in aggregate funds of Indian clients with Swiss banks for the second consecutive year, after hitting a 14-year-high of CHF 3.83 billion in 2021, was sharply driven by a sharp plunge in funds held through bonds, securities and various other financial instruments.

Besides, the amount in customer deposit accounts and funds held through other bank branches in India also declined significantly, the data showed.

These are official figures reported by banks to the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and do not indicate the quantum of the much-debated alleged black money held by Indians



in Switzerland. These figures also do not include the money that Indians, NRIs or others might have in Swiss banks in the names of third-country entities.

The total amount of CHF 1,039.8 million, described by the SNB as 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks or 'amounts due to' their Indian clients at the end of 2023, included CHF 310 million in customer deposits (down from CHF 394 million at 2022-end), CHF 427 million held via other banks (down from CHF 1,110 million), CHF 10 mil-

lion (down from CHF 24 million) through fiduciaries or trusts, and CHF 302 million as 'other amounts due to customers in form of bonds, securities and various other financial instruments' (down from CHF 1,896 million).

The total amount stood at a record high of nearly 6.5 billion Swiss francs in 2006, after which it has been mostly on a downward path, except for a few years including in 2011, 2013, 2017, 2020 and 2021, as per SNB data.

While all four components had declined during 2019, the

year 2020 saw a significant plunge in customer deposits, while there was a surge across all categories in 2021. During 2022, only the fiduciaries segment saw an increase.

According to the SNB, its data for 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks towards Indian clients takes into account all types of funds of Indian customers at Swiss banks, including deposits from individuals, banks and enterprises. This includes data for branches of Swiss banks in India, as also non-deposit liabilities.

On the other hand, the 'local banking statistics' of the Bank for International Settlement (BIS), which have been described in the past by Indian and Swiss authorities as a more reliable measure for deposits by Indian individuals in Swiss banks, showed a decline of nearly 25 per cent during 2023 in such funds to USD 70.6 million (Rs 663 crore).

It had dropped by 18 per cent in 2022 and by over 8 per cent in 2021, after rising by nearly 39 per cent in 2020.

## SBI Chairman pitches for tax relief on interest income in Budget



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has pitched for tax relief on interest income, saying it would help banks to garner savings that could be used for funding long-term infra projects.

Currently, banks are required to deduct tax when interest income from deposits held in all the bank branches put together is more than Rs 40,000 in a year. With regard to savings accounts, interest earned up to Rs 10,000 is exempt from tax.

"If at all some relief could be given in the Budget regarding tax on the interest earnings, it will be an incentive to depositors. Eventually, the banking sector uses deposits mobilised for the capital formation in the country," he told PTI in an interview.

The Full Budget for 2024-25 is likely to be presented by

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Parliament next month. Given the current economic growth rate, the SBI chairman is expecting 14-15 per cent loan growth during the fiscal year 2024-25. "Normally the way we look at it is that the GDP growth rate plus inflation and 2-3 per cent over that. That gives us the number around 14 per cent or so," he said.

"Hence, 14-15 per cent credit growth depends upon the opportunities available for lending, and it meets our risk appetite. We will be happy to grow at this pace," he said.

As far as deposits are concerned, he said, it grew by 11 per cent last year. "And we have some elbow room available in terms of excess SLR...which ensures that we don't have any pressure on us to raise the deposit rates for supporting our loan-to-deposit ratio," he said.

## India fossil fuel consumption up 8 pc in 2023

PNS ■ DUBAI

Fossil fuel consumption in India rose 8 per cent in 2023, accounting for almost all demand growth, while its share of overall consumption stood at 89 per cent, according to a report.

According to an Energy Institute (EI) report, for the first time, more coal was used in India than Europe and North America combined.

EI and co-authors KPMG and Kearney on Thursday released the 73rd annual edition of the Statistical Review of World Energy, presenting for the first time full global energy data for 2023.

The report suggests that five key stories emerge from the 2023 data, starting with record



global energy consumption, with coal and oil pushing fossil fuels and their emissions to record levels.

"Global primary energy consumption overall was at a record absolute high, up 2 per cent on the previous year to 620 Exajoules (EJ). Global fossil fuel consumption reached a record high, up 1.5 per cent to 505 EJ (driven by coal up 1.6 per cent,

oil up 2 per cent to above 100 million barrels for first time, while gas was flat)," said the report.

As a share of the overall mix they were at 81.5 per cent, marginally down from 82 per cent last year. Emissions from energy increased 2 per cent, exceeding 40 gigatonnes of CO2 for the first time.

Solar and wind push global renewable electricity generation to another record level. Renewable generation, excluding hydro, was up 13 per cent to a record global high of 4,748 TWh, it said.

This growth was driven almost entirely by wind and solar and accounted for 74 per cent of all net additional electricity generated.

## Financial sector players pitch for tax sops in Budget to boost capital markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Financial sector players on Thursday pitched for streamlining capital gains tax and reduction in Securities Transaction Tax in the upcoming FY25 Budget to boost capital markets.

In a pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here, some of the players urged the government to fix tax arbitrage wherever it exists.

This was the second Pre-Budget Consultation, which was attended by leading

experts of the financial and capital markets sector, in connection with the forthcoming General Budget 2024-25, the finance ministry said in a post on X.

The full Budget for 2024-25 is expected to be presented in Parliament next month. Emerging out of a two-hour meeting with the finance minister, Arun Kohli, MD & Country Head, Morgan Stanley India Company, said tax policies need to be stable and long-term oriented.

Participants also extended their suggestions on capital



gains tax and securities transaction tax.

According to George Alexander Muthoot, MD of Muthoot Group, some of the players pitched for deepening the market and providing some tax incentives.

"We've suggested that since NBFC credit has grown and the RBI has flagged over-dependence on banks, allocation of funds from SIDBI and NABARD could increase for refinancing of NBFCs," FIDC Director Raman Aggarwal said. NBFCs (non-banking financial companies) also sought clarity on GST demand on co-lending and payment of GST on service fees, Aggarwal added. Asset management companies discussed issues related to GIFT CITY also and the ways to retain capital within the country, he noted.

## Govt issues draft guidelines to curb unsolicited biz messages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Consumer Affairs Ministry on Thursday sought public comments until July 21 on draft guidelines to curb unsolicited and unwanted business communications like promotional calls and text messages.

The guidelines -- prepared after consultations with stakeholders, including telecom firms and regulators -- define "business communication" as any communication related to goods or services like promotional and service messages but excludes personal com-

munication. They will apply to all individuals and entities that make or engage others for such communications or benefit from them, the ministry said in a statement.

The draft guidelines classify any business communication as unsolicited and unwanted if it does not comply with the recipient's consent or registered preferences.

Other conditions that would make a communication unauthorised include using unregistered numbers or SMS headers, calling despite recipients opting out,



failing to obtain digital consent, not identifying the caller and purpose, and lacking an opt-out option.

The proposals also bar such communications that violate the telecom regulator Telecom Regulations Authority of India (Trai) rules on commercial messages based on customer preferences.

While Trai's 2018 rules have been effective for registered telemarketers, communications from unregistered marketers using private 10-digit numbers remain unabated, the ministry said.

"Do Not Disturb (DND)

registry has been highly effective for registered telemarketers, but the unwarranted communication from unregistered telemarketers and those using 10-digit private numbers remain unabated," the ministry said.

The government is "committed to safeguarding consumer interests and consumer rights, especially in the increasingly expanding and penetrative consumer space".

The draft guidelines aim to protect consumers from invasive and unauthorised marketing, the ministry added.

## Govt weighs interventions to stabilise rising wheat prices



As of June 20, the average retail price of wheat stood at Rs 30.99 per kg, up from Rs 28.95 a year ago, while wheat flour price rose to Rs 36.13 per kilo-

gram as against Rs 34.29 per kg last year, the data showed.

The ministers discussed the position of wheat stocks and prices in detail during the meeting. In a statement, the Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry said, "The Union Minister directed that a close watch may be kept on the prices of wheat and suitable policy interventions to be undertaken to ensure price stability for the consumers of the country."

It assured that the government has procured slightly more wheat for the central pool than the previous year.



## Sensex, Nifty scale fresh record high levels on robust FII inflows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty soared to new lifetime highs on Thursday, fuelled by intense buying in market heavyweights Reliance, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank amid a recent surge in foreign capital inflows.

Besides, stable global crude prices extended support to capital markets amid investors looking for fresh triggers, traders said.

Rallying for the sixth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 141.34 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 77,478.93. During the day, it surged 305.5 points or 0.39 per cent to 77,643.09.

As many as 2,282 stocks advanced while 1,571 declined and 128 remained unchanged on the BSE. The BSE benchmark has jumped 1,022.34 points or 1.33 per cent in the last six days.

The NSE Nifty rose 51 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at its fresh closing high of 23,567. Intra-day, it soared 108 points or 0.45 per cent to 23,624.

"FIIs have been net buyers in Indian equities for the last three days and have bought Rs 12,600 crore, which includes a few large block deals. On the domestic front, the market is consolidating with a positive bias amid strong FII flows and healthy macros."

Also, an expectation of a growth-focused budget is aiding sentiments and is likely to lead to sector-specific action," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Asian Paints were among the biggest gainers.





## Shatrughan Sinha says ‘KHAMOSH’ to rumours about Sona’s wedding

The Sinha and Ratansi families have yet to share details about the upcoming wedding of Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal. Despite this, rumours claim the Sinha family is unhappy and will not attend.

Shatrughan Sinha denied these rumours in an interview and shared, “I will be there at the wedding, certainly. Why shouldn’t I, and why won’t I?” He emphasised, “Sonakshi and Zaheer have to live life together. They look very nice together.”

He added, “It’s just the life of my only daughter, Sonakshi, whom I am very proud of and immensely fond of. She calls me the pillar of her strength. The very fact that I have still been in Mumbai conveys

that I am here not only as her pillar of strength but as her real kavach (armour) as well. Her happiness is my happiness and vice versa. She has every right to choose her partner and the other details of her wedding.”

Shatrughan Sinha also condemned the rumours saying, “Those who are coming out with fake news are just sounding very frustrated with this joyous occasion as they are spreading nothing but lies. I would like to caution them with my signature dialogue: ‘Khamosh’, it’s none of your business. Mind only your business.”

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal will have a court wedding on June 23, followed by a private celebration at Bastian in Mumbai with family and close friends.

# what’s brewing?

## Alia Bhatt shares her excitement for *Jigra*, *Love & War*

Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt recently spoke about sharing screen time with Vedang Raina, her co-star in *Jigra*. She described him as “sublime.” Additionally, Alia talked about her experience working with filmmaker Vasan Bala. “Vedang is just sublime,” Alia shared in an interview. “He appears in the movie as my brother. We had a pretty smooth, laid-back working relationship, although I won’t go into too much detail about it.” “I had a wonderful time working with Vasan Bala,” Alia said, referring to director Vasan Bala as cool. She further added, “You’ll see so many Easter eggs in his films and in *Jigra* as well. In fact, it used to be like a discovery for me every time I

walked onto the set. He has this grounding, old-soul sort of quality, yet he is also so edgy and cool. As a filmmaker, the way he writes and thinks is amazing. I had a blast working with him.” In addition to *Jigra*, Alia is working on an unnamed film with Yash Raj Films and *Love and War*, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Talking of *Love and War*, Alia has been pretty excited for the film, as she shares, “There are so many layers to look forward to that I don’t know which one to pick. First and foremost, the pleasure and honour of working with Sanjay sir once again, under his guidance and gaze, is step number one. You can go anywhere with it because of his attention to



detail and his attention to you.” Alia added that she is looking forward to Ranbir Kapoor and Sanjay Leela Bhansali coming together once again. “I, as an audience, am more excited to see him (Bhansali) and Ranbir collaborate again after so many years. I am like, ‘Wow, what’s that going to be like?’” she said.

## Mandira Bedi evokes hard time she faced adopting her daughter!

Actress Mandira Bedi, recently shared her thoughts on why she chose to adopt a child. She named the baby girl Tara Bedi Kaushal after her late spouse, Raj Kaushal. Mandira stated that she had informed Raj during their relationship that she had always wished to adopt one child. The actor also talked about Veer’s reaction to Tara’s adoption. Veer was nine years old when Tara was adopted.

“I want to have one and adopt one,” Mandira Bedi recalled how she didn’t want to become a mother during the early years of her marriage. She told Humans of Bombay, “When we got married, I was not ready to get pregnant for a while. I was too busy doing cricket commentary; a couple of my contracts didn’t allow me to get pregnant, and then there was someone in my family who was trying to get pregnant and was doing IVFs, and the IVFs were failing. And then I realised, I do want to be a mother. I am not going to let life pass me by. I do want to be a parent.” She added, “The day I decided, three months later, I was pregnant. It was 13 years



into our marriage when I got pregnant. I was so busy running around. Once I became a mother, I realised, ‘This is the best thing I’ve ever done.’ Then I was like, I want more. So, when Veer was six years old, I put the paper for adoption.”

Mandira and Raj had to wait three years to adopt and bring home a girl. In their adoption documents, they said that they were open to adopting a kid from any part of India, which added their name to the list.

“It’s a long process, and I don’t know why it’s not easier. I mean, I understand the reasons, but when it’s clear that this is a good family, it should be simpler. It took a while—Veer turned nine, the pandemic hit, and I told Raj, ‘It still hasn’t happened. Why?’ We had gotten caught up and didn’t follow up much. So, I thought, it’s now or never, and we pushed forward.”

They eventually received images of Tara, who was born in Tikamgarh, Jabalpur, over the mail, and they decided right away that they wanted her to be a part of their family. Raj took her on a private jet flight from Jabalpur to Mumbai during the height of the coronavirus pandemic.



## Angelina Jolie’s son, Maddox, turns to her as ‘protector’ now

After the reported domestic abuse incident on a flight from Paris to Los Angeles in 2016, Brad Pitt’s connection with some of his children deteriorated. The six children that Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have together are Maddox, 22, Pax, 20, Zahara, 19, Shiloh, 18 and the twins, Knox and Vivienne, 15; in court documents, Jolie claimed that Pitt had physically abused the children throughout the flight. Shortly after the purported incident on the airplane, Jolie and Pitt’s marriage disintegrated in 2016.

*The Bullet Train* actor allegedly grabbed and shook her, accusing her of “f\*\*\*\*ng up this family,” according to her claims. In addition, the paperwork contained additional unsettling claims, such as that Pitt “hit” and “choked” one of their kids in

the face. But a close aide to Pitt refuted any claims of mistreatment. Recently, a source close to the family told that Maddox “rubbed off on” the younger kids because he felt badly about Pitt after the event, and that “he’s taken it upon himself to be Angelina’s protector.” Because of this, a source claims that Shiloh’s recent decision to remove Pitt from her last name is “connected” to the rumours circulating about her father’s purported “abuse history.” The informant said, “She used to be very close with Brad and his family, but that relationship [changed] in recent years.” The younger Jolie-Pitt children, Vivienne and Knox, have also begun to distance themselves from their father. Vivienne declined to sign her father’s name on the “Outsiders” playbill.

## JESSICA BIEL SEES HUSBAND JUSTIN’S ARREST AS A ‘DISTRACTION’

Following his arrest on Tuesday and subsequent charges of driving while intoxicated in the Hamptons, well-known artist Justin Timberlake sparked a media frenzy. After his arrest, the singer’s wife, actress Jessica Biel, was filming a new episode of her program, *The Better Sisters*. Biel is apparently not happy about the whole incident, according to a close source of hers. Biel is a well-known and talented artist who has won two Golden Globes and a Primetime Emmy. Her credits include the films *Total Recall*, *Blade: Trinity*, *The Illusionist* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. She married the NSYNC alum in 2012, and the two are parents to two children. Images of Jessica Biel from her *Better Sisters* Prime video set went viral on social media on Tuesday. Her response to Justin Timberlake’s imprisonment has now been disclosed by a source. According to the source, Biel was not delighted about this arrest and was only using it as a diversion. The source went on, “She had to

shoot. She dislikes any attention, especially non-negative, focused on the family.” Jessica Biel, however, “will always be by his side” since she loves and cares for her husband. The source went on, “He’s a great husband and father.” Even though Biel was exhausted, another person who saw her on the sets reported that she was totally engaged in the filming. “The cast and crew have nothing but positive things to say about her,” the insider said, adding that she seems enthusiastic about her work.



## FUN

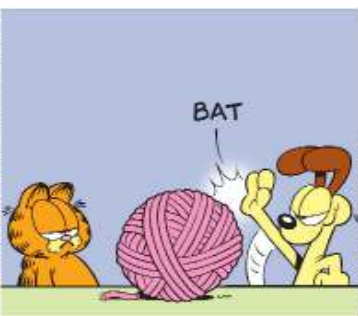
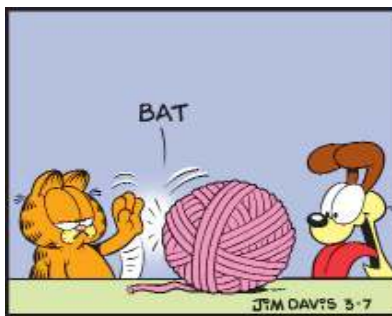
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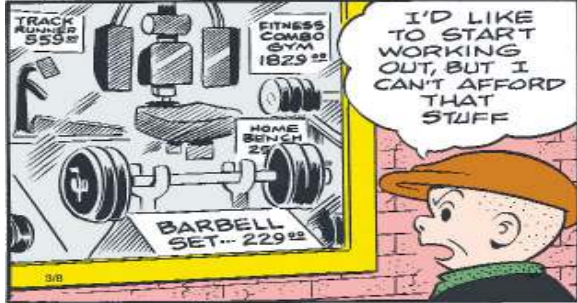
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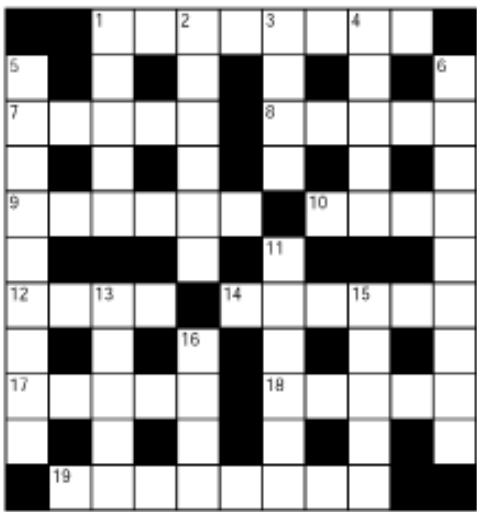
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### GINGER MEGGS



### SUDOKU

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

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

### ACROSS

- Made or became larger
- A month
- An item of furniture
- One of the continents
- A graceful water bird
- Give assistance
- Purchased
- Sample by mouth
- Tiny
- Bewildered

### DOWN

- Mistake
- A building for a king or queen
- Short letter
- Where your arm bends

- A skydiver wears this
- Jack climbed this in a story
- Buildings for people
- A rope thrown by a cowboy
- Keep watch over
- A green thing growing on a tree

SOLUTION												
M	I	S	T	A	K	E	S					
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# TRAVELOGUE





# Huge fan of Bumrah, don't want thing be changed in his unorthodox action: Ambrose

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN BARBADOS,

Curtly Ambrose is a huge fan of Jasprit Bumrah and despite the Indian spearhead's struggles with stress fractures in the past, the Caribbean legend would not want to change anything in his unorthodox action as he feels every fast bowler takes the field with a risk of getting injured. Bumrah, arguably the best all-format pacer in the game right now, has had his fair share of back problems and underwent a surgery in March last year. After a long rehab, Bumrah made a comeback ahead of the ODI World Cup in India in November and he has not looked back since then.

The 30-year-old can get wickets in a T20 at any stage of the game and in the longest format, he has the ability to strike with both the new and the old ball, more so when it is reversing.

In a telephonic interview with PTI, Ambrose said Bumrah should not change a thing unless he sustains a serious injury.

"What I can tell you something about Jasprit Bumrah, I'm a big fan. Right from ever since I saw him the first time. He's so unconventional but highly



effective. And that's what I like about him. When you look at traditional fast bowlers, you wouldn't look at Bumrah, he's so unorthodox.

"He has done a great job for India and still doing a great job in all formats. I met him a couple of years ago when India played in Antigua. He's someone I've always enjoyed watching because he's so different," said Ambrose who is involved with promoting the ongoing T20 World Cup here.

Bumrah's open-chested action does put pressure on his back but Ambrose believes every fast bowler has to deal with risks like that. "From my little experience, there are no two bowlers who are exactly alike. Bowlers may have similarities but they are never exactly alike and we all have our different styles everyone is different.

"In terms of his longevity, in terms of injuries, (for) every fast bowler, there is always risk of being

injured. But at the same time you can't go out there thinking that way. "You've got to go out there and do the job to the best of your ability and whatever happens, happens. The only way he should change is if he, may be, sustains a serious injury or has to re-model his action or something," said the 60-year-old who played 98 Tests for the West Indies taking 405 wickets.

Ambrose, who troubled the world's best batters with the extra

bounce he created because of his 6'7" frame, also doesn't believe that the stress on Bumrah's back is only because of his action.

"I've never been through it (stress fracture). So it would be unfair for me to even try to say what to do. I will leave that for the medical expert. I don't think Bumrah's stress comes totally from his action.

"You can look at Ian Bishop, he had a perfect action and he also had stress fracture," reasoned the cricketer from Antigua.

**Too much cricket being played, Test cricket is real cricket**

The international calendar is busier than ever before with T20 leagues around the world taking a lot of space. Ambrose acknowledged that the game has changed drastically and too much cricket is having an adverse impact.

"The game has become a bit more commercialised. Too much cricket is being played as well. Players are leaving from one series to the next, there is franchise cricket as well. Guys could get burnt out.

"It's still exciting, there are wonderful players around but too much cricket is being played and that to me would be a bit of a concern," said Ambrose.

## Kuldeep will come into play in the Caribbean: Rahul Dravid

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

Without giving too much away, India head coach Rahul Dravid hinted at the possibility of playing wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in the Caribbean leg of the T20 World Cup, starting with the Super 8 opener against Afghanistan. India did not play either Kuldeep or Yuzvendra Chahal in the USA leg of the tournament considering the pace-friendly conditions. However, the conditions are different in the Caribbean where wrist spinners have already made an impact with Adam Zampa being a case in point.

India could drop a pacer and include Kuldeep in the team

How tough was it to leave Kuldeep, who has been India's standout spinner over the past 12 months, out of playing eleven in USA?

"It's tough to leave anyone out. I mean all the four guys that we left out in those games, to be honest, are all quality players. It's just that the conditions and what we felt was the requirement in that particular venue made us go with that particular combination where we felt that there wasn't a huge role for spin and it was more of pace more of kind of conditions.

"And we also wanted to ensure that we had the depth on those tricky kind of tickets. So that's what we went there with. You know, it might be different here. Without giving too much away, certainly. You know, it might be slightly different here. That you might need an extra spinner and then someone like Kuldeep or Yuzi can come into play. They become a very good factor for us," said Dravid ahead of the Afghanistan fixture.

We have definitely pushed the needle in batting India were guilty of being too conservative in their approach in the previous two editions of T20 World Cup but Dravid feels the team has turned the tide on that front.

"We have actually been to be able to push the needle forward in terms of our batting there. Sometimes in certain conditions, you just got to be mindful of conditions also. Sometimes we just get carried away with pushing the needle forward in T20 cricket. "Cricket is a very condition specific game. It's one of the only sports left where the surface



makes such an impact on the actual skill levels, the actual performance levels, what is an acceptable performance level.

"It's one sport that we play that where the surface makes a huge difference and it has to be brought into consideration at all times. And I think we saw that in the US that had to be brought into consideration not only for us but for other teams as well," said the outgoing India coach.

Dravid expects the wind to be a factor at the Kensington Oval on Thursday, bringing the fast bowlers like tournament's leading wicket taker Fazalhaq Farooqi into play.

"It is not just their spinners, their pacers are also experienced and doing well. Afghanistan is a very dangerous team in this format of the game. They play a lot of T20 cricket and their cricketers are very prominent members of their IPL teams. They have showed that with their performances in the World Cup."

Dravid loves the cricket culture in the Caribbean and is looking forward to the business end of the tournament. He was cheekily reminded by a scribe on India's infamous Test defeat against the West Indies at this venue back in 1997 when the visitors were bundled out for 81 chasing 120 on a treacherous pitch.

"It's also now lovely to come to the Caribbean, you know, come to Barbados, come to this ground which has a great history, a great tradition of great... Country and this region. We've had a couple of days of really good practice. We are ready, we rested, we feel we are prepared."

## T20 WC: England batters look to tame strong South African bowling

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

If their authoritative win against the West Indies is a sign, England batters seemed to have found their cloak of invincibility at the right time and they will eye an encore against a formidable South African bowling unit in a Group-2 match of the T20 World Cup Super 8s here on Friday.

England were at their menacing best against the Windies, while handing them a crushing eight-wicket defeat here that has also fired them to the top of the group through a better Net Run Rate -- +1.34 against SA's +0.90.

That the winner here will have their one foot in the semifinals of this ICC showpiece will come as an additional motivation.

South Africa, on the other hand, suffered a scare from the USA before they squeezed out an 18-run win in their Super Eight opener.

English opener Phil Salt showed why he is the No. 2 T20I batter in the world when he steered a tricky 181-run chase, mixing caution and aggression en route an unbeaten 87.

Salt would once again look to give England an explosive start along with his skipper Jos Buttler, who will be eyeing some runs under his belt.

Buttler, who scored a 42 in their loss to Australia in the group stage, has not been able to convert his starts with just 91 runs from four innings.

The return to form of Jonny Bairstow, who struck a crucial 48 not out against the West Indies, will also be a big boost for England.

## My priority is playing for NZ, even though SA20 is exciting: Kane Williamson

WELLINGTON, JUN 20 (PTI)

Kane Williamson said the intention to play in next year's SA20 was the catalyst behind him declining the New Zealand central contract, but reaffirmed his commitment to play for his country in all three formats outside of the T20 league.

The SA20 is scheduled between January 9 and February 8, 2025, which clashes with the dates of the Super Smash in New Zealand. As per NZ rules, a player has to play in Super Smash if they are not on an international assignment to be eligible for a central contract. "I want to play as long as I can. There's a number of great competitions during that time, but

SA20 looks really exciting. Unfortunately, it meant turning down a central contract," Williamson told reporters upon his arrival in New Zealand from the T20 World Cup, where his side failed to enter the Super Eight stage.

Consequently, Williamson had also stepped down from the Kiwis' captaincy in white-ball formats but the elegant right-hander insisted that his international career was far from over.

"My priority still is, absolutely, playing for New Zealand. Think I might miss maybe a handful of games over a three-week period," he added.

It meant that Williamson would miss the ODI and T20I series



against Sri Lanka in January next year. But he will be available for the one-off Test against Afghanistan in September, besides the WTC matches against India and Sri

## Salt assault leads England to smooth eight-wicket win over WI

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (SAINT LUCIA)

Opener Phil Salt slammed a belligerent unbeaten 87 as defending champions England began their T20 World Cup Super Eights campaign with a crushing eight-wicket win over co-hosts West Indies here.

Coming off a scorching display against Afghanistan, West Indies amassed a competitive 180 for four, but England waltzed to 181 for two in 17.3 overs in their Group 2 match.

Salt led the Three Lions' charge with a bruising innings that came off 47 balls with seven fours and five sixes. The right-hander received copious help from Jonny Bairstow (48 not out, 26b, 5x4, 2x6). But equal amount of credit should be given to the English bowlers for producing as many as 51 dot balls with Jofra Archer (1/34) and Adil Rashid (1/21) accounting for

22 of them in their tidy spells after Jos Buttler opted to bowl.

Their win with 15 balls to spare took the net run-rate of England to 1.343, putting them ahead of South Africa who posted a win over tournament co-hosts USA earlier on Wednesday.

"That's a really good performance from us, we executed well with both bat and ball. I thought we bowled really well to restrict such a powerful batting line-up, still we had to chase it down, but smart play from us. The partnership between Salt and Bairstow was great," England skipper Jos Buttler said.

WI now have a negative NRR -1.343 which may be a worry for them as they will have two must win matches against the USA and South Africa coming their way. "When you look from the batting perspective, we were 15-20 runs short. We could have given a better display



with the ball," felt WI skipper Rovman Powell. On Brandon King's injury, Powell said: "Just a bit worried, but hopefully, he can pull through for the next game."

Salt made full use of his reprieve by Nicholas Pooran on seven to cart the Windies bowlers around in the company of Bairstow as the Englishmen together milked

97 runs from 44 balls for the third wicket, while negotiating the hosts' spin attack in the middle overs. After a sedate start, England broke loose in the second over when Buttler struck two boundaries off Romario Sheperd to take 12 runs. Akeal Hosein created an early chance but Pooran's drop proved costly as Salt began his destruction job, hammering

an Andre Russell slower one for a six.

The duo continued their assault and Salt finished the power play smashing Alzarri Joseph for a four and a six to lift England to 58 for no loss in six overs, the best powerplay score by any team against the Caribbeans in this tournament.

Off-spinner Roston Chase finally gave the breakthrough when he noticed Buttler stepping forward and speared in a 108.9 kph delivery to catch him off guard. The ball hit him hard and low on the front pad to be trapped leg before.

In that period, England lost two wickets in 15 balls.

Just when he was looking dangerous, Moeen Ali (13; 10b) was dismissed by Russell by a smart change of bowling by the Windies skipper. Salt too started slowing down and England, at 111/2, needed 70 runs from 42 balls. But Bairstow upped the ante,

smashing Alzarri Joseph and Hosein to swing the momentum.

Buttler smashed Joseph for back-to-back four and six, and in the next over hammered Hosein for two fours and one six.

From thereon, Salt killed the contest, hitting three sixes and three fours in a 30-run 16th over bowled by Romario Shepherd.

Earlier, Windies got off to a splendid start as Brandon King and Johnson Charles opened with authority. The pair had Windies flying at 40 for no loss in the fifth over, before they were hit with a cruel blow.

Attempting to drive Sam Curran down the ground, King (23; 13b) picked up what appeared to be a side strain and had to retire hurt. The in-form Pooran joined Charles at the crease, lifting them to 54 in the power-play Pooran smoked Mark Wood for a leg-side six to start the

eighth over, but England managed to tighten the screws after the drinks.

That was the final boundary before the mid-innings break. Charles then ended a brief lull by smashing Rashid for a six. But in the next over, England struck with Moeen Ali dismissing Charles (38; 34b), who holed out to Harry Brook at long-on.

Captain Powell took on off-spinner Ali with a maximum and went on to smash Liam Livingstone for three sixes in five balls in a 20-run over.

But Livingstone had the last laugh, picking up the crucial wicket of Powell (36 off 17) off his last delivery.

The English found some fight in the final five overs.

Archer found the edge of Pooran's bat, as the heavy hitter removed for 36 off 32. Rutherford then dominated the strike in the last few overs to lift their total but that was not enough for them.

## T20 WC: Australia need all-round effort against tricky Bangladesh

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

It's a mismatch on paper but title-favourites Australia would be wary of slipping on the proverbial banana peel that Bangladesh can be when the two teams clash in their Super Eight, Group 1, match of the T20 World Cup here on Friday. Australia, champions of the 2021 edition of the tournament, will be mindful of the dangers of taking Bangladesh lightly.

The supremely confident team from Down Under was humbled 1-4 by the South Asians in a T20 International series in 2021, and any laxity can be severely punished in conditions here that have close resemblance to the sub-continent.

From an Australian perspective, it might bring

increased onus on leg-spinner Adam Zampa and part-timers such as Glenn Maxwell and Travis Head.

Keeping in mind the inherent slowness of the pitch here, the Aussies might also mull retaining left-arm spinner Ashton Agar, who is a handy bat too, from their last group match against Scotland.

But irrespective of the conditions or nature of the pitch, Australia's real strength lies in its pacers -- Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood -- who are persistently nagging. Cummins and Hazlewood are set to return for this match after sitting out of the Scotland game. The Aussies have also received a boost as captain Mitchell Marsh has declared himself fit to bowl in the Super Eight stage.



"I'll be available to bowl. With the line-up that we've got, I don't really necessarily see a need for me to bowl.

"But I think it's really important in this format to have options and we're blessed with plenty of those," said Marsh in the pre-match press conference.

Not just in bowling, Australia carry heavy guns through their batting line-up as well.

Their top-six consisting of Head, David Warner, Marsh, Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis and Tim David can be a threat to any bowling line-up in the world.

All of them have chipped in with runs at various stages of this ICC showpiece, and now they will eye a collective firing. Bangladesh will hope that their assortment of clever and experienced T20

bowlers like Mustafizur Rahman, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah and Taskin Ahmed can deliver against the Australian batters.

However, Bangladesh's real problem lies in a rickety batting line-up.

The batters are as experienced as any of their counterparts in the T20 format, but in this tournament, they have not really joined the party.

They stuttered through the group stage matches, and the highest total they could post was 159 for five against Netherlands.

Their other totals were 125/8, 109/7 (both while chasing against Sri Lanka and South Africa respectively), and 106 while batting first against Nepal. So, there is a need for them to find their rhythm against a storied opponent.

**TEAMS (FROM)**

**Australia:** Mitchell Marsh (c), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa. **Travelling Reserves:** Jake Fraser-McGurk, Matt Short.

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



# Biggest stars come together for *Kalki 2898 AD*'s grand event

The highly anticipated magnum opus of the year, *Kalki 2898 AD* is just days away from its release. Building on the mounting excitement, the film held a grand gala night in Mumbai, truly living up to the immense buzz surrounding it.

This star-studded event featured an unparalleled pan-India cast, including legends and luminaries such as Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas and Deepika Padukone.

Producers C. Aswani Dutt, Swapna Dutt and Priyanka Dutt were also in attendance, adding to the evening's glamour. The highlight of the night was the remarkable gathering of such an exceptional ensemble. Each star shared their experiences and excitement about being part of this ambitious project, further fuelling the anticipation among fans.

Present at the event, superstar Amitabh Bachchan opened up about his experience working in the magnum opus. He said, "To work in a setup where they have gone beyond what most of us have been doing all our lives in this film industry is inhuman. And I really appreciate that they're moving a little ahead of time and making us a part of it, working in conditions that we

never thought we would be able to work in. I want to congratulate Nag Ashwin and the production for thinking of something like this film."

In addition, Kamal Haasan says, "I always thought it would be fun to play the bad guy because he wanted it to be different and I am almost like saying in the movie whatever I feel like doing. The badman gets to do all the good things in the movie when the heroes are singing romantic songs and waiting for the heroine, where he can just go and do what he wants."

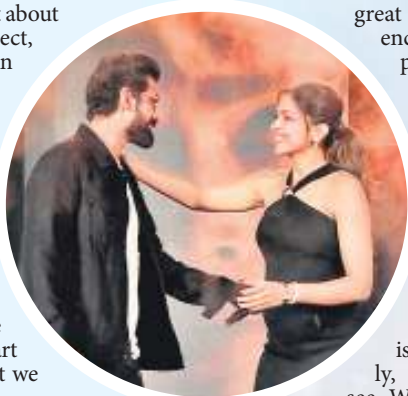
Adding to it, Deepika Padukone further stated, "It's been a great learning experience. It was a completely new world and we went through different phases of discovering what this movie is all about. The magic that is in Nag's (Nag Ashwin) head is now here, finally, for everyone to see. We, as actors, have discovered that along the way. It's been an incredible experience, at both a personal and professional level."

Talking about working with legends and sharing the screen with Amitabh Sir and Kamal Sir, Prabhas added, "I should thank Datgar and Nagi for giving me the

opportunity to work with such great legends. It's bigger than a dream. And I don't know what to say. When I first met Amitabh, sir, I touched his feet. He said, 'Don't do it. If you do it, I'll do it.' Sir, please. I can't even think. We grew up watching you." Furthermore, he said, "Kamal Sir, when his *Sagar Sangam* came out, I asked my mother, 'I want his dress.' My cousin, if he had indulged, had a tummy. And they used to put a

cloth on his stomach. They used to act in front of us like him. And now I'm working with them. This is like something unbelievable. Regarding Deepika, I always wanted to work with her. She is someone who can reach such an international level and she is a great actor. It was beautiful to work with her."

Directed by Nag Ashwin and produced by Vyjayanthi Movies, *Kalki 2898 AD* is set to release theatrically on June 27, 2024. With a star-studded cast featuring Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Disha Patani, the film promises to be an unparalleled cinematic experience.



## Sunny Deol joins hands with director Gopichand Malineni for #SDGM

Sunny Deol will star in Gopichand Malineni's forthcoming film *SDGM*, which is billed as "the biggest actioner of the country," following the success of last year's blockbuster *Gadar 2*. The actor made the announcement on Thursday along with a poster on X (previously Twitter). "Make way for the biggest action film of the country - #SDGM. Starring Action Superstar @iamsunnydeol. Directed by @megopichand. Produced by @MythriOfficial & @peoplemediatcy. Mass feast loading. Shoot begins soon,"

Sunny captioned his post on X. Neveen Yerneni, Y. Ravi Shankar and T.G. Vishwa Prasad are the producers of *SDGM*, which is being produced by People Media Factory and Mythri Movie Makers. Rishi Punjabi is the person behind the camera. Thaman S. composed the soundtrack for the movie. Alongside Preity Zinta, Sunny Deol will also feature in Rajkumar Santoshi's forthcoming film. Produced under the auspices of Aamir Khan Productions, Lahore 1947 is the first joint venture between Sunny and Aamir.

## Telugu teaser of *Aho Vikramarka* out now

Producer Dr. Meehir Kulkarni's film *Aho Vikramarka*, Marathi cinema's first blockbuster-Pan India film, is all set to release soon in 7 languages. The first look and motion poster for this film have already been released.

All of you get ready to watch the heroic story of a brave and determined policeman. The film will be released in theaters in Marathi, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada,

Malayalam and Bengali. It is produced by Meehir Kulkarni, Aarti Gill and Ashwini Kumar Mishra. Music composed by Ravi Basur.

Now, the makers of the film have released the Telugu teaser for the film. The teaser has introduced Dev in the character of a sincere police officer who fights against all the odds to protect people from the hands of the deadly antagonist.



## *Paruvu*: Intriguing yet a one-time watch

RIYA KOMMINENI

**Plot:** Married couple Dolly and Sudheer, who moved to Hyderabad and eloped, return to Guntur for a relative's burial at Paruvu. The couple's families had disowned them because of their different castes. When the pair returns home, they find themselves embroiled in a major criminal case and discover that their connection has made them targets. The series delves deeper into the serious topic of honour killings in South India, with multiple individuals involved in subplots that add to the story's complexity.

**What lured us in:** In the world of Indian web series, the notion of this one is novel. It tells a compelling story while delving into a significant socio-political topic. The terrible reality of India's caste system is depicted in *Paruvu*, where the main characters frequently engage in violence and bloodshed. It also examines the loneliness that results from rejecting social norms, as we witness Dolly's attempts to maintain a relationship

with her family.

**Technical aspects:** Technically speaking, *Paruvu*'s cinematography is superb. From the start, Vidyasagar Chinta used original camera techniques. The exterior views show how the environment is changing as Dolly and Sudheer make their way to Guntur. They travel along high-rise residential complexes and streets lit by streetlights in Hyderabad's urban area. They travel through unidentified lanes on dimly lit dirt roads in rural Andhra Pradesh. The opening twenty minutes of the first episode cover all of this. As the show goes on, Chinta plays with hued lighting, reflections in water, and dark cast shadows that work nicely with the story.

**Performances:** Another noteworthy aspect is the cast's diversity. Siddharth and Rajashekar made an attempt to select actors with less experience in addition to well-known actors. One such actor is rookie Siddha, who plays a significant and commendable role as a silent character who uses ASL for communication. Despite playing a small role, Amit Tiwari's portrayal of Kallaji had a strong effect.

**What we found kind of dull:** It can be challenging to keep track of all the characters and plots. Despite the fact that every character is connected, things become very unclear very quickly. You start to get tired of the subplots by the third episode. Although I can appreciate Siddharth and Rajashekar's Tarantino-inspired vision, it's crucial to consider the audience's attention span. In an effort to extend the plot, the final two episodes seem to have been slapped together. The resolution is completely unclear and feels like a complete afterthought to the main story. Dolly and Sudheer, the primary protagonists, make a number of poor choices that both function as plot

devices and cause the audience to question their judgment. The show's idea is actually flawed. Given that they would be in danger, why would the couple even go back to their hometown? *Paruvu* takes a number of artistic licenses that make it difficult to distinguish between an instructive and poignant thriller and an unrealistic soap opera. Additionally perplexing is Praneetha Patnaik's portrayal of the character Swathi. Similar to Dolly and Sudheer, she makes a number of dubious choices. When her fiancé disappears, she draws hasty conclusions and causes needless chaos in a community that is already in hardship. Her manipulative nature makes it difficult to sympathise with her because she seems to have no ulterior motive.

**Verdict:** Even if *Paruvu* is a crucial reminder of some long-standing problems in Andhra Pradesh, the series nevertheless finds it difficult to leave an impression. Despite being intriguing, the numerous subplots became tiresome and laborious after the first few episodes. Although some of the cast members' performances and the film-making are commendable, there is still more to be desired.



### Megastar Chiranjeevi is proud of his daughter's *Paruvu* webseries

Sushmita Konidela, the elder daughter of megastar Chiranjeevi, has made her mark in the entertainment industry not only through her production company but also with her latest web series, *Paruvu*. The series, directed by Siddharth Naidu and Rajasekhara Vadlapati, has garnered a positive response on Zee5.

*Paruvu* tells the story of a young couple, played by Nivetha Pethuraj and Nareesh Agastya, who defy societal norms and elope. Their inter-caste relationship creates complexities, leading them on a perilous journey as they evade their families and become entangled in a web of crime. Honour killing, a sensitive topic, is explored in a thought-provoking manner within the series. Each character's motivations add layers to the narrative, with the couple's actions culminating in a significant crime that further complicates their situation. Chiranjeevi, expressing his pride in his daughter's work, lauded Sushmita Konidela and the entire *Paruvu* team for creating "groundbreaking Telugu OTT content." He praised his brother Naga Babu's performance and expressed his eager anticipation for the upcoming season, wondering whether the couple will escape the perilous situation they've found themselves in.

## BREAKING: URVASHI RAUTELA SIGNS CONTRACT WITH HONEY SINGH, CAN'T WORK WITH BADSHAH

As per sources, Urvashi Rautela has signed a special work contract with Yo Yo Honey Singh, where the two of them will have many interesting collaborations going forward. However, as per the same sources, the special clause of the contract highlights that Urvashi Rautela cannot work with Badshah as per the terms and conditions of the contract! We tried getting in touch with Urvashi Rautela to get an official update on the same, but we didn't receive any response from her or her team.

Well, given the fact that everyone knows Yo Yo Honey Singh and Badshah don't share the best of equations, this ain't a surprise for anyone. It will be interesting to see what happens going forward in terms of Urvashi Rautela and her upcoming collaborations with Yo Yo Honey Singh. On the work front, apart from her upcoming grand Tamil movie with Shankar, global Indian superstar Urvashi Rautela has massive projects like *Welcome 3* with Akshay Kumar, *NBK109* with Bobby Deol, *Dulquer* Salman, *Nandamuri Balakrishna*, *Baap* (a remake of Hollywood blockbuster *Expendables*) with Sunny Deol and Sanjay Dutt, *Inspector Avinash 2* with Randeep Hooda and *Black Rose*.



## Varun Tej resumes shooting for *Matka*

Official filming of the new film has commenced, with a superb cast including Varun Tej. "Back on set after 175 days with new energies and aspirations, ready to bring the retro magic of *Matka* to life!" the actor said on social media to express his delight. He hinted that he began filming *Matka* by sharing a picture of himself clutching an antique

phone. Fans are counting down the seconds until they see him in this movie. The film *Matka* features G V Prakash Kumar as the composer and stars Norah Fatehi and Meenakshi Chowdary as the female leads. The project is being produced in partnership by Vyra Entertainment and SRT Entertainment.

