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-SPORTS



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CM Revanth releasing Mega DSC notification along with officials on Thursday

The government had earlier cancelled the notification issued by the BRS government on September 6, 2023, for the recruitment of 5,089 teachers. The Congress government increased the number of posts to 11,062 and issued a fresh notification.

BJP national vice president D K Aruna and the party's OBC Morcha chief K Laxman were also present at the BJP headquarters on the occasion.

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He said that the concern arose out of the use of these devices in the community, where additional tests to ascertain unwell patients like blood tests and physical assessments are not available as they are in hospital and other healthcare settings. Acknowledging limitations to the study, the researchers said all the studies were conducted in high-income countries, where the majority of the population have light skin tones. This they said was relevant as low- and middle-income countries often have a higher proportion of people with darker skin tones and funding for healthcare may be such that pulse oximetry is the only available monitor for unwell patients.

The government on Wednesday announced a Rs 24,420-crore subsidy on phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers for the upcoming kharif season and said the farmers will continue to get oil nutrient DAP at Rs 1,350 per quintal. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal of the Department of Fertilizers for fixing the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for the Kharif Season 2021-22 from April 1 to September 30 on P&K fertilisers.

Unemployed youth protest announcement of DSC posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the announcement of Mega DSC posts, thousands of unemployed people who want 25,000 teacher posts under DSC to be filled, besized the Education Commissioner's office on Thursday. They demanded that TET examination should be conducted along with the DSC. Speaking on the occasion, R Krishnaiah, President of the National BC Welfare Association, questioned why the government was not issuing the TET DSC notification all at once. He also said that only 10 per cent passed the last TET exam. In all, 190 per cent failed. After the last notification, two batches of B.Ed and D.Ed passed. Due to the low number of posts in the previous notification, TET was not written by many. Many teachers are not getting promotions now. If they write TET and pass they will be eligible for a promotion. Addressing the intentions of



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the unemployed, the DSC has announced the filling of 11,000 teacher posts. But TET also has to release notifications. Krishnaiah asked the authorities to hold discussions with the unions of the unemployed and the job unions without depending on the number of teacher posts. He also said that previously, the State government announced that 5,000 teacher posts were

filled by the education department. This is very unfair. As per the PRC committee report, about 25,000 teacher posts are vacant in government schools which is in contrast to the announcement made by the former chief minister that 13,000 teacher posts would be filled. Also, 16,000 education volunteers were recruited two years ago. The finance department has approved the appointment of 22,000 special

teachers five months ago. "Why these special teachers, if the teacher posts are not vacant?" he asked. About 6,000 schools have been closed during the past 10 years and teacher posts have not been filled. There are no English, Maths, and Science teachers in 16,000 schools as the teacher posts are not filled. Students are lagging in their knowledge in the three subjects, thereby making them unfit to compete with other states in competitive exams such as engineering, medicine, NEET, etc.

ACB nabs women and child welfare officer

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested an officer of the Women Development and Child Welfare department for misappropriation of funds worth Rs 65,78,467. The accused was identified as Anishetty Sridevi; while serving as the Child Development Project Officer in Adilabad in 2015-16, she diverted the funds allocated to provide milk for tribal children. Sridevi created a false statement for incurring expenses under the Arogya Laxmi milk supply to 322 anganwadi centres. Following the investigation, a case of criminal misconduct was registered against Sridevi and she was arrested.

DCA asks blood banks to adhere to fixed charges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Drug Control Administration (DCA) on Thursday asked blood banks to adhere to charges fixed by the Central government. VB Kamalasan Reddy, Director General, DCA, in a statement issued said, "Instances of overcharging by blood banks for blood and its components, including fresh frozen plasma, platelet concentrate, single donor platelets, packed red cells etc., were uncovered during surprise raids conducted at nine blood centres." The processing charges for blood and blood components by government and non-government blood centres were prescribed as per the Guidelines for Recovery of Processing Charges for Blood and Blood components issued by the National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC).



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Also, it is mandatory for all blood centres (government-supported and non-government supported) to provide blood/blood component free of cost to patients, who require repeated blood transfusion as a life saving measure, such as Thalassemia, Haemophilia, Sickle Cell Anaemia and any other blood dyscrasia requiring repeated blood transfusion. The DCA statement also pointed out that the processing

charges for blood/blood components should be displayed prominently in the blood centre premises so that it is conspicuously visible to the recipients. "Blood banks should mandatorily adhere to the charges indicated regarding blood and blood components. Stringent action shall be taken as per the law against over-charging blood centres," Reddy said.



GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose, along with other officials, studying the construction works

GHMC Commissioner inspects Amberpet flyover construction

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Commissioner Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Ronald Rose, along with Zonal Commissioner Ravi Kiran and Chief Engineer Devanand, inspected the progress of the construction of Amberpet Flyover here on Thursday. During the inspection, the Commissioner instructed the officials to speed up the land acquisition process of pending properties to be acquired and also to acquire the front portion of the apartment facing the side where it is obstructing the free flow of traffic on the approach road. At Quadri Bagh, Ronald Rose asked to acquire a small portion adjacent to the masjid and to shift the transformer beside Mahankali temple, Amberpet. He also asked the officials concerned to clear small structures which are obstructing the service road opposite the Gandhi statue. Later, the Commissioner, along with Zonal Commissioner T Venkanna,

visited Chanchalguda Press Road and Saidabad area to inspect the progress of work of the flyover from Malakpet to IS Sadhan, where the Commissioner instructed the officials to speed up the work. Officials from R&D, Town Planning, and other senior officials participated during the inspection. Meanwhile, Ronald Rose, who is also the District Election Officer, said that the sectoral officers will have to play an active role in the conduct of elections. In view of the upcoming Parliament elections, training classes were conducted for the Election Sectoral Officers at Sewalal Banjara Bhawan in Jubilee Hills on Thursday. As a part of conducting the elections, the sectoral officers were given a thorough understanding of the duties, responsibilities and matters to be examined through a power-point presentation. A handbook has been prepared to inform about the duties to be performed under the rules and regulations of the Election Commission.

Marico Innovation Foundation cohort recycles 1,338 tons of plastic waste

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 12 start-ups which are part of the Marico Innovation Foundation (MIF)'s plastics portfolio have converted innovative plastic waste management solutions into new business models, saving a whopping 124,360 tons of Carbon Dioxide emissions collectively in the last 12 months. MIF released this and other data points at the Plastics Program Roundup 2023-24, a day-long event, here on Thursday. This stock-taking reviewed the impact of MIF's focused intervention in the plastic waste management value chain providing opportunities to innovators to address the plastics problem. According to the MIF's research, India's plastic consumption growth has been



For representation purpose only

alarming, increasing from 14 million tonnes in 2016-17 to 20 million tonnes in 2019-20. During the same period, the plastic waste output also doubled. What is more disturbing is that despite generating 3.4 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, India only recycles 30%. In this context, it is notable how MIF-supported startups have made significant strides in

developing innovative solutions to address the challenge of plastic waste. For instance, Ibansand Dharaksha have effectively managed 60 tons of agricultural waste using biocraft innovation technology and mycelium respectively. Then, there are others in the portfolio like Padcare which has recycled 37 tons of sanitary pads, preserving 74,000 km of landfill area. Ishitva Robotics'

AI-based sorting machine has sorted 100,000 tons of plastic waste, significantly impacting energy conservation by saving 265,000 tons of oil barrels. Innovators like Ricron Panels and Angirus have recycled 1,338 tons of plastic waste through innovative construction products. Bintix, which focuses on household waste management, has collected 360 tons of plastic waste, contributing to biodiversity conservation and waste reduction while preserving 8,300 trees. Harsh Mariwala, Founder, Marico Innovation Foundation, said, "MIF is at the forefront of the innovation journey in plastic waste management. Our commitment to innovation is what drives us to identify and address challenges for the short, mid, and long term."

Science fair held at Vintage Central School

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Chevella Member of Parliament Konda Vishweshwar Reddy inaugurated a Science Fair being hosted at the Vintage Central School, Mominpet, Vikarabad District, on Thursday. In his address to the students, Vishweshwar Reddy emphasised the importance of prioritising both hygiene and health alongside their academic pursuits. He asserted that only Prime Minister Modi possesses the capability to enhance the academic landscape of the nation. Vishweshwar Reddy presented scholarships to meritorious students from government schools in Mominpet, on behalf of Justice Konda Madhav Reddy Foundation, on the occasion.

Excellence in Education award to Devesh Nigam



Dr Devesh Nigam receiving the Excellence in Education Award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Devesh Nigam, Registrar, University of Hyderabad (UoH) has been awarded the Excellence in Education award at the Edtech Summit organised by Outlook Business on Thursday at an event held at Hotel Sheraton, Hyderabad. Dr Nigam received this award for his incredible experience, work and contribution in the field of Education and

Administration of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The Outlook Business organised the Edtech Summit 2024, with the theme "Transforming Education with Technology", to bring together leaders, share insights into different technology, enhance examination systems, help universities provide transparency and celebrate the new paradigm shift by accepting technology.

Maharana Pratap statue unveiled at Begum Bazar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 21-foot statue of Maharana Pratap was unveiled at Begum Bazar's Maharana Pratap Chowk late on Wednesday night. This is the first of its kind, biggest statue installed in Hyderabad. In 2007, a statue of Maharana Pratap was unveiled by former President Pratibha Patil in Parliament House. The unveiled statue weight is around 2 tons, which was made by artist Sunder Singh in three months. The man behind this initiative and execution is Thakur Surender Singh, a youth leader from Rajput community who has dedicated himself to put his last efforts to install the huge statue. Rajya Sabha Member Anil Kumar Yadav, MLA Makkan Singh Raj Thakur, Corporator Shankar Yadav and others participated in the function. Maharana Pratap, was a king of Mewar, a region in north-western India in the present-day State of Rajasthan. He is notable for leading the Rajput resistance against the expansionist policy of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who fought the Battle of Haldighati and Battle of Dawer, which have turned him into a folk hero.



City Mayor to participate in the ninth World Cities Conference

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Singapore Council General Edgar Pang on Thursday invited Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi to participate in the ninth World Cities Conference to be held in Singapore from June 2 to 4, 2024. The World Cities Summit (WCS) will be a platform for mayors, entrepreneurs and urban experts to share integrated urban solutions. The summit will also aid the experts to create new partnerships for solving livable and sustainable city challenges. In this platform, the issues of livable and sustainable cities will be discussed with mayors, business leaders and urban experts, opportunities in all aspects such as re-imagine, reinvent, rejuvenate and opportunities in order to achieve



Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi interacting with Nicole Chen and other officials of the World Cities Summit

smart and regenerative cities, solutions for achieving the goals of smart cities and providing a better city life for all in the present and future. The officials asked the Mayor to come to the Singapore WCS and give valuable messages,

advice and suggestions on how to make cities better and more sustainable. Accepting their invitation, Vijayalakshmi explained the development in the city of Hyderabad. She said that we are working to make the city a top

city and explained that the infrastructure in the city has been developed as a signal-free city of social and economic schemes. Vice Council Nicole Chen and others participated in the programme.

Quality assurance, faculty preparation in universities discussed at OU seminar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The valedictory session of the national seminar on "Quality Assurance and Faculty Preparation for NAAC Accreditation of Osmania University," organised by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Osmania University, took place on Thursday at 4.30 pm. The session was marked by esteemed dignitaries who came together to reflect on the insightful discussions and outcomes of the seminar. The valedictory session was attended by Prof. T Tirupathi Rao, Chancellor of Manipur University, who highlighted the importance of quality assurance in higher education and the role of accreditation in ensuring academic excellence. Prof. Redya Naik, OSD to the Vice-Chancellor of

Dr A Vijaya Bhasker Reddy delivered the seminar report, providing a comprehensive overview of the discussions, key takeaways and recommendations arising from the two-day seminar.

Osmania University, underscored the university's commitment to quality assurance initiatives and its proactive approach toward enhancing academic standards. Dr A Vijaya Bhasker Reddy delivered the seminar report, providing a comprehensive overview of the discussions, key takeaways and recommendations arising from the two-day seminar. The valedictory session concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Prof. Suresha, Director of IQAC at Osmania University, who expressed gratitude to all the dignitaries,

Three held for fake franchise of ITC company

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad cyber crime police arrested three persons on charges of cheating people on the pretext of a fake franchise of ITC Company. Following a complaint from a city-based businessman, the police took up investigation and identified that the franchise fraud was being operated from Patna. Cyber crime police arrested the main organiser Dheeraj Kumar and his associates Ankit Kumar and Gaurav Kumar. According to the police, the suspects created a fake website of the company and posted it on social media to attract people. "Whenever a person looking to venture into franchise business searches on Google, this website will be thrown up first on ads. When the person visits the website, he is asked to fill in some details via registration form.

Cong rule responsible for sorry state of affairs in rural areas: Gadkari

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has claimed that BJP is able to change the contours of the country and maintained that the Congress rule destroyed the countryside.

Addressing the valedictory function of the Vijay Sankalpa Yatra here on Thursday, he pointed out that the condition in several villages deteriorated during the Congress rule. The people had faced lot of problems for want of drinking water and road communica-



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari speaking at a meeting in Nizamabad on Thursday

tion facilities.

For want of medical and health amenities, many vil-

lagers deserted their villages and migrated to urban areas. To develop roads in rural areas,

the Centre is implementing Pradhan Mantri Grameen SadakYojna. He stressed the need to support farmers by extending them financial support. He praised the farmers of the nation saying that they are capable of providing aviation fuel to nation.

He called for halting the farmer suicides. The turmeric cultivated in Telangana is being exported to other nations.

Country's roads are being upgraded to express ways by pumping Rs 2 lakh crore, he said.

The trade and commerce and tourism will thrive only when road communication facilities are improved.

He exuded confidence that the BJP would form government in Telangana too in near future. After a long time, a quintal of turmeric fetches the record price of Rs 15,000 as against only Rs 6,000 earlier. He said that Prime Minister gave the green signal to establish the turmeric board in Nizamabad. Further, he accused the Congress of politicising the Nizam Sugar factory issue.

Govt to provide compassionate jobs to dependents of deceased VROs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government issued orders to provide compassionate appointments to dependents of deceased Village Revenue Officers (VROs), according to Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy here on Thursday. As many as 178 VROs died in harness.

In a statement, Srinivas Reddy said that the previous BRS government brought a new Act removing the VRO system in 2020. Some VROs died due to mental agony after they were transferred to other departments.

Now, the Congress govern-



ment decided to do justice to those VROs' families by providing compassionate appointments. He said that the Chief Minister took a positive decision with good intention to support the VROs' families. He said that the VROs were subject to severe loss due to the abolition of the VROs system by the previous BRS government.

Srinivas Reddy said that the Congress government will restore the village revenue system by appointing a Village Revenue Officer to each village and strengthen the revenue system for the development of the State and to ensure that schemes introduced by the government are implemented effectively.

Srinivas Reddy said that the government already filled 23,000 jobs in Police, Staff Nurse, Gurukul and Singareni within 3 months. The government issued Group-I posts with 62 additional posts, and issued Mega DSC notification with 11062 posts.

KCR's silence baffles party leaders, cadre

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

While all the political parties are busy with selection of candidates and preparing the election manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, BRS president and former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is spending time lonely at his Eravelli farm house. The BRS cadre and leaders are not able to digest the attitude of KCR. The BRS cadre feels that there is no change in the attitude of KCR even after the Assembly elections. Before elections he was the Chief Minister and after elections he became former chief minister. This is the only change in KCR.

Important party leaders, including MLAs and MPs are leaving the party but KCR is not taking any steps to prevent them and

remaining silent. Usually if any party is defeated in the elections, its president soberly announces that they are accepting the people's verdict. At the same time he congratulates the new government. But till today KCR did not open his mouth about these two things. Some BRS leaders feel that some leaders are leaving the party as they are fed up with the attitude of KCR. KCR skipped the recent Assembly budget session.

The political circles feel that in the absence of KCR from active politics former minister T Harish Rao is acting as Opposition leader and BRS working president KT Rama Rao has become an active president. There are no meetings by KCR with party leaders to discuss about selection of party candidates and the preparations for the coming Lok

Sabha elections. BRS sources said that perhaps KCR might be having an idea in his mind about party candidates since there are only 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. B

RS sources say that KCR has a habit of calling a particular leader to the farm house if he wants any information. But the party leaders do not know what KCR is doing in the farm house and whom he is meeting. After the Assembly elections, KCR addressed only one public meeting in Nalgonda where KCR commented that the people made a mistake in the Assembly elections by defeating the BRS and giving power to the Congress. It appears that KCR has handed over the party responsibilities to KTR and Harish Rao, confining himself to the farm house.

Price of red jowar goes up by Rs 500 in 10 days, thanks to Congress govt

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Prices of red jowar has gone up by Rs 500 a quintal in 10 days as the state government directed officials to prevent traders forming into a syndicate and dictate terms to the red jowar farmers.

Initially, the procurement of red jowar commenced at Rs 3,400 per quintal. Now, the procurement price crossed Rs 4,000 a quintal, registering an increase of Rs 500a quintal in 10 days.

As the prices are encouraging, the area under the crop is likely to increase in the next season.

Last year, the crop was raised in 46,000 acres harvesting 20 to 25 bags per acre. Traders supply seeds to farmers and procure the crop from them. Last year, the price fixed was Rs 3,200 a quintal. The traders allegedly managed the officials and leaders of farmers' association so that

they did not interfere on behalf of farmers.

As the procurement price offered was not encouraging, the area under the crop this year has come down to 38,000 acres.

The total yield was 9 lakh quintals. Exactly at the time of procurement of the red jowar, the Congress government replaced the BRS in the state. The district administration received orders from new government asking it to stop the syndicated procurement of the red jowar by traders.

District Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanmanthu held two rounds of negotiations with farmers and traders and warned the traders of stern action if the traders cheated farmers. A vigil has been established at the field level by agricultural officials.

For the past 10 days, the prices have been on the rise. In fact, 75 per cent of the procurement of red jowar is over.

Student denied entry for being late to exam, commits suicide

PNS ■ ADILABAD

In a tragic incident in Adilabad district, where an Intermediate student, identified as Tekum Shiva Kumar, from Mangurla village under Jainatha mandal in Telangana, took his own life by jumping into the Satnala project after being denied entry into the examination hall. He was denied to write the first-year Intermediate examination because he was late by a few minutes in arriving at the examination centre.

The 14-year-old student, who was attending the Intermediate first-year English examination at a Junior College, arrived two minutes late and was denied entry. The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education due to the strict rules. The Board imposed a condition that students should not be allowed into the examination hall during the ongoing examinations if they are late even a minute.

This rejection caused immense distress for Shiva



Kumar, who then wrote a suicide letter to his father before ending his life.

I couldn't take the exam due to the minute order, I can't bear this pain, I am sorry father," the Intermediate student wrote before ending his life at the project in Telangana.

The police registered a case of suicide after finding the student's sandals, purse and suicide letter at the project.

An investigation has been launched into the case based on his family's complaint.

AIMIM to observe its 66th formation day on March 2

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) will celebrate its 66th formation day on Saturday. To mark the day, a meeting and party flag hoisting will be held at the AIMIM headquarters in Darussalam. AIMIM's national president and Hyderabad Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi will address the gathering. The formation day is seen as a crucial event in view of forthcoming general elections in April-May. The AIMIM will be in a five-way fight with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress, Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) and Majlis Bachao Tehreek (MBT) if all parties contest the polls on their own.

MBT's leader Amjadullah Khan, who almost defeated AIMIM's Yakutpura candidate in last year's Assembly polls, may however be the Congress candidate if both sides come to an agreement.

Set up Metro Coach Factory: DCM to BEML

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka urged to set up a Metro coach factory in Telangana State for which necessary land, other resources and cooperation will be provided by the government to the Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML). The Deputy CM had a meeting with BEML CMD Shantanu Roy's team at the Secretariat on Thursday. He enquired about the base of the BEML company and in which sectors it invests and creates products.

DCM Shantanu Roy explained that his company works in the fields of metro rail coaches, defence and mines.

PC Indian Achievers Award for Suryapavan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To encourage those who have served the country in the fields of education, medicine and entrepreneurship the "Power Corridor National Magazine" is giving prestigious PC Indian Achievers Awards every year. Dr Komatireddy Suryapavan Reddy, who hails from Telangana, has received the Best Achiever Award in the medical field this year.

Suryapavan Reddy received the award from Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari at a function held at Hyatt Regency, New Delhi. Suryapavan Reddy was selected for the award for



Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari presenting the award to Komatireddy Suryapavan Reddy at a function in New Delhi on Thursday

his outstanding contribution for providing special medical services for 23 years in treating type-1 diabetes and giving hope to lakhs of diabetic patients.

Dr Suryapavan is the elder son of Minister for Telangana State Roads Buildings and Cinematography Komatireddy Venkat Reddy.

Cong captures municipal chairman posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The municipalities of Bhongir, Sultanabad and Khanapur have been captured by the Congress as no-confidence motions were moved against the municipal chairpersons who belonged to the BRS. Crisis had been brewing in the BRS even before the Congress party came to power.

In Jagtial, BRS rebel candidate with the support of the Congress captured the post of the municipal chairman.

Bhongir municipal chairman post was bagged by the Congress, while the vice-chairman post went to the BJP. Thanks to the cross-voting by the BRS and BJP councillors.

On Jan 23 this year, 31 councillors in Bhongir municipal council expressed their desire to move no-trust move against municipal chairman

In Jagtial, BRS rebel candidate with the support of the Congress captured the post of the municipal chairman. Bhongir municipal chairman post was bagged by the Congress, while the vice-chairman post went to the BJP. Thanks to the cross-voting by the BRS and BJP councillors.

A Anjaneyulu and vice-chairman ChintalKistaiah lost their power in the show of strength decided in a meeting held in the council on Wednesday.

In all, 30 councillors attended the no-trust move proceedings. Congress candidate PotamsettyVenkateswarlu was polled 18 votes, including those of 11 Congress voters. Three BRS councillors, a BJP councillor resorted to cross voting.

Two independents also voted for him. Including the vote of the ex-officio voter, he was polled 18 votes. Maya Dasaradha of the BJP was elected vice-chairman.

The Congress bagged Khanapur municipal chairman post in Nirmal district with the help of the lone BRS dissident councillor. In the show of strength held on Wednesday, out of 12 council-

lors 10 attended the session, including 5 Congress councillors, 4 BRS councillors and lone BJP councillor.

Congress councillor Satyam was elected chairman of the municipal council with the support from dissident councillor of BRS Kavali Santosh. Santosh became vice-chairman.

In Sultanabad, BRS dissident councillor Gajula Lakshmi was elected chairperson in the election held on Wednesday. After her election, she immediately joined Congress in the presence of Chintakunta Vijaya Ramana Rao, Peddapalli MLA.

In Jagtial, BRS rebel councillor Aduvala Jyoti with support from Congress became chairperson of the municipal council amidst dramatic development with a majority of just one vote.

CM Revanth praises Badminton player Meghana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy congratulated Meghana Reddy for winning Bronze medal in the Badminton International Challenge-2024 held from February 21 to 25 in Uganda. The Chief Minister praised Meghana for bringing laurels to the country and making the nation proud

Meghana Reddy also clinched many medals at the international events in the past. She won gold medal in Uganda International Series -2023, Silver medal in Kampala International -2023 and Bronze medals in Bahrain



CM A Revanth Reddy all praise for Badminton player Meghana Reddy

International series 2023, Infosys Senior Badminton ranking tournament-2024 and in Goa National Games - 2023. Hailing from Mahbubnagar

district, Meghana is currently pursuing her BA degree from St Ann's College, Mehdiptnam. Her father Ravinder Reddy is working as DSP in the State Police department and her mother Shyamalata is a government teacher.

Currently, Meghana is undergoing training at Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy, Bengaluru under Khelo India Scheme. She topped in the Under-13 and Under-15 categories as well as in all age categories in India. Meghana has bagged a total of 32 domestic and international medals so far.

Cong trusting report of BJP's NDSA: KTR

Accept Harish's challenges, step down, we will show you how to give water: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

KTR questioned the Telangana government's intention behind waiting for the NDSA report which works under the Modi government.

"Has the NDSA taken at least one sample so far? Did they even get down? An NDSA report is a politically motivated report. It reached the media first and then the government. It was prepared for election purposes in just two days," he said.

"If our government did not give information and reports then how did they give a comprehensive report? Why does Congress Minister Uttam have all faith in Central institutions under the BJP, just because their reports are in their

favour? Do they have the same faith in the ED, the CBI and the IT Department? When they are questioning other institutions, why not NDSA?", he said.

"Officials are telling us clearly that there is no chance of getting water after March-end. There is a chance of crops drying up. Despite having the possibility to give water they are not giving. This is criminal negligence," he said.

"Accept Harish Rao's challenge, step down and we will show how to supply water," KTR said.

"Many projects were repaired in the past. Then governments repaired and saved them, but the projects were never abandoned. When this happens, governments should take corrective measures. At



times like these, there should be action for repairs and engineering solutions," KTR added.

"They are saying that we don't have sense. The government does not have sense and common sense to support farmers. Uttam does not know the difference between a barrage and reservoir. Hope Uttam Kumar Reddy equips himself better next time when he

speaks. If you don't want our advice, set up an expert committee, build and repair the coffer dam in four months. Even today, around 5,000 cusecs of water are flowing into the sea. This is not one-upmanship," he said.

"We gave confidence in the judiciary and will fight the partisan moves of the Congress if the need arises. There is a conspiracy to sink the project. The minister said that our suggestions are not needed. Whose suggestions are you taking apart from Sunil Kanugolu's. If you don't want our advice, take expert advice and appoint an expert committee," KTR said.

"On the one side they say that Kaleshwaram will fail and they say that they will give water to Hyderabad. The

Congress is in total confusion," KTR said.

"The Palamuru Yatra is a competitive Yatra for diversion. The project is complete and just digging the canals remains. They will be the ones whom people will remember saying that the people of Palamuru are using the reservoirs we built during your visit. Kaleswaram needs 400 permissions," KTR added.

Vedire Sriram is talking passionately because he wants the Bhuvanagiri seat.

KTR said that there was drought during Chandrababu's time. Kaleshwaram is for drought-proofing which is the beauty of this project.

The Congress still behaves as if it is in the opposition and are stopping our cars, he said.

Constable saves life of farmer

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

A police constable saved the life of a young farmer who consumed pesticide in Bhetigal village under Veenavanka Mandal on Wednesday near his farm following a dispute with family members.

The farmer was identified as Kurra Suresh of Bhetigal village.

The locals called up the police control room. Immediately the Blue Colts police reached the place. Constable Jayapal and Home Guard K Sampath immediately reach the village.

Noticing that the condition of the farmers was deteriorating, the constable carried the farmer on his shoulders and walked a distance of two kilometres across

the fields and admitted him to Government Hospital at Jammikunta.

The family members said that the condition of the farmer is now stable.

The police officials, elected people's representatives and the locals appreciate the presence of mind of the constable in saving the life of the farmer.

Social activist's sons donate 'last journey vehicle'

PNS ■ JANGAON

A person belonging to Gundlagadda in Jangaon town, - Mohammad Yousuf, has executed a will which asked his sons -to buy a vehicle for carrying bodies

to burial ground and gift it to the Muslim community here.

Yousuf who was an active social worker had asked his sons to donate the "last journey" vehicle to Muslim community in his name.

INDIA CORNER

Implement decisions without fear or favour: J-K LG to officials

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday directed the officers to implement decisions without fear or favour, as he interacted with citizens during live public grievance hearing here. Sinha also asked the officials to assess the public outreach programmes and take corrective measures for efficient redressal of grievances. The LG interacted with the people and listened to their grievances during LG's Mulaqaat, a live public grievance hearing programme at Civil Secretariat. He sought details of the complaints received on Jammu and Kashmir Integrated Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (JKIGRAMS) portal and action taken report on public outreach programmes from the concerned administrative secretaries, deputy commissioners and senior officials. "All the initiatives must serve the common good and decisions must be implemented without fear or favour," the Lt Governor said.



Customs hands over rare East India Company telescope to ASI

The Customs Department on Thursday handed over a 206-year-old tracker telescope of the British East India Company to the Archaeological Survey of India. The rare telescope was seized in 2018 near Rangia in Assam's Kamrup district by the Customs sleuths when it was being smuggled from West Bengal to Bhutan, Central Excise and Customs Chief Commissioner (Guwahati Zone) Bandhana Deori told reporters here. "After its seizure by the Guwahati Customs Division, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was requested to verify its genuineness," she added. The expert committee of ASI, Kolkata examined the telescope and confirmed the seized tracker telescope with the inscription 'UK EAST INDIA COMPANY, 1818, SINO LEO103' and engraved with a logo of a crown, a spider and a scorpion, Deori said. "Declaring it as an antique ite.



Agra jail inmates offer 'taste of prison' to outsiders

District jail authorities here have decided to open a restaurant just outside their premises to give outsiders a taste of prison. The restaurant named Jail Chowpati' will serve 'jail ki roti', poori bhaji, chai, samosa, kachori, and thaali among others, all prepared by inmates of the Agra district jail. Inaugurated by state prison minister Dharamveer Prajapati on Wednesday, the restaurant is being managed by people who have been released from the jail. The jail administration is also planning to set up a selfie point at the restaurant and make the premises air-conditioned. Launching a tiffin service for students and office goers will be the next move. Talking to PTI, Hariom Sharma, Superintendent of District Jail, Agra said, "In Jail Chowpati opened outside the district jail premises, inmates will prepare food while those who have been released will manage the distribution." The restaurant will help rehabilitate former inmates.



Modi, Jugnauth launch 6 India-assisted projects in Mauritius

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Mauritius are natural partners in the maritime domain to combat traditional and non-traditional challenges in the Indian Ocean region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday after virtually inaugurating a new airstrip, a jetty and six community development projects in the island nation. The India-assisted projects in Agalega island of Mauritius are seen as significant as they are expected to boost connectivity as well as maritime security and surveillance in the strategic waters in the region. After inaugurating the projects along with Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, Modi announced that Mauritius will be the first coun-



The India-assisted projects in Agalega island of Mauritius are seen as significant as they are expected to boost connectivity as well as maritime security and surveillance in the strategic waters in the region

try to join India's Jan Aushadhi scheme, which is an initiative aimed at providing quality medicines at affordable prices. In his remarks, Modi flagged concerns over challenges in the Indian Ocean region and said India and Mauritius are "natural partners" in the maritime domain to deal with them.

"Many traditional and non-traditional challenges are emerging in the Indian Ocean Region. All these challenges affect our economy. India and Mauritius are natural partners in the field of maritime security to deal with the challenges," he said at the virtual ceremony. "We are actively working to ensure security, prosperity and

stability in the Indian Ocean Region. We are cooperating together in all areas like monitoring of exclusive economic zone, joint patrolling, hydrography, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief," he said. Modi's comments came amid increasing concerns in New Delhi over China's growing military forays into the Indian Ocean region which is largely considered as the backyard of the Indian Navy. He said the inauguration of the airstrip and jetty at Agalega island will further advance the cooperation. The prime minister described Mauritius as an important partner under India's 'Neighborhood First' policy and that the bilateral development partnership has been an important pillar of the strategic relations.

'Centre afraid of INDIA, abusing probe agencies'

PNS ■ MAINPURI

Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Dimple Yadav slammed the BJP-led Centre over CBI summons to her husband Akhilesh Yadav, and accused it of abusing the central probe agencies for personal gains. The Mainpuri MP said the Bharatiya Janata Party is realising the strength of opposition bloc INDIA. Speaking to reporters at the SP office here, Dimple said, "He (Akhilesh) is not the first opposition leader to have received CBI summons. Efforts are being made to suppress every section of the society. To create this pressure, government investigating agencies CBI and ED (Enforcement Directorate) are being misused."

90 lakh new beneficiaries added to PM-KISAN scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 90 lakh new beneficiaries have been added under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme through the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra in the last three-and-a-half-months, according to the agriculture ministry. Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) launched on November 15, 2023 is the Centre's flagship initiative to raise awareness on its schemes. VBSY aims to achieve beneficiary saturation under government schemes. "Recently, as part of VBSY, undertaken to ensure saturation of the government's welfare schemes across more than 2.60 lakh gram panchayats, 90 lakh eligible farmers were added to PM-KISAN scheme,"



the ministry said in a statement. Under PM-KISAN, launched on February 2, 2019, eligible farmer families are provided a benefit of Rs 6,000 per year in three equal instalments of Rs 2,000 every four months. The benefit is transferred directly to bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer mode,

using modern digital technology. Since the launch, Rs 3 lakh crore has been disbursed, out of which Rs 1.75 lakh crore was transferred to eligible farmers during the Covid-19 pandemic period. Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued the latest 16th installment to more than 11 crore beneficiaries on Wednesday.

Concern over 5 states not signing PM SHRI School MoU



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has expressed strong concerns about five states not signing MoUs with the education ministry for PM SHRI schools and Punjab not implementing it despite continuing to take funds under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, sources said on Thursday. Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi have not yet signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Education, while 30 states and union territories (UTs) have done so. The scheme targets to upgrade 14,500 schools and is expected to benefit 1.8 million students. It also aims to ensure these schools serve as model institutes and encapsulate the spirit of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The government has already selected 6,448 schools from 28

states and UTs for the upgrade in the first round. "Despite taking funds from Centre for Samagra Shiksha Scheme, the refusal of five States/UTs, namely Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi to sign MOUs for PM SHRI schools reflects a troubling pattern. Punjab, after initially signing the MoU, stopped the implementation of PM SHRI," a source said. "It is a clear politicization by the States/UTs, where they accept funds under Samagra Shiksha but resist signing an MoU for PM SHRI," the source added. Asked about if the Centre can halt funding under Samgra Shiksha scheme for these states, the source said "nothing can be ruled out". The Samagra Shiksha Scheme is the largest Central government scheme for school education for universalisation of education.

Enough with 'jumlas', time to answer people now

CONG SLAMS GOVT OVER FARMERS' ISSUES

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday accused the BJP government of not fulfilling its promises to farmers such as doubling their income and said "enough with the jumlas", it is time to answer the people now. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said 16 years ago, the Congress-UPA government had waived Rs 72,000 crore farm loans and interest of 3.73 crore farmers. "This was the guarantee of Congress which was fulfilled. Modi ji made two big promises to the farmers -- first, cost+50 per cent of MSP and second, to double the income



of farmers by 2022. Both 'Modi's guarantees' turned out to be fake, and the condition of farmers became worse," the Congress president said in a post in Hindi on X. "Now Congress has again promised the farmers -- We will give legal guarantee of MSP to 15 crore farmer families. Only Congress fulfils its guarantee," he asserted.

SC upholds Rajasthan's 2-child norm for govt jobs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has upheld the two-child eligibility criterion of the Rajasthan government for seeking public employment, ruling that it is not discriminatory and does not violate the Constitution. The Rajasthan Various Service (Amendment) Rules, 2001 bar candidates who have more than two children from seeking government jobs. While upholding the two-child norm, the top court dismissed the appeal filed by ex-serviceman Ramji Lal Jat, who had applied for a constable's job in the Rajasthan Police on May 25,

2018 after his retirement from military in 2017. A bench headed by Justice Surya Kant held that Rule 24(4) of the Rajasthan Police Subordinate Service Rules, 1989, which says "no candidate shall be eligible for appointment to the service who has more than two children on or after June 1, 2002" is non-discriminatory and does not violate the Constitution. "This court held that the classification, which disqualifies candidates for having more than two living children, was non-discriminatory and intra-vires the Constitution, since the objective behind the provision was to promote family planning."

'In CBI, work needs to be done anonymously'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI is a place where work needs to be done anonymously and silently while staying away from seeking recognition through external platforms, its Director Praveen Sood said on Thursday. Addressing investiture ceremony of sub-inspectors at the agency's academy in Ghaziabad, Sood said young officers must strive to do their work by employing out-of-the-box thinking and looking for achieving better results through approaching their tasks differently. "This will do away with the mundane work by replacing the same with smart work which will yield better results," he said. The officers have been inducted after a 38-week training in different disciplines and specialisations. Among the 30 pass-outs, Sood awarded medals and trophies as well.

Jumrani Prince Omprakash was awarded 'DP Kohli Award for Best All-Round SI Trainee', Vicky Raj got 'DCBI Trophy for Indoor Studies' and 'Trophy for Cyber Crime Investigation. while Sudhanshu was selected for the 'John Lobo Trophy for Best Outdoor' and Ankit Tanwar received the 'CBI Academy Trophy for Dedication and Exemplary Conduct'. The CBI chief told the new recruits that the agency offers multiple specialisations in investigations of various crimes like anti-corruption, cyber crime, economic offences, special crime and they should work in a manner that they are equipped with specialization of their choice in the next four-five years. "Noting that most of the officers are from technical background, he underlined that the knowledge and learning acquired during academics and during the training, will come handy as the officers embark on real part of their learning process when they assume charge," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. The director said that as CBI officers, the new inductees are going to be the brand ambassadors of the organization as their conduct and work will always be up for scrutiny by the court and public which will reflect upon the agency.

'What Central projects have we stalled'



PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Thursday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should spell out what central schemes the state government has "blocked", and said those it opposed include NEET and the CAA, keeping public welfare in mind. The chief minister was responding to Modi's claim that there was lack of cooperation from the DMK-led TN government in implementing central projects in the state. The PM made these claims during his public address on Wednesday in Tirunelveli, in the southern part of the state. Stalin, on his part, referred to Modi's frequent visits to Tamil Nadu, saying "the fear of defeat on his face is evident and it manifests as anger." The PM is "slandering" the DMK and its government, the chief minister alleged.

WITH MH 60R HELICOPTER INDUCTION

Navy to bolster anti-submarine warfare acumen

PNS ■ KOCHI

The coast of Kochi is all set to witness the pinnacle of airborne supremacy of the Indian Navy next week when it inducts the aerial marvel, the MH 60R helicopter into its fleet, bolstering the Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capabilities. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will commission the newly inducted MH 60R Seahawk multi-role helicopter at the INS Garuda here on March 6, Navy officials said. The squadron will be commissioned in the Indian Navy as INAS 334, under the Command of Captain M Abhishek Ram. The Indian government signed a deal with the United States of America in February 2020, to acquire 24 fourth-generation MH 60R helicopters.



Six of them have been delivered to the Indian Navy so far. Speaking to PTI, Ram said the induction of these helicopters into the Indian Navy will bring about a significant surge in its maritime prowess and capabilities. Detailing the capabilities of the new chopper, he said that apart from the ASW, it is designed for anti-surface warfare, search and rescue opera-

tions during the day and night, medical evacuation and vertical replenishment, among others. "With this MH 60R, we have filled a major gap in our anti-submarine warfare capability. The anti-submarine capability and the sustenance of the chopper will change the way we are doing our surveillance and it will give us a larger surveillance bubble," Ram said. He added that the newly

inducted choppers have been integrated with almost all the ships under the Indian Navy and ready for operational deployments. The MH 60R is also capable of firing torpedoes, missiles and advanced precision kill weapon system rockets. The self-protection suite on the helicopter comprises Chaff and Infrared Flares, which can be deployed automatically upon detection of a threat, Lieutenant Commandant Aneesh Ayarotil, one of the trained pilots of MH 60R said. This is the only chopper in the Indian Navy with a self-defence capability from incoming gunfire or missiles. "We can deploy flares against the incoming heat-seeking missiles, while chaffs that contain high radar-reflecting materials can be deployed to confuse the radar-homing missiles," Ayarotil

told PTI. Ayarotil, who was earlier a Chetak pilot, said the MH 60R is one of the most advanced choppers and the systems are pilot-friendly. "We can engage autopilot to hover and reduce the workload of the pilots," he added. The first five batches of pilots and observers, who handle the detection and weapon systems and make the necessary tactical and navigational decisions, were trained in the US. Ram said the rest of the training was held at INS Garuda in Kochi where a simulator is also coming up. "This training here is more realistic because when you embark on an Indian ship, we are giving them a realistic sense of tactics. Because most of the training in the US was on the simulator and they do not let us expose ourselves much.

Manipur govt seeks Assam Rifles' help to maintain peace

PNS ■ IMPHAL

The Manipur government has sought Assam Rifles' assistance to maintain peace and restore public confidence in six violence-hit districts. An order issued by the Imphal West district magistrate on Thursday highlighted reports of significant breaches of law and order, notably instances of mob violence. "The situation has gone beyond the control of the district administration and police," the order said, adding that the services of Assam Rifles has been requisitioned in different parts of the district from February 29 till March 5. This follows recent events, including a torchlight rally on Wednesday night by thousands of women in Imphal West demanding the termina-



tion of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement between the central government and Kuki militant groups. On February 27, around 200 armed men vandalised and fired upon the residence of additional ASP M Amit Singh in Wangkhei, Imphal East district, leading to Singh's

abduction and subsequent rescue by security forces. In response to the escalating situation, other districts such as Bishnupur, Thoubal, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, and Tengnoupal have also requisitioned the deployment of Assam Rifles to maintain peace and security, officials said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Upmanship

Both TMC and BJP rush forth to claim credit for fugitive Sheikh Shahjahan's arrest after 55 days

The arrest of Trinamool Congress strongman Sheikh Shahjahan, who was wanted for the Sandeshkhali infamy involving the charges of gang rape and landgrab, is likely to further muddy political waters in West Bengal and intensify the bitter war of words between the Mamata Banerjee-led State Government and the BJP. On the run for 55 days following a mob attack on Enforcement Directorate officers during a raid at his house on January 5 in a ration scam case, Sheikh was finally taken into custody within 24 hours of the Calcutta High Court stating that the CBI, ED or State police could arrest him. However, the delayed development has opened a can of worms in political circles. While the ruling TMC maintains that Sheikh was apprehended now since the High Court had cleared the ambiguity on a stay on his arrest, the Opposition BJP claims that the accused was being shielded by the police and his arrest was "scripted" because of the "intense pressure brought on the Government by us". As the drama



unfolds in West Bengal, one thing remains clear: Sheikh's arrest has ignited a firestorm, with both the main players vying for supremacy in the State's ever-evolving political milieu. While the development has sent shockwaves across the State, the political manoeuvrings have understandably quickened as both the TMC and BJP seek to capitalise on the situation, especially since the Lok Sabha elections are very much in sight, and Sandeshkhali and its aftermath could be a game changer for both parties. For the TMC, it presents an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to combating corruption and upholding the rule of law. The party has wasted no time in touting the arrest as

a testament to its dedication to clean governance and accountability. On the other hand, the BJP has seized upon the arrest as evidence of its growing influence in West Bengal's political arena. The party sees it as vindication of its anti-corruption stance and validation of its claims of rampant corruption within the TMC-led Government. However, under the surface lies a deeper struggle for supremacy in the State's tumultuous political arena. The fierce battle for electoral dominance has only intensified with Sheikh's arrest, with each party seeking to leverage the situation to bolster its poll prospects. However, amid the political grandstanding, it is important not to lose sight of the broader implications of the fugitive strongman's arrest. Beyond being a mere pawn in the State's political underbelly, Sheikh's case underscores the pervasive issue of corruption that continues to plague governance in West Bengal. His arrest serves as a stark reminder of the challenges facing the State in its quest for clean and transparent governance, irrespective of political affiliations. Amid the cacophony of competing claims and counterclaims, the true test lies in the ability of Bengal's political class to address the underlying issues of corruption and criminalisation of politics, which continue to undermine the State's progress and development.

PICTALK



A local artiste with long mustache poses for photos, in Bikaner

PTI

Empowering grassroots innovation for progress

Science and technology stand as the twin engines propelling our nation towards progress, but they must address the needs of society

Science and technology serve as the driving force propelling our nation forward, akin to the wheels of progress. However, the efficacy of these wheels determines the speed of our journey. Since independence, Bharat has experienced significant advancement, largely attributable to strides in scientific innovation undertaken by our scientific community. This progress is evident across various sectors crucial to human life, including agriculture, food, healthcare, infrastructure, and communication. Yet, the translation of scientific innovations into societal benefits often encounters challenges, primarily due to a disconnect between scientific research and grassroots needs. While many innovations originate from peer-reviewed publications, often authored by Western scientists, they may lack relevance to local contexts. Consequently, solutions to everyday challenges remain elusive, despite remarkable achievements in space and technology. This reliance on external sources creates a bottleneck in developing disruptive discoveries



tailored to local needs. Historically, groundbreaking innovations were not solely the domain of trained scientists but also arose from the keen observations and creativity of untrained naturalists. Preceding the advent of modern science, human civilizations thrived for millennia, leveraging state-of-the-art technologies of their time. Many contemporary innovations find their roots in ancient technologies, underscoring the contributions of our forebears. However, the contemporary scientific community often falls short in generating truly novel ideas, frequently resorting to replicating concepts from Western literature. This approach results in innovations primarily catering to

industrial needs rather than addressing societal issues. The critical distinction between invention and utility underscores the necessity for originality and societal relevance in innovation. Grassroots innovators emerge as pivotal agents in bridging this gap, offering solutions rooted in local contexts and addressing specific community needs. These individuals possess an intimate understanding of their environment, enabling them to develop tailored interventions that resonate with the realities of daily life. Their localized approach ensures solutions are not only relevant but also sustainable, addressing root causes rather than superficial symptoms. By empowering grassroots innovators, communities can leverage their inherent knowledge, creativity, and resourcefulness to solve their challenges. This bottom-up approach fosters ownership and collective responsibility, driving more effective and sustainable solutions. Initiatives such as those facilitated by the National Innovation Foundation-India exemplify the government's

commitment to promoting grassroots innovation and integrating it into the mainstream. While India has made significant strides in fields like space science, vaccine development, and agriculture, persisting societal challenges necessitate a collaborative approach between scientific institutions and grassroots innovators. Celebrating National Science Day under the theme 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat' provides an opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of grassroots innovators. Their selfless dedication to improving their communities exemplifies the spirit of innovation and underscores the potential for transformative change when science aligns with grassroots needs. In conclusion, the journey of progress propelled by science and technology requires not only scientific excellence but also a deep-rooted connection to societal needs. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, views are personal)



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

LK Advani: A Ratna of Bharat

From attacking pseudo-secularism to pan-India moderation, it was as if Advani had given up his yesterday for the sake of the BJP's and the country's tomorrow

The biggest sacrifice Lal Krishna Advani made was to distance himself from the culmination of the Babri edifice at Ayodhya. Understandably, the Hindu public was disappointed; Advani's followers were heartbroken. Many of them went to the extent of alleging that he had let down the cause. For a conscientious leader, this was like cutting his nose and throwing it away. During the spring of 1991, Advani told me that it was Ayodhya that had made him a national figure. Until his leading the Rathayatra from Somnath to hopefully reach the birthplace of Shri Ramchandra—which was intercepted by Lalu Prasad Yadav at Samastipur in 1990—Advani was merely a senior party apparatchik.

It was his taking up the cause of the Ramjanmabhoomi that catapulted him to the gallery of national figures. When, therefore, Advani spoke to the press saying that December 6, 1992, was the darkest day of his life, he knew what he was throwing away. Soon thereafter, accompanied by friends, I called on him at the Irrigation Department's guest house near Jhansi, where he along with a few other senior BJP leaders had been kept under house arrest, following the demolition of the Babri edifice on that fateful day of December 6 that year. Advani told me that after seeing my letter published in the Pioneer, wherein I had in rejoinder to his remark written that "There have been darker days", he knew I had come to protest against his statement. It took him quite a while before he came around to believing my denial. He was right to the extent that I continued to hold the view (which I of course, still do) that the Babri edifice was a baggage of dacoity and had to be confiscated.

Advani then went on to explain: Whatever my explanation, I had to realise that party unity, regardless of anything else, was our uppermost duty. Atalji (Vajpayee) was our seniormost leader, and no party member should differ with him publicly on such a matter of policy. Should party members flagrantly violate their party's



PRAFULL GORADIA

commitment made to the Supreme Court, that the edifice would be safe? Its future was for the court to decide. First, who then would ever again have faith in the word of a BJP leader?

Secondly, the opposing parties would go to town saying that the BJP was a party ridden with factions. Its top leader does not believe in masjid-hunting while one of its chief ministers practices the exact opposite. Thirdly, an upright party is a united party, and we are known as a party with a difference. Becoming a faction-ridden party is not the difference between our aspirations. Fourthly, discipline has been our hallmark. Did the karsevaks at Ayodhya behave in a disciplined way, by going against the leadership and demolishing a place of worship of another community?

In April 1998, I became the party's Member of the Rajya Sabha through a bye-election. Among members generally, it seemed that interest in Ayodhya had waned. The case lay in court without active hearings. When I thought of the vanished edifice, I did wonder whether at that rate

“IF THERE IS TO BE ANOTHER LEADER IN THE FUTURE, HE SHOULD HAVE THE WIDE ACCEPTANCE AND LOYALTY THAT ATALJI COMMANDED. THAT IS WHAT A DIVERSE COUNTRY LIKE OURS NEEDS”, ADVANI OPINED

the Congress with a clever leader might just snatch the issue out of the BJP's hands and use it for electoral benefit. How popular the issue was kept becoming clear over and over again.

Meanwhile, many more pilgrims continued to visit the holy city. One day in July 1999, Advani called me to his room in Parliament House for a chat over toast and coffee. He opened up by showering praise on Vajpayee's tactful leadership of a coalition of so many parties with so many different political ideologies ranging from the Shiv Sena on the one hand to the DMK on the other.

There was no doubt that Vajpayee was running a complex government very successfully. Advani was full of praise for his leadership. If there is to be another leader in the future, he should have the wide acceptance and loyalty that Atalji commanded. That is what a diverse country like ours needs, Advani opined. All of us in our party should give up small differences and think of large policy issues. Automatically, such a leader and his party would attract votes as well as an ongoing following.

He went on to say that India's future lies in the integrity of politics. Rather than recommending any shift towards moderation or 'soft secularism', Advani stressed the unity of thought, policy and leadership. By implication, he was asking for a united party under a broadminded leader. He was repeatedly emphatic about parties rather than the party.

Even dynastic parties are not free of factions and breakups, and it is the BJP alone that has admirably avoided going that way. It seemed as though he wanted to give up all he had stood for earlier and espouse a new cause, not only for the BJP but for the sake of the country.

As I knew him, I can state that this was no mere shift but a sacrifice. From his eloquence of attacking pseudo-secularism to pan-India moderation, it was as if Advani had given up his yesterday for the sake of the BJP's and the country's tomorrow. It could not have been easy for him, but that is what he is.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

14 BANK HOLIDAYS IN MARCH

Sir — People who are planning to visit banks in the first week of March and thereafter will have to plan very well in advance. Locker operation for the marriage will have to gear up early. The banks across the country will remain closed for 14 days on various counts due to holidays and the end of the financial year at the fag end of March. According to the bank calendar released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the coming weeks of March and April will witness over seven days of holidays.

These include all Sundays, the second and fourth Saturdays, public holidays, and regional holidays. In the state of Maharashtra, the bank is closed on March 8 as well for Mahasivarathri, March 25, Monday for Holi second day, and March 29 for Friday. People with pending work related to the banks also need to note that there will be only two days when the banks will continue their services between March 27 and April 4 will remain shut as it will be the last day of the financial year (FY 24). In April, the banks will be shut down to close their yearly accounts. April 2 will be a holiday on account of Good Friday while the services will be affected further.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | Mumbai

RARE DISEASES

Sir — Autoimmune disorders, inherited cancers and congenital conditions are not uncommon. Across the globe, some three fifty million people live with about seven thousand of what are called "rare diseases". A disease is "rare" when it affects fewer than one in two thousand people. More than seventy per cent of these diseases begin in childhood. Insufficient knowledge on the part of the doctor and lack of awareness among the patients render these rare diseases challenging. That more than seventy-five per cent of rare diseases are of genetic origin, and fifty per cent are present from birth further complicates things. Besides misdiagnosis leading to inadequate treatment, crippling pain and discomfort are unpleasant companions of the patients with rare diseases. 'Rare Diseases Day' on

Reservations rendered ineffective



The struggle for reservation is carried forward by many castes. A few individuals whip the sentiments of the concerned people and involve them in a struggle by which the individuals gain fame and benefits. Reservations are sought to get admission to educational institutions and to gain jobs in government institutions. But everyone talking about reservations should, first of all, analyse how many vacancies

in government institutions are filled and how many have been recruited permanently on reservations in the last 10 years.

The recruitment in government offices is filled on casual, contingent, daily wage, contract or outsourced basis. Under these systems, reservations have no relevance. Recruitment is carried on only for the top layer posts where reservations have their place. PSUs were recruiting employees under the rules of reservation. Now they are either closed or facing closure. Moreover among the unemployed lot, more than 40% are educated youth. In this background fighting for employment opportunities is all the more important. The present struggles resemble searching for fuel sticks in a desert land. Leaders and followers should think before embarking upon a struggle. Struggling for reservations is struggling for non-existing jobs.

AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

February 29 aims at achieving "true equity" for those afflicted by rare conditions. Equity in health access, treatment, and social opportunities is crucial for patients with rare diseases. In India, one in twenty suffers from rare diseases. All this said, the biggest difficulty that arises in the management of rare diseases is their treatment, which takes a heavy financial toll on the patients as well as their relatives. Moreover, treatment is long and tiring, so patience and equanimity among all stakeholders can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

THE HUMAN COST OF UKRAINE WAR

Sir — Ukrainian President Zelensky told reporters on February 22, in the second year of the Russian invasion, that Ukraine had lost more than 31 thousand soldiers in the war. The lives of civilians would have been even greater than this. On Monday evening, French President Emmanuel Macron indicated that he was willing to send his troops to Ukraine. But immediately after his statement, almost all EU and NATO member countries distanced them-

selves from Macron's suggestion. All refused to deploy their troops in Ukraine. Whereas just two days ago, US President Joe Biden's views were being read on his social media platform 'X' in which he wrote, "When Putin ordered his tanks to enter Ukraine, he thought the world would bow down. To provide "so that the Ukrainian troops have the necessary weapons and ammunition to defend themselves". The Second World War also ended only when all the Allies entered the field together, otherwise before that the German victory campaign was uninterrupted. Was moving forward. According to the latest data, Ukraine is losing more and more of its territory to Russia. Kyiv is facing a shortage of military equipment as well as trained combat soldiers. In such a situation, if Ukraine has to save its existence, then NATO's soldiers will have to be fielded in the region to fight Russian invaders.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

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India advocates for a balanced voice in shaping a multilateral world order



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

As elections draw closer, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been frequenting India's south more than championing the causes of the global south across available diplomatic platforms. One reason is that his party seems to have a weaker presence down south. Earlier, as a strategic choice, PM Modi chose to inaugurate a Hindu temple in a Muslim country during his last foreign trip in the current tenure. Even as he did so, statements regarding continuity of policies and outlook were subtly delivered when PM Modi confidently told his audience that he already has invitations from several foreign governments for the middle and latter part of 2024, indicating confidence in his potential third term. A third term for Modi would have wider ramifications for a whole bunch of issues, not to mention foreign policy, given India's rising economic clout and confidence, making it a significant player in global affairs. India is expected to be the third-largest economy after the US and China in PM Modi's next term, which, besides putting a couple of stars on the shoulder, will also mean a heavy lift of responsibilities. One of the significant achievements for Mr. Modi, particularly during his second term, has been uplifting the India-US relationship and situating it in the Indo-Pacific context. While the India-US bilateral is by far at its strongest ever in history, the two nations have managed to work through several plurilateral platforms, the most important being the QUAD (a grouping of the US, India, Australia, and Japan), each having significant stakes and interests in the Indo-Pacific, while also wary of the dragon in the region, never stopping short of using any overt or covert means to push its assertive agenda.



While some of the world's finest diplomats, policymakers, and think tanks were deliberating on global issues last week, EAM Jaishankar found some time to speak to a whole bunch of policy strategists on the relevance of QUAD and the way forward. EAM highlighted the changing nature of India's foreign policy outlook over the last decade when he mentioned "remarkable changes in India's bilateral relationships with its three Quad partners. With the US, we put behind ideological hesitations of history. With Japan, we gave longstanding goodwill much more practical shape. And with Australia, we actually made a real beginning in seriousness." Even though there hasn't been a QUAD leaders summit since May last year, backroom meetings between foreign ministers from the member countries to discuss issues of regional and global importance haven't taken a backseat. Given the political compulsions, it might be difficult for India to host the QUAD leaders summit this year, as it will be too close to the US elections by the time the new Indian government is in place. However, the significant targets India aims to achieve through the QUAD group, as highlighted by EAM, namely, "it reflects the growth of a multipolar order. Two, it is a post-alliance and post-Cold War thinking. Three, it is against spheres of influence. Four, it expresses the democratizing of the global space and a collaborative, not unilateral, approach. And five, it is a statement that in this day and age, others cannot have a veto on our choices," shall remain in focus. It is this message of continuity of policies that the Indian government is highlighting to the domestic and international audience at a time when instability is the norm for most, including powerful nations in the world. India has effectively managed the QUAD as a non-military arrangement, unlike NATO, with shared interests of all members in the region. Mr. Jaishankar highlighted in his address, "Among Quad countries, there is a growing comfort in working with each other given the strong consensus we have in our strategic outlooks. India's bilateral partnerships with each of these three Quad countries have also transformed in recent years." The message is clear: India will continue to push for a multilateral world order with a fair share of voice on international forums.

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

Protests stress need for climate-smart agriculture



KOTA SRIRAJ

There is a pressing need for proactive measures aimed at protecting both farmer livelihoods and national food security



The ongoing farmer protests that began on February 13th have already claimed five lives and resulted in Delhi bearing the brunt of economic losses to the tune of 300 crores as nearly five lakh traders who did regular business in Delhi from adjoining states suspended their businesses given the unrest. Since 2020, farmer protests have unfortunately assumed a regular frequency not only in Delhi and Punjab but across India. According to consultancy firm Verisk Maplecroft estimates, India has accounted for the biggest global share of farmer protests in the past three years. The farmer protests 2.0 again highlight the fault lines in India's agricultural viability and this time the farmers are demanding conclusive government action. The protesting farmers want a firm minimum support price (MSP) that is backed by a legal guarantee for all crops. Another demand is to implement the recommendations of the MS Swaminathan committee on agriculture which will enable increasing MSP to 50 per cent above the weighted average cost of production. Other demands include better sugar cane prices and a pension of Rs 10,000 a month for every farmer above the age of 60. The government is engaged in feverish negotiations with the farmer unions to break the impasse. However, a breakthrough achieved may be short-lived, as the government would have only successfully attended to the symptoms and not to the problem itself. India's agri sector contributes only 15 per cent to the GDP but engages 58 per cent workforce. This lopsided proportion is made worse by the fact that 85 per cent of the farmers operate in less than five acres of land half of which in many parts of India may be dry and barren. This translates to low yields, low earnings and high debt and when combined with increasing challenges of climate change on agriculture, the problem assumes a much larger and ominous proportion. Climate change whether it is unseasonal rain, hailstorms, floods, or drought, India's agri-sector has seen it all. The lingering uncertainty due to environmental issues



BEST FARMING PRACTICES NEED TO BE PROMOTED ACROSS THE SECTOR TO ENSURE CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

keeps the farmers on their toes leading to income insecurity and mounting debt. An example is the casualty in the current protests of a marginal farmer whose 8-acre agricultural land had 8 lacs of debt on it, making it virtually impossible for the farmer to pay it off and continue with another crop. Climate change-driven issues such as these have made the farmers demand an MSP law to act as a safety net for the time, effort and risk they invest in farming. The perennial shortage of water resources is the first symptom of climate change's impact on the agri sector. According to Rainfed Atlas, it is estimated that between 52% and 55% of the farming community have no means of irrigation and are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. But due to climate change temperatures are spiralling and rainfall has become more erratic, with longer dry spells resulting in droughts and shorter periods of more intense rainfall causing floods. This results in a domino effect whereby crop yield is adversely impacted while high Co2 levels cause low nutritional value of crops. This translates to low marketability of the produce therefore causing financial distress and rising debt for the farmers. The impact of climate change on the agri-sector and the sluggish government response in managing its fallout has come as a double whammy for the farmer community. The lack of robust insulation measures that seek to protect the sector from the vagaries of climate extremities is now having a telling impact on productivity. The cereal crop productivity of most cereals is slated to decrease due to an increase in temperature and CO2 levels, and the decrease in water availability. According to estimates, there will be a projected loss of 10-40% in crop production by 2100 if no climate change adaptation measures are

taken. A one-degree Celsius increase in temperature may reduce yields of major food crops by 3-7%. Given these troubling projections, the government must extricate the agri-sector from the clutches of climate change. This alone can ensure the best interests of farmers, safeguard national food security and protect livelihoods. An audit of the agri-sector at the micro-level is essential to identify and remove processes that are detrimental to natural resources. This will ensure weeding out of inefficient water-intensive practices and allow optimal use of the precious resource. Similarly, best farming practices need to be promoted across the sector to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation in the sector. For example, the raised-bed planting of wheat in the Indo-Gangetic plains enables 20-25% savings in irrigation water and also helps in reduced herbicide use. Measures such as these combined with water accounting methodologies can build long-term sustainability, efficiency and resilience of the agri-sector besides immensely benefiting the marginal farmers. The government must also initiate climate-smart agriculture strategies which aim at adapting agriculture to climate change. This can be done by implementing technologies that help farmers plan crops by considering the climate specifics of their area through easy-to-use apps on their smartphones. This can be done by prioritising botanical research to develop crop species that are more tolerant to water deficiencies and extreme temperatures. Additionally, ecologists can evolve effective soil management methods that reduce the depletion of topsoil, promote carbon sequestration, and reduce chemical application. Advanced farm irrigation technologies can also help proper water saturation levels in the soil, prevent water flooding,

and help avoid top-soil runoff. The government must focus on specially developed software solutions for agriculture that can help in real-time monitoring of the crops and allow farmers to accurately calculate the required inputs, which reduces costs in the short term and protects nature in the long term. Technology-assisted cover crops for instance can not only help prevent soil erosion, and promote water retention and nitrogen fixation but also serve as organic manure for fodder. Smart agri-software can help farmers implement differentiated applications of fertilisers which can help decrease soil pollution and increase crop nutrient levels. The software can also have in-built weather-related tools that provide timely alerts of extremities, elaborate weather forecasts to schedule farming events and enable prediction of general climate change tendencies by analysing historical weather data. Currently, the agri-sector problems and farmer grievances are dealt with on a reactive basis; this is evident in the form of chronic farmer agitations that come back every year. The government must realise that a lasting solution is only possible if actual problems, including the impact of climate change on agriculture, are addressed with the participation of all stakeholders of the sector. The collaboration of farmers, policymakers, environmentalists, botanical scientists and technology experts can help chalk out long-term strategies and solutions and ensure a robust agri-sector that is resilient against climate change onslaughts. Farmer protests are a symptom of climate change's impact on agriculture. Protecting the sector from adverse impacts will automatically ensure farmer well-being and prosperity.

(The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)

New India: Roti, kapda, makaan, vigyan and aatmasamman

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has prioritised inclusive growth and sustainable development, empowering every section of society

The Modi government's comprehensive strategy for tackling fundamental aspects of development such as food security (Roti), clothing (Kapda), housing (Makaan), science and technology (Vigyan), and self-respect (Aatmasamman) stands as a remarkable example of effective policymaking. These initiatives have not only brought about socio-economic transformation but have also significantly contributed to the nation's advancement. The Modi government has aimed to uplift and empower every section of society. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India has prioritised inclusive growth and sustainable development. Through numerous flagship



ANIL AGRAWAL

schemes, significant strides have been made towards building a stronger, more resilient India. As we reflect on the journey of India's transformation over the past decade, it becomes evident that the Roti, Kapda, Makaan, Vigyan, and Aatmasamman initiatives have played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's socio-economic landscape. Moving forward, it is imperative to build

upon these foundations and continue striving towards a more prosperous and equitable future for all. Through revolutionary initiatives, the government has aimed to enhance agricultural productivity and bolster the textile industry, thereby encouraging research in science and technology, stimulating economic growth, and creating employment opportunities for Aatmanirbhar Bharat. A pivotal aspect of the Modi government's initiatives has been the empowerment of Bharat, ensuring self-reliance and dignity for every citizen. This vision extends to promoting social justice, gender equality, and skill development, encapsulating the ethos of "Aatmanirbhar Bharat." Initiatives aimed at uplifting

marginalised communities exemplify the government's commitment to fostering an inclusive society. **Roti: Transforming Food Security in India** The Modi government has taken a multifaceted approach to food security, encompassing macro and micro levels. Initiatives like PMGKY and ONORC have bolstered vulnerable groups' food access, provided relief during crises, and built resilience. Prioritising nutrition through POSHAN Abhiyaan demonstrates a commitment to tackling deficiencies. **Kapda: Enhancing Textiles and Khadi** The remarkable growth in Khadi's turnover, from Rs. 31,154 crores in 2013-14 to Rs. 1,34,630 crores in 2022-23,

underscores its economic revitalization. This surge in demand has propelled production and employment opportunities, reflecting the government's commitment to nurturing indigenous industries. India's textile exports have increased from \$12 billion in 2010-11 to \$39.2 billion in 2017-18. The textile industry in India is currently a \$75 billion industry and is expected to grow to \$300 billion by 2025-26. **Makaan: Revolutionising Housing** In a nation as vast and diverse as India, characterized by historical socioeconomic disparities, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) has emerged as a transformative force. This initiative transcends mere housing provision; it catalyses

profound change. Through Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), expansive coverage underscores the unwavering dedication of the Modi government and the vision of converting mere structures into cherished homes and dreams into tangible realities, marking a testament to the government's commitment to the well-being and prosperity of its citizens nationwide. The "Housing for All" scheme represents a multifaceted approach to address the critical issue of housing in India. The Light House Projects (LHPs) stand as a pioneering initiative under the visionary Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India), spearheaded by the Government of India since its launch in 2019.

Vigyan: Advancing the Space Sector India has emerged as a prominent space power in the world, with significant global implications. Chandrayaan-3 hailed as India's lunar triumph, reaffirms India's technological prowess and solidifies its position as a leader in space exploration, paving the way for future lunar endeavours, including human exploration. Aditya-L1, a state-of-the-art coronagraphy spacecraft meticulously crafted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), embarked on a pioneering mission to explore the mysteries of the sun's atmosphere, particularly focusing on the corona and chromosphere.

Aatmasamman: Empowering Bharat Once an individual has secured all the necessities for a comfortable life, the concept of "Aatmasamman," or self-respect. Beyond material needs, self-respect becomes the cornerstone of emotional and psychological well-being, encompassing a profound sense of dignity, worth, and integrity. Stand Up India Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme, Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) have been supportive of empowering numerous sections of society. (The author is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Rupee settles flat at 82.91 against US dollar

The rupee on Thursday settled flat at 82.91 (provisional) against the US dollar, as the support from lower crude oil prices and a weak greenback against major crosses overseas was offset by sustained foreign capital outflows. Besides, a positive trend in equity markets provided a cushion to the domestic unit, forex traders said. Market participants were also cautious ahead of the domestic GDP data to be released later in the day, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.88 and touched the intra-day low of 82.94 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at its previous day's closing level of 82.91 (provisional) against the dollar. On Wednesday, the rupee settled 2 paise lower at 82.91 against the US dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined 0.19 per cent to 103.78. Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the Indian rupee was under pressure due to selling by foreign institutional investors and dollar demand from importers.



Swan Energy raises Rs 3,000 cr via QIP

Swan Energy on Thursday said it has raised Rs 3,000 crore from qualified institutional placement of shares which were priced at Rs 670 apiece. The issue got interest from qualified institutional investors including Quant Mutual Fund, SBI Life, LIC, LIC Mutual Fund, Tata Mutual Fund, Infiniti Mutual Funds, SBI General Insurance, BNP Paribas Mutual Fund, Nomura, Goldman Sachs, Future Generali, Anand Rathii, and other domestic and foreign institutions and family offices, the company said. The fund will be deployed to modernise the recently acquired Reliance Naval and Engineering's shipyard at Pipavav. Additionally, a portion of the fund will be allocated for project expansion and debt reduction. Paresh Merchant, an executive director of Swan said taking management control of Reliance Naval – the largest defence shipyard in the country – aligns with their vision to emerge as a leading private player in the manufacture of defence, commercial, and oil and gas vessels.



Key infra sectors' growth slows to 15-month low

The growth of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed to a 15-month low of 3.6 per cent in January, on account of poor performance of sectors like refinery products, fertiliser, steel and electricity, according to the official data released on Thursday. The growth of eight core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 4.9 per cent in December. It was 9.7 per cent in January 2023. The previous low level of growth rate was recorded at 0.9 per cent in October 2022. Cumulatively also, the growth rate in the output of these sectors slowed down to 7.7 per cent as against 8.3 per cent in April-January 2022-23. The output growth of refinery products and fertiliser was in the negative zone. And the pace of increase in the output of coal, steel, and electricity decelerated during the month under review. However, crude oil, natural gas, and cement production recorded positive growth in January.



Cabinet nod to Rs 1.26L cr chip-making units

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved setting up three semiconductor-making units by firms, including Tata Group and Japan's Renesas, at an investment of Rs 1.26 lakh crore as part of an attempt to cut India's dependence on imports to meet requirements of chips. The units which will make chips for sectors including defence, automobiles and telecommunications, will begin construction within the next 100 days, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters after the cabinet meeting. The three units will be set up under the 'Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem' programme that provides government support of up to Rs 76,000 crore. Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor



Manufacturing Corp at Dholera in Gujarat. The plant will have a capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and will involve an investment of Rs 91,000 crore. Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) will set up a semiconductor unit in Morigaon, Assam, at an investment of Rs 27,000 crore. CG Power in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand will set up a unit in Sanand in

Gujarat at an investment of Rs 7,600 crore. In June last year, the Cabinet approved a proposal of Micron for setting up a semiconductor unit in Sanand, Gujarat. The approvals are part of the Modi government's ambitions to make India a chipmaker for the world and cutting reliance on countries like Taiwan. Vaishnaw said the Tata plant at Dholera will produce high-performance compute chips with 28 nm technology for electric vehicles (EV), tele-

com, defence, automotive, consumer electronics, display and power electronics. The unit in Assam will have a capacity of 48 million per day for automotive, electric vehicles, consumer electronics, telecom, and mobile phones. The CG power semiconductor unit will manufacture 15 million chips for consumer, industrial, automotive and power applications. "Within a very short time, India's semiconductor mission has achieved four big successes. With these units, the semiconductor ecosystem will get established in India. India already has deep capabilities in chip design. With these units, our country will develop capabilities in chip fabrication. Advanced packaging technologies will be indigenously developed in India with today's announcement," he said adding the three units will generate direct employment of 20,000 advanced technology jobs and about 60,000 indirect jobs.

India's GDP grows at 8.4% in Q3; economy to expand at 7.6% in FY24: Govt data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic growth accelerated to 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2023-24, mainly due to good performance by the manufacturing, mining & quarrying and construction sectors. The Indian economy recorded a growth of 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of this fiscal (October-December 2023), according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Thursday. The NSO, in its second advance estimate of national accounts, pegged the country's growth at 7.6 per cent for 2023-24. It had projected a growth of 7.3 per cent for the current fiscal in its first advance estimates released earlier in January 2024. The NSO also revised the GDP growth for 2022-23 to 7 per cent against the earlier estimate of 7.2 per cent.

Protect investors in small, midcap schemes amid surging inflow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has asked mutual fund houses to put in place a framework to safeguard investors, who invested in smallcap and midcap schemes, amid a "froth building up" in these categories. Also, the regulator has suggested steps such as restrictions on inflows in these segments, portfolio rebalancing, and laying guidelines to safeguard investors from the first-mover advantage of redeeming investors. This came in the backdrop of strong flow in the small and midcap schemes of mutual funds over the last few quarters. In a communication to Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Tuesday, Sebi asked the industry body to inform trustees of all the mutual fund houses to frame a policy to protect the interest of investors of smallcap and midcap schemes. "In the context of the froth building up in the small and mid-cap segments of the mar-

Sebi asks mutual fund houses



ket and the continuing flows in the small and mid-cap schemes of mutual funds, trustees, in consultation with unitholder protection committees of the AMCs shall ensure that a policy is put in place to protect the interest of all investors," the regulator said. The market regulator said that "appropriate" and "proactive measures" should be taken by Asset Management Companies (AMCs) and fund managers to protect investors. However, such a framework

should not be restricted to moderating inflows and rebalancing of portfolios. Additionally, the new framework should protect investors from the first-mover advantage of redeeming investors. Further, fund houses are required to disclose the new policy on their website within 21 days, the letter mentioned. During the three months ended December 2023, the mid-cap category garnered net inflows of Rs 6,468 crore, marking it the 12th-consecutive quarter of inflow. Besides, the small-cap category experienced a net inflow of Rs 12,052 crore in the third quarter of fiscal 2023-24, which was the highest the category has witnessed ever over a quarter. This was also the 11th-consecutive quarter in which the category witnessed net inflows. Strong, consistent net inflows and favourable market conditions propped up the assets under management for these segments.

Exicom Tele-Systems IPO subscribed 129.52 times

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of EV charger maker Exicom Tele-Systems Ltd got subscribed a whopping 129.52 times on the last day of subscription on Thursday. The Rs 429 crore-initial share sale received bids for 2,36,03,94,900 shares against 1,82,23,540 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The portion for non-institutional investors got subscribed 153.20 times, while the category for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) received 121.80 times subscription. The Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) part attracted 119.51 times subscription. The IPO got fully subscribed within hours of opening for bidding on Tuesday. It had a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 329 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) component of up to 70.42 lakh equity shares worth Rs 100 crore, at the upper end of the price band, by promoter NextWave Communications.

Fiscal deficit touches 63.6% of full year target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government's fiscal deficit at Rs 11 lakh crore at January end touched 63.6 per cent of the revised annual target, according to the official data released on Thursday. In the corresponding period last year, the fiscal deficit or gap between the expenditure and revenue was 67.8 per cent of Revised Estimates (RE) of the Union Budget 2022-23. For 2023-24, the government's fiscal deficit is estimated at Rs 17.35 lakh crore or 5.8 per cent of the GDP. The government's total receipts stood at Rs 22.52 lakh crore (81.7 per cent of corresponding RE 2023-24 of total receipts) as of January 2024, according to the data released by Contoller General of Accounts (CGA). This comprised Rs 18.8 lakh crore tax revenue (net), Rs 3.38 lakh crore of non-tax revenue and Rs 34,219 crore of non-debt capital receipts. Non-debt capital receipts consist of the recovery of loans and miscellaneous capital receipts. The total expenditure incurred by the Centre was Rs 33.54 lakh crore (74.7 per cent of corresponding RE



2023-24), out of which Rs 26.33 lakh crore is on revenue account and Rs 7.2 lakh crore on capital account. As per the CGA data, Rs 8,20,250 crore has been transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by the central government up to this period, which is Rs 1,52,480 crore higher than the previous year. Out of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 8,21,731 crore was on account of interest payments and Rs 3,15,559 crore on major subsidies. Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said: "While there may be some slippage in the disinvestment target and capex may trail the FY2024 RE, ICRA does not expect the revised fiscal deficit target of Rs 17.3 lakh crore for FY2024 to be breached."

Coal Minister launches coal logistics policy for infra development

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Coal and Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi on Thursday launched the Coal Logistics Plan & Policy for the development of logistics infrastructure for dry fuel in the country. The minister said that there is a need to expand coal mining and scale up evacuation infrastructure as the demand for coal in electricity generation in India will continue to grow. This case primarily deals with fraudulent and manipulative trading in the scrip of V Marc India Ltd, listed on NSE's SME segment, prima facie orchestrated by the promoter and company management, along with connected parties. In its order, Sebi, prima facie, found that V Marc's promoter and MD Vikas Garg and Sandeep Kumar Srivastava, former Whole Time Director of the company-- engaged the services of Priyesh Kurani to 'operate the market'. It further noted that Kurani, in

Sebi bans 12 entities from securities mkt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Thursday barred 12 entities, including promoter of V Marc India Ltd, from the securities market for engaging in a fraudulent scheme to manipulate volumes and price of the company's shares. Additionally, the regulator impounded wrongful gains of Rs 6.38 crore made by some of the entities from the manipulative scheme, according to an interim order. This case primarily deals with

MANIPULATIVE TRADES IN V MARC INDIA

fraudulent and manipulative trading in the scrip of V Marc India Ltd, listed on NSE's SME segment, prima facie orchestrated by the promoter and company management, along with connected parties. In its order, Sebi, prima facie, found that V Marc's promoter and MD Vikas Garg and Sandeep Kumar Srivastava, former Whole Time Director of the company-- engaged the services of Priyesh Kurani to 'operate the market'. It further noted that Kurani, in

turn, in addition to using his own and his connected entities' trading accounts, engaged accounts of persons connected to Garg to manipulate the scrip. Further, Garg and the company management channelled funds through their connected entities to Kurani for executing the fraudulent scheme. The alleged fraudulent scheme was set in motion as soon as the scrip was listed on April 8, 2021. "The impact of this alleged fraudulent scheme is evident in the manner volumes surged and

prices increased after which most of the entities -- PV Manipulators-- as well as the IPO subscribers - exited fully. The shares offloaded were purchased by public shareholders leading to the increase in their numbers as well," Sebi said. Accordingly, Sebi has restrained 12 entities 'from buying, selling or dealing in the securities market or associating themselves with the securities market, either directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever until further orders'.

India built around 92,000 km of national highways in last 9.5 years: Anurag Jain

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road and Transport Highways (MoRTH) has built around 92,000 km of national highways in the last nine and a half years and by the end of the next month, it will touch 95,000 km, its Secretary Anurag Jain said on Thursday. Addressing an event organised by the International Road Federation (IRF), Jain said the use of latest technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, has helped the ministry revolutionise plan-



ning and developing vision-based transport models for the future. The high speed corridors are being built for the next 50 years, keeping in mind the prospective congestion and

the needs of the increasing population, he added. Jain also said the ministry has identified most black spots on the national highways in the country and most of them will be covered up by the end of March 2025. IRF President Anouar Benazzou said the role of infrastructure planners, designers and contractors is changing fast and they need to be able to embrace new technologies, digital tools, and Intelligent Transport systems (ITS).

Sensex, Nifty close higher in volatile trade

RIL gains after mega-merger deal

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed with gains on Thursday in a highly volatile trade amid the scheduled monthly expiry of derivative contracts. The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 195.42 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 72,500.30. During the day, the benchmark oscillated between a high of 72,730.00 and a low of 72,099.32. The broader Nifty of NSE gained 31.65 points or 0.14 per cent to close at 21,982.80. "Domestic benchmark traded near a flat-line trend throughout the session, but some buoyancy emerged by the end of the day. Investors adopted a cautious wait & watch

approach on the verge of a heavy economic data week," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Among Sensex shares, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Tech, Power Grid, Maruti, State Bank of India, Titan, Asian Paints, Nestle and UltraTech Cement were the major gainers. Reliance Industries climbed nearly 2 per cent intra-day before closing more than half a per cent higher after the company and Walt Disney announced the signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a Rs 70,000 crore behemoth. Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, ITC, Tech Mahindra and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
"e" PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
Superintending Engineer (R&B) Mahabubnagar CTN No: 33/SE/Tenders/2023-24
On line tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for following one work.
S.No:1: Name of work: Construction of District Level Skill Development centre at Mahabubnagar District.
Estimate amount: Rs.2000.00 Lakhs. Tenderers can download the tender schedule for the above work from e-market place i.e. <https://www.telanganagov.in> from 25-02-2024 at 09.00 PM onwards. The last date of receipt of tenders is on or before 05-03-2024 upto 4.00PM.
Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place i.e. <https://www.telanganagov.in>
Sd/- Superintending Engineer (R&B)
Regional Office, Mahabubnagar
R.O. No.: 978-DPCL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2023-24

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTICE
NIT No. 27/EE/SRNR/GHMC/2023-24 Dated: 28-02-2024
Name of the Work: For(1) No. of Work "Festival work", Estimate Amount: Rs. 1.60 Lakhs, Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids: 01-03-2024 @ 11.00 AM. Name & Address Office: Call No: Sri K. Srinivas, Executive Engineer, Saroomagar Circle-5 GHMC, (M): 9586930602. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <http://www.eprocurement.telanganagov.in/>
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Saroomagar Circle-5, GHMC
R.O.No: 11990-PPCL/ADVT/1/2023-24, Dt. 29-02-2024

Need a review of customs duties moratorium: India

PNS ■ ABU DHABI

India on Thursday pitched for re-examination of the implications of the customs duties moratorium on e-commerce trade for developing and least developed member nations of the WTO. India is not in favour of further continuation of the moratorium of customs duties on e-commerce trade as it is impacting developing countries. The issue came up for discussion during a session of a work programme on e-commerce at the World Trade Organization's 13th Ministerial Conference, which entered its last day on Thursday.

The e-commerce medium is a fast-growing segment for cross-border and domestic trade. India said that this emerging segment of the global economy holds the promise for economic development and prosperity for developing countries, including the least developed countries (LDCs). Due to this, New Delhi has stressed that all policy options, including the imposition of customs duties on e-commerce trade, should be available for the WTO members to promote digital industrialisation. "With the digital revolution still unfolding and with increasing diffusion of technologies such as additive man-

ufacturing and 3D printing, data analytics, artificial intelligence, Internet-of-Things etc., there was a need for re-examination of the implications of the moratorium on

customs duties on electronic transmissions, particularly for the developing countries and the LDCs," the commerce ministry said. Currently, a few firms based



in developed countries dominate the global landscape of e-commerce. "India explained that there was a huge digital chasm between the developed and the developing countries, which makes it challenging to increase the participation of developing countries in global e-commerce," the ministry said. The country also argued that developing countries need to focus on improving their domestic physical and digital infrastructure, creating supportive policy and regulatory frameworks, and developing digital capabilities. India and certain other developing nations are pushing to discuss the scope of the moratorium, as there are rev-

enue implications due to this. As per estimates, the potential tariff revenue losses to the developing countries are about USD 10 billion every year. For India, it could be over USD 500 million every year. The World Trade Organization members have agreed not to impose customs duties on electronic transmissions since 1998, and the moratorium has been periodically extended at successive ministerial conferences (MC), the highest decision-making body of the 166-member body. India is witnessing a rise in imports of electronic transmissions, mainly of items like movies, music, video games and printed matter, some of which could fall within the scope of the moratorium.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Following her iconic performance as Srishti in *Kundali Bhagya*, Anjum Fakhir has become one of the most beloved actresses on television. She is currently winning people over on *Dabangi*: *Mulgi Aayi Re Aayi*. Recently, the TV actress shared photos of her spiritual journey to perform Umrah with her mother on social media, announcing an exciting new chapter in her life.

"After two years of previous obligations, the trip to Mecca was a truly rewarding experience, a promise kept to my mom," which led to an exclusive travel tales segment with her. "The most delightful aspect was seeing millions of believers come together as one, serving as a potent reminder of our common religion and goals."

Anjum has been sharing lovely photos on her official Instagram account ever since she returned from her pilgrimage to Mecca. "Mecca offered a breathtaking cultural display as people from all walks of life joined together in prayer. The spiritual

atmosphere, long-standing customs, and ceremonies were humble and emphasised the value of harmony and tolerance.”

She has been constantly reminded of His love and blessings along the way, and she couldn't help but be struck by how beautiful this spiritual trip has been. She is still filled with great gratitude and happiness as she gives God her sincere gratitude for leading her on this holy journey. Amen! "May he accept our Umrah."

May we accept our Umrah.

May he richly reward us, Amen. We are celebrating our first Umrah, and you have made it even more spectacular! Shukran, Shukran. Witnessing the



actress.

Anjum's journey embodies grace, resiliency, and a deep sense of purpose as it comes to an end, encouraging others to cherish spiritually significant moments in their own lives. The actress tells us in the exclusive interview, "The trip was spiritually fulfilling, despite the difficulties of navigating busy places and linguistics."

to millennia of faith, history, and communal prayers.” To truly savor this trip, one must consider its spiritual and transforming elements, treasure the unity

believers,

and express gratitude for its deep link to both faith and history, felt Anium.

In a general way, she remembered, "I usually find peace in quiet environments and retreat into nature's lap for renewal. I can refuel and discover inner calm when I'm in nature. Thank goodness, I haven't had any scary incidents while travelling. Every trip has been full of insightful discoveries and life-changing experiences."

age-old Hajj rites and experiences. There was a long-lasting impression from seeing the people's generosity and my mother's unselfish charitable deeds, such as giving out dates in Medina."

She continues, "In addition, the weather in Mecca was extreme, necessitating physical preparedness. Despite the difficult circumstances, conducting Umrah with fervor and excitement required staying physically hydrated! The muted colors of the hotels in Mecca offered a tranquil haven following the day's spiritually enlightening encounters. Selecting the ideal hotel is essential for a relaxing getaway on such a holy voyage."

We kept asking questions because we couldn't stop hearing her. "Going to Mecca was freeing because it helped me fulfill a promise I made to my mother and strengthened my faith," she said. "It was incredibly inspiring to feel the communal spirituality, make sincere prayers, and observe the heavenly presence surrounding the Kaaba. Seeing the Kaaba with one's own eyes was unquestionably the most magnificent pleasure one could have in Mecca. It was an event that had me crying and left me feeling deeply connected

TANISHA SAXENA

Continuing from Season 1, police inspectors DG and Tambe, played by Ranvir Shorey and Girish Kulkarni, persist in their pursuit of Kapoor's killer. The prime suspect, Sonu Singh who had flown off the scene is back to the Sunflower society.

For the uninitiated, Set in Mumbai, *Sunflower* unfolds the story of a murder within a middle-class housing society bearing the same name. Mumbai police detectives, Digendra (played by Ranvir Shorey) and Chetan Tambe (portrayed by Girish Kulkarni), launch an investigation that casts suspicion on nearly every resident. Amidst the intrigue, Sonu Singh (characterized by Sunil Grover), a seemingly uncomplicated individual residing in the society, finds himself entangled in the murder mystery, emerging as the primary suspect.

In the initial episode of the second season, there's a noticeable attempt to reconnect viewers with the plot through the introduction of the Sunflower Society members. However, the lack of evolution in these characters over the past two years becomes glaring. Dilip Iyer, portrayed by Ashish Vidyarthi, persists as the unchanging embodiment of the neighborhood

uncle—insistent on imposing his narrow worldview. His disapproval of women in revealing clothing and aversion to profanity, particularly from women, remain as outdated as ever.

This season introduces us to Rosie (played by Adah Sharma), a bar dancer and heir to Mr Kapoor's penthouse. Right from word go, Rosie carries this charm and mystique about her.

Rosie emanates an air of mystery and sharp intellect, her enigmatic presence veiling her true motives. Beyond her charming exterior lies a figure that embodies the fears of any man. Rosie gradually unveils her prowess in manipulation, deftly maneuvering through the lives of those around her under the guise of innocence. Whether dealing with authorities, Iyer, or Sonu, she establishes herself as a skilled manipulator, effortlessly outsmarting anyone who dares to cross her path.

This exhausting 8-episode series relentlessly tests your patience with a single-line plot dragged out to the point where you find yourself questioning the purpose.

Ranvir Shorey, portraying the detective, disappoints in an ill-conceived role. Sporting thick glasses, he radiates a restrained and

unenthusiastic aura. Inspector Tambe, portrayed by Girish Kulkarni, exudes liveliness with a penchant for pursuing romantic interests. However, his character seems to lack depth, as he is often ready to demean others without contributing significantly to either the comic or serious aspects of the narrative.

Regrettably, Ashish Vidyarthi's role appears confined to a singular dimension, offering him limited opportunities to showcase the diverse facets of his acting prowess. Mukul Chadda's portrayal of the vengeful angel falls flat and proves irritating. The female cast members are confined to stereotypical roles.

Sunil Grover's performance (played by Sonu) in the series, is all about rehashing his character from *Kapil Sharma's* show with a lackluster and repetitive approach. The entire season and in fact both the seasons revolve around this man. His slapstick antics fell disappointingly flat. The execution of his scenes in particular lacked the usual finesse, with poorly timed pratfalls and predictable slapstick clichés. The audience, expecting uproarious laughter, instead witnessed awkward and forced moments that failed to elicit the usual comedic response. It became evident that the writing didn't align with the charm that usually makes slapstick routines enjoyable, leaving viewers longing for the moments of laughter.

Touted to be a suspense-comedy, *Sunflower* unfortunately doesn't quite hit the mark. In an age that values a refined sense of humor, it's a bit perplexing to identify the comedic elements within the show. Moreover, the suspense seems elusive, prompting one to question the rationale behind its classification as a suspense-comedy.

In a nutshell, *Sunflower* Season 2 falls short of expectations, with characters that remain stagnant and a plot stretched to the point of tedium.

Creator: Vikas Bahl, Rahul Sengupta

Production: Good Co, Reliance Entertainment

Director: Vikas Bahl, Rahul Sengupta

Cast: Sunil Grover, Ashish Vidyarthi, Adah Sharma, Ranvir Shorey, Girish Kulkarni, Radha Bhatt, Sonal Jha, Sameer Kakkar, Annapurna Soni, Pallavi Das and Simran Nerurkar

Streaming on: Zee 5

Rating: 1.5

To achieve optimal health and well-being, men opt for dietary supplements as a shortcut to increase energy, muscle growth, and overall health. These supplements can boost energy levels, promote muscle growth, and support overall health. However, before adding supplements to one's regimen, it's essential to consider the below-mentioned key aspects to make an informed decision.

Understanding Ingredients and Formulas: Not all supplements are made equal, men's health supplements often contain a mix of natural and synthetic ingredients ranging from vitamins, herbs, and minerals to amino acids. While some ingredients may be genuine, others may pose risks, especially when taken in more than recommended doses or combination with certain medications. Thus, one should do thorough research on the product, understand the ingredients and its purpose, and consult a healthcare professional before including any supplements in the diet.

Potential Risks and Side Effects: Understand the risks associated with health supplements, though they claim to offer various benefits, there are potential side effects that could include allergic reactions, gastrointestinal discomfort, interactions with medications, and adverse effects on specific health conditions. It's essential to read labels carefully, follow recommended dosages, and monitor for any adverse reactions when starting a new supplement. Research potential side effects, listen to your body, and stop immediately if anything feels off.

Individual Health Needs and Goals: Each person's health profile is unique, and influenced by factors such as age, genetics, lifestyle, diet, and underlying health conditions. Before adding

rich in essential nutrients, engage in physical activity that suits one's fitness level and preferences, prioritize restorative sleep, and adopt strategies to manage stress effectively.

Monitoring and Adjustments: It's important to monitor one's progress and make adjustments as needed. Keep track of how you feel both physically and mentally while on supplements, and be open to reassessing the regimen based on changes in your health status, lifestyle, or goals. Regular check-ins with a healthcare provider can provide valuable insights and guidance.

Dosage and Safety: Pay attention to the recommended dosage of supplements and avoid exceeding the recommended intake unless advised by a healthcare provider. Some vitamins and minerals can accumulate to harmful levels in the body if taken in excess, leading to adverse effects. Additionally, certain supplements may interact with medications or underlying health conditions, so it's crucial to consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new supplement regimen, especially if you have existing health issues or are taking medications.

Long-Term Effects and Sustainability: Consider the long-term implications of supplement use on your health and well-being. While certain supplements may offer short-term benefits, it's essential to assess their sustainability and potential effects on overall health in the long run. Focus on adopting a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, and other lifestyle factors that promote holistic health and well-being alongside supplement use.

While men's health supplements can offer potential benefits, it is crucial to approach them with caution, skepticism, and a discerning eye. Prioritising safety, quality, and individualised considerations, and always seeking guidance from qualified healthcare professionals when in doubt, can help make empowered choices that support overall health and well-being.

(The author, Dr. Sanjeev S. Tonshal, is a Consultant – Urology, at Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore.)

supplements to your regimen, consider your specific health needs and goals. Consulting with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian can help one tailor a supplement plan that aligns with requirements and addresses any deficiencies or health concerns.

Balance Diet and Healthy Lifestyle: While supplements can complement a healthy lifestyle, they should not be replaced with a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, and stress management. Prioritize whole foods



● Yashwanth and Kaushalya



● Rakesh and Ravi



● Ramakrishna



● Sujatha



YK Designers Fabric Studio, an exclusive showroom for designer fabrics with an aim to provide modern fashion choices to everyone, was recently launched at Hydernagar, Near Jntu Metro Station. YK designers Fabric Studio stocks thousands of designer garments, which have become a favorite for the new generation. Textile Lovers are more attracted and interested towards designer garments. YK designers Fabric aims of providing a wide array of options in modern fashion to everyone, a store representative said.

As MTR commemorates its 100th anniversary in India, the brand reaffirms its commitment to meeting the diverse needs of consumers, particularly in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Over the past century, MTR has witnessed the changing culinary landscape and adapted its offerings accordingly. From traditional masalas to Ready-to-Eat meals, MTR has aimed to maintain relevance across generations. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh stand as thesecond largestand the fastest-growing market in India, emphasizing their pivotal role in MTR's journey.

LISTINGS

Amazon India launched Women in Night Shifts

Amazon India announced the launch of Women in Night Shifts (WINS) at one of its large Sort Centre in Haryana. In addition to Amazon's existing initiatives, WINS is designed to provide a safe and supportive work environment for women, ensuring equal opportunities for both men and women to work in various shifts, and championing inclusivity for all. In some states in India, regulations prohibit the employment of women in night shifts in warehousing operations facilities primarily stemming from concerns about women's safety and wellbeing. Through dedicated efforts and collaboration with authorities, the company has successfully enabled night shift operations for women across select sites in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, and now, in Haryana.

Excitel launches IPTV services in Hyderabad

Excitel, India's leading home internet start-up, extends its IPTV service 'Excitel TV' to Hyderabad. Following IPTV's success in Delhi, under the flagship plan 'Cable Cutter', Excitel is offering high-quality regional television content and premium OTT platforms with an incredibly high speed internet. Excitel IPTV is a one stop home entertainment solution that provides access to regional TV channels and integrates popular OTT platforms like ZEE5, Sun Nxt, Disney Hotstar, SonyLIV, Aha TV, Namma Flix, etc. With internet speeds soaring up to 400 Mbps, this plan not only delivers diverse content but also transforms the home entertainment landscape with its high-speed fibre internet across India.

Toyota Hilux sparks thrill in Indian Supercross Racing League's Final Round

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) continues its exciting partnership with the Indian Supercross Racing League (ISRL), showcasing the iconic Hilux being its official vehicle partner. The ISRL marks the world's first franchise-based supercross league in India, and TKM's collaboration through the iconic Hilux has created unforgettable experiences, captivating audiences, and setting new standards for motorsports and automobile enthusiasts across the country. Following the first and second rounds held in Pune (Jan 2024) and Ahmedabad (Feb 2024) respectively, the ISRL concluded its third leg at Open Ground (Airport Road), Chikkajala in Bengaluru on February 25th, 2024, transcending the conventional boundaries of racing, embarking on a mission to redefine motorsports in India. This final round received overwhelming response with participation of over 7000+ fans, highlighting the growing popularity and significance of off-roading engagements in India.

Tackling the toughest

ICMR's National Institute of Reproductive and Child Health (ICMR-NIRRH) Genetic Research Centre (GRC) in Mumbai has become the first government centre in Maharashtra to offer free and state-of-the-art genetic testing and counselling services for rare diseases. The centre is currently offering its services in Maharashtra, to referrals from prominent Municipal Corporations, Government medical colleges, and hospitals in the surrounding areas of Mumbai, as well as catering to rural populations from across Maharashtra, as well as other parts of India. With its cutting edge genetic diagnostic laboratory and official Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 (PCPNDT) approval, the centre is fully equipped to conduct genetic counselling and testing, ensuring comprehensive support for individuals affected by these serious diseases.

Party

Photos by- SV Chary

Mercure Hotel Hyderabad KCP organizes the much-anticipated Beer and Kebab Festival, inviting food connoisseurs and beer enthusiasts to embark on an unparalleled gastronomic adventure. Set against the vibrant backdrop of Hyderabad, this festival promises to tantalize taste buds and elevate culinary experiences to new heights. This ongoing food festival is till 31st March 2024. At the festival, guests will experience a celebration where the art of brewing meets the mastery of kebab-making, creating a symphony of flavours that delights the senses.





Guru Nanak Institutions recently played host to the annual sports fest, KHEL MAHOTSAV 2k24, which is a thrilling celebration of sportsmanship, where students from diverse backgrounds come together to compete and showcase their athletic prowess. With a wide array of sports events ranging from traditional games to modern challenges, the Khel Mahotsav is a testament to the college's commitment to a healthy and competitive spirit among its students and faculty. The finest teams from all houses have been selected for the finals of KHEL-MAHOTSAV, scheduled for February 29th to March 1st, 2024. The inauguration event took place on February 29th, 2024, featuring a grand march past by all finalists.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

ACROSS

1 A large group of musicians
6 The steps of a ladder
7 Do this when you are thirsty
9 Knotted
10 Opposite of newest
12 Mend
14 A holder for cut flowers
17 A slow-moving creature
18 Jewellery for fingers
19 People who hide on ships to avoid paying a fare

DOWN

2 Wash the soap out of
3 A snake noise

SOLUTION

P	L	A	C	E	F	U	R
S	A	F	E	N	E	R	
E	A	G	L	E	D	E	
P	E	N	S	E	P		
T	I	S	S	E			
E	E	F					
M	I	N	D				
B	E	S					
E	N	E	M				
R	E	E					
M	E	A	S				

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

All the way from Sri Lanka to South India

Producer Sanjay Gulati, who has been one of the co-producers of the remake of the Tallinn-winning dark comedy *Tentigo* in Tamil, speaks to *The Pioneer* about how the film happened, *Tentigo* being a game changer, and more.

K. RAMYA SREE

Modern times have witnessed a growing trend of remakes and reboots. However, remaking an award-winning film comes with great challenges. One needs to be extremely dedicated and sincere to bring to the audience the authentic self of the movie without losing its credibility during the remake. Maybe this is why many producers often do not risk taking on this task.

But these Indian producers—Sanjay Gulati and Neeraj Pandey of Crawling Angel Films and Kaarthikeyan Santhanam of Stone Bench Films—decided to take the risk because, why not?

The film they chose is so interesting that the trio, along with Silent Frames Productions in Sri Lanka, has

decided to remake the Tallinn-winning dark comedy Sri Lankan film *Tentigo* in Tamil.

Of all the Indian languages, are you wondering why they chose Tamil? And of many award-winning films, why did they choose *Tentigo*? We have one of the producers of the movie, Sanjay Gulati, answer everything about the film in this interaction with *The Pioneer*.

But first, let us begin with how he stumbled upon *Tentigo*. As he begins, “There is a co-production market that happens every year in Goa, so in the 2018 IFFI market, this project was pitched to me under a different name. I felt this was an out-of-the-box project, and I wanted to be a part of this project at any cost. From the beginning, I felt this film was a universal subject. There is no particular reason for us to choose the Tamil language. One of our producers is a Tamil native, and it was his idea to remake this movie in Tamil.”

The Tallinn-winning film is a dark comedy about a family dealing with a deceased father's throbbing boner by debutant direc-

tor Ilango Ram from Sri Lanka, which originally featured in Sinhala and earned accolades.

Sanjay believes this movie would be a game changer because: “Even if I recall old films, we do not have a proper dark comedy film. We only had adult comedy movies. I can hardly recall authentic dark comedy films except for a few. *Tentigo* is an effort from us to give the audience a real dark comedy experience and treat them as intellectuals. The reviews for the international version have been exceptional so far.”

The team has, of course, decided to Indianise a bit of the concept; however, he says they have ensured the quality of the movie is not going down. “Since the same director is helming the film, I have more hopes that this will be made in a better way,” says the independent producer, for whom this is his first film in South Cinema. He looks forward to it, as he feels south cinema is one of the biggest industries in Indian cinema.

As an independent producer, passion is what drove him to take up the project, and

their actors are also the ones for whom cinema comes over money. He shared, “As far as the actors' pay packet side is concerned, I'm working with actors who speak with the subject from the heart. It is a big thing to work in a film like this; it is not like we want to pay them less, but we are making the movie with full sincerity, so if we generate profits, my actors will be the first to enjoy them.”

Furthermore, he also spoke about the perks that established banners have over independent producers, and he explains, “If a film is being produced by renowned banners, then there are high chances that the film will be taken over by some good OTT platforms because of the long-term relationships the production house has with them and the confidence the OTT platforms have in banners because they have proven their worth in the past. But when it comes to independent producers like us, they have their apprehensions.” Moreover, he feels co-production is a more successful model, as he has collaborated with many films outside India where his experiences have been successful.

Trailer for *Gaami* released by Sandeep Reddy Vanga



Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who is riding high on the success of *Animal*, launched the trailer for Vishwak Sen starrer *Gaami*, a highly anticipated movie of the actor. *Gaami* is a one-of-a-kind film and Vishwak Sen's most ambitious project. Moreover, for the first time, a trailer has been released in PCX format.

The trailer opens with Vishwak Sen, who questions himself, ‘No matter how hard I try, I can't remember who I am, where I came from, and how long I have had this problem?’ He is rescued by some Aghoras, but they ask him to leave the place for their own good. However, the master gives him details on where he can find a cure for his disease. He needs to travel a long way to a particular place in the Himalayas within a deadline, or else he needs to wait for another 36 years. On the other hand, simultaneously, two other stories of a Devadasi and a scientist making his clinical trials are also shown.

The trailer shows the journey of the main characters, and every story is prodigious in its own way.

With Chandini Chowdary in the female lead role, the film, directed by Vidyadhar Kagita and produced by UV Creations, is set against a backdrop of mysticism and drama, and tells the story of Shankar, played by Vishwak, an Aghora who is searching for a cure for his inability to feel human touch.

Heading for a grand theatrical release on March 9, the film has gripping music by Naresh Kumaran and cinematography by Vishwanath Reddy and Rampy Nandigam

Tussle between Jr. NTR and Koratala Siva



Actor Jr. NTR and director Koratala Siva have collaborated for the fourth time for *Devara*, and it's become one of the most anticipated films of the actor.

The release of the film has been postponed, and the shooting is going on at a brisk pace. Earlier, slated for a grand release in April 2024, the movie's release has been postponed to October 2024. Recent updates indicate that the final schedule for filming the project has finally taken off, and it is most probably because Jr. NTR is pressing Koratala Siva to complete this project soon.

Sources close to the unit say that Jr. NTR is exerting pressure on Koratala Siva to complete the film fast, as he has to shoot for *War 2*. However, it seems Koratala is not ready to wrap up the film in a hurry, as he feels he can give his best only when he is at ease.

The tussle between the actor and director is going on, it is



said. Interestingly, Jahnvi Kapoor is making her Tollywood debut with this film alongside Jr. NTR. The director plans to shoot his songs after filming major scenes of the movie with Jr. NTR and other renowned stars of the film, in the next few weeks.

— KRS

Mrunal Thakur, VD's *Family Star* moves to Chennai

Actress Mrunal Thakur, after bagging back-to-back hits, is being regarded as the Queen of Romance. Her adorable performance and lively looks is making her grab some of the interesting films in Tollywood, one of which is the Rowdy of Tollywood Vijay Deverakonda. The latest update about the movie titled *Family Star*, directed by Parasuram, is that it is in its final leg of shooting.

Slated for release on April 5, the movie will film its final schedule in Chennai.

Sources say that Mrunal has already departed for Chennai to team up with Vijay and commence filming the final schedule of *Family Star*. “The entire week-long filming would be done in Chennai.

As they get closer to the end of this amazing trip, the entire cast and crew are excited and a little emotional. But this is the beginning of an engrossing movie with the gifted pair of Vijay and Mrunal, who will appear on screen together for the first time,” the insider continued.

Sree Vishnu welcomes audience to his *Swag* world

Hasith Goli for a bigger and better project. TG Vishwa Prasad of People Media Factory is mounting this project on a grand scale along with Vivek Kuchibhotla.

A concept video was released along with the announcement of the movie's title. The film, titled *Swag*, opens with some animals in the forest debating who should become the next leader after the lion steps down, generating some humour. Gangavva provided the voiceover for the monkey's character, while

Sunil did it for the lion's.

Sree Vishnu is seen as a king in the glimpse, welcoming the audience to his *Swag* world.

The movie seems to be an out-and-out entertainer with a unique concept.

On the technical front, the team that worked for *Raja Raja Chora* has come on board for *Swag* as well. Vedaraman Sankaran cranks the camera, whereas Vivek Sagar provides the music, and Viplav Nyshadham is the editor.

Sree Vishnu ties up with Allu Arvind

On the other hand, as the actor celebrated his birthday, Geetha Arts, one of the most renowned production houses of Tollywood announced its collaboration with Sree Vishnu for his next film to be directed by Caarthick Raju of *Ninu Veedani Needanu Nene* fame. In association with Geetha Arts, Kalya Films will bankroll the project. Mega Producer Allu Aravind presents the movie produced by Vidya Koppineedi, Bhanu Pratapa, and Riyaz

Chowdary.

This announcement comes in a video form of gift to Vishnu where he's asked to solve a puzzle and the answer to it is the announcement of his new film with Geetha Arts banner. Tentatively titled #SV18, the film is billed to be a fun rollercoaster ride coupled with a good love story. Ace technicians will be joining hands for this craziest combination, promising to blend their expertise.

Ananya Nagalla: *Tantra* will be the best movie of my career

Ananya Nagalla and Dhanush Raghunadri-starrer *Tantra* had its trailer launch event held in the city on Thursday. While the teaser is already being appreciated by the audience, the team says that viewers will equally enjoy the trailer. Directed by Srinivas Gopishetty and produced by Naresh Babu P and Ravi Chaitanya under the banners of First Copy Movies, B The Way Films, and Vizag Film Factory, this film will release on March 15.

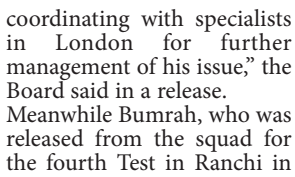
Speaking at the trailer launch event, Ananya Nagalla said, “*Tantra* is a very different movie. I am confident that it will be the best movie of my career. Hope *Vakeel Saab* Ananya and *Malleshm* Ananya are called *Tantra* Ananya (she laughed) The film turned out very well. We are coming with very good content, and the movie will make a big sound after release. The whole movie is very gripping.”



Actor Sree Vishnu celebrated his birthday on Thursday. Celebrating his birthday, an interesting update about his film has been made official. The actor is reuniting with his *Raja Raja Chora* director

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"Mr. KL Rahul, whose participation in the final IDFC First Bank Test was subject to fitness, has been ruled out of the fifth and final Test in Dharamsala. The BCCI Medical Team is closely monitoring him and



line with the team's workload management policy, will link up with the squad in Dharamsala for the final Test, beginning March 7. India have already taken an unassailable 3-1 lead,

following the victory in the fourth Test in Ranchi. Rahul's absence from the final Test means Rajat Patidar remained with the squad but the MP batter can't be sure of his place in the playing

It is the same quadriceps injury that had sidelined Rahul for almost four months last year.

India's updated squad for fifth Test: Rohit Sharma (C), Jasprit Bumrah (VC), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (WK), KS Bharat (WK), Devdutt Padikkal, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep.



"My question is, are they playing enough domestic cricket? They are playing T20

“There are players like Jurel, Sarfaraz who do play T20 cricket but, at the end of the day, are also representing their states in the Ranji trophy. The bowlers also get into the rhythm of bowling longer spells when they regularly play domestic cricket. It (Ranji) is not a form of slam-bang and thank you,” he said.



"If you're bowling balls consistently in that area down leg, it should be a similar ruling to the spinner if that makes sense. Basically bowl one or two, then get a warning and then get wides called," he added.

"It's a good skill and it can be challenging, particularly for guys that are pullers of the ball."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"If this doesn't apply to all
then Indian cricket won't

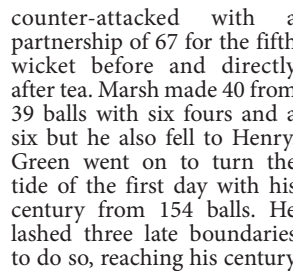


"In the game of cricket, comebacks define the spirit. Chin-up, @ShreyasIyer15 and @ishankishan51! Dig deep, face challenges, and come back even stronger. Your past achievements speak volumes, and I have no doubt you'll conquer once again," Shastri had posted on X.

AP WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND)

"They're probably just on top. They've got a quality batting lineup and we've got to bowl

Marnus Labuschagne (1) fell just after the resumption, then Khawaja (33) and Travis Head (1) were out as Australia slipped from 61-0 to 89-4. Mitch Marsh and Green



When the covers came off at the Basin Reserve about 8 am on Thursday after light rain overnight and in the early morning, the pitch looked bright green and moist. With the two teams captained by faster bowlers in a rarity for Test cricket it was inevitable

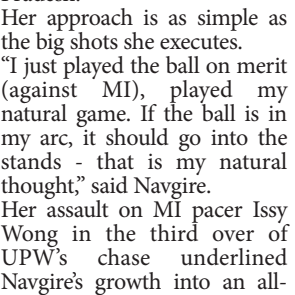
Henry had Smith caught by wicketkeeper Tom Blundell with a good length ball that just left the batter, sending

Starc (9) and Cummins (16) fell before the second new ball which was taken in the last half hour. Hazlewood (0) will join Green on Friday morning as Australia attempts to add late runs to its total.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

"When the innings ended the head coach (Jon Lewis) came up to me and said I had to open. I was happy, because I

Navgire, a big fan of former Indian captain MS Dhoni, is not new to opening the



"Firstly, I don't think Navgire was going to open. The injury (to Vrinda), I guess, gave them a licence to put her up in the order. We weren't quite planning for her in the batting," said Edwards. Now that Navgire has the licence to kill, the Warriorz can hope for a more productive WPL season.