

The new Big Bang Theory: Crafty graft with mega projects

Government contracts, land, liquor, allocation of public resources, mining and leakages in welfare constitute the primary sources of corruption money for political parties in power worldwide. The siphoning of welfare funds, illegal mining and liquor trades involve many people, thus increasing the risks of exposure and generating wide negative publicity and anti-incumbency. On the other hand, insider trading of land, allocating public resources as part of quid pro quo arrangements, and illegal grants of government contracts deliver high returns with lower risks of exposure.

Of the three sources, those at the top of the ruling hierarchy prefer the third source - humongous, centralized grants of public contracts. The preference is easy to understand as it helps those at the top to enjoy the spoils exclusively, without sharing them with others lower in the hierarchy. It delivers dual benefits -- riches for self and family and financial muscle to sustain political supremacy.

All the parties that have ruled Telangana - independently or as part of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh state have mastered the art of large-scale corruption with low risks. Their modus operandi has been similar. There are three essential ingredients to their recipe. Firstly, instead of retail bribery, which is risky, focus on big-ticket items that can deliver hundreds, if not thousands, of crore in returns. Secondly, centralise the decision-making so that only a few are involved, thus reducing the risk of exposure. Thirdly and most importantly, select projects that are politically difficult to criticize - projects that those in power can market as visionary, heavily beneficial to the region's development and deliver on a long-standing demand of the people.

For a dry state like Telangana, water has been the greatest need. No wonder water has been the core reason for the decades-long separate Telangana agitation. Any project the rulers conceive to deliver on this need receives automatic public support, making it difficult for political opposition to criticise it on its merits. The egregiously corrupt rulers of Telangana, too, understood this very well. Instead of working to solve the issue, they saw an opportunity to make humongous monetary gains. The presentation on Thursday by Sriam Vedire, adviser to Union Minister for Jal Shakti, exposes this truth threadbare with necessary evidence.

The Congress government that ruled the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh from 2004 to 2014 had spent almost Rs 12,000 crore (Rs 11,917 crore) to acquire land and build canals and tunnels for the Pranahita Chevella project as part of its Jalayagnam mission. What is shocking is that the Congress government spent this massive amount without constructing any headworks at Tummidihatti, where the Pranahita river water needs to be stored. The Congress government was well aware that the project, as designed, would cause the submergence of 3,665 acres in Maharashtra. Yet, they went ahead with the expenditure without an agreement with that state. The reason for the Congress government eagerly spending Rs 12,000 crore of public money, which is now down the drain, even before ensuring the project can become possible, is apparent.

The first government of Telangana, after the state's formation, led by Chandrasekhar Rao of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (since renamed Bharat Rashtra Samithi - BRS), outdid even the Congress government. Exploiting the faith the people of Telangana had reposed in a government headed by a Telangana bidda (son of Telangana), the TRS government committed fraud of even greater proportions on the state's unsuspecting population. Instead of negotiating a mutually beneficial agreement with Maharashtra, Chandrasekhar Rao used it as an excuse to redesign the project and escalate the cost to Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

Vedire, in his presentation, has called out the lie the TRS government resorted to for redesigning the Pranahita-Chevella project. Firstly, he refuted the TRS lie that the Central Water Commission (CWC) estimated the water available at Tummidihatti was 67 TMC and not 165 TMC. He asserted that the CWC had always mentioned that 165 TMC of water was available at Tummidihatti.

The Chandrasekhar Rao government had used this lie to move the location of the head-works (dam/barrage) to Medigadda.

Another lie the Chandrasekhar Rao government used to justify the redesign was that the CWC had approved the redesigned project. Vedire pointed out that as per prevailing policy, if a state has a Central Design Organisation (CDO), the CDO is responsible for project design, and the CWC will have no role.

With the sinking of the Medigadda barrage piers and the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) questioning the project's safety, the viability of the entire Kaleswaram Lift Irrigation Project is in question. The Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report on the Kaleswaram project also pointed out the project's financial non-viability and various financial frauds committed in the project execution. The people of Telangana are once again the losers: it did not matter that one of their own from Telangana was heading the government. The Congress and the BRS are birds of the same feather when it comes to corruption and personal aggrandizement.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

CM releases Rs 708 cr for edu scheme

PNS ■ PAMARRU (KRISHNA DIST)

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy released Rs 708.68 crore towards Jagananna Vidya Deevena for total fee reimbursement for the quarter of October-December, 2023. The amount would be directly credited into the joint bank accounts of 9, 44,666 students and their mothers.

Addressing a huge public meeting before releasing the amount with the click of a button here on Friday, the Chief Minister said that Jagananna Vidya Deevena (JVD) and other schemes help students from poor families to pursue



higher education, get professional degrees and boldly face the competitive job market. While elaborating on the educational reforms and their

tangible results, the Chief Minister took TDP president Chandrababu, Pawan Kalyan and their friendly media to task for opposing reforms in the education sector. It's not the right to quality education is what we need. The government has been striving to reform the system by introducing English Medium, digitization, and modern and emerging subjects like AI and IB besides upgrading school infrastructure through Nadu-Nedu so that our Government school students receive quality education, pursue global courses and face competition easily in the world job market. If we continue the momentum of the present educational reforms, we will find our students working in top com-



KISHORE POREDDY

panies and attaining high positions after a few years, he said. However, it is unfortunate that TDP President Chandrababu Naidu, his foster son and their friendly media have declared war on the reforms in education while their children are pursuing education in English medium, the Chief Minister said. Unlike during the TDP rule, the Government has brought more students into the purview of Vidya Deevena to prevent families from falling into debt trap, he said, adding that the scheme covers 93 per cent of the students pursuing professional courses.

Demand to drop cases filed against employees

AP NGOs Association office-bearers elected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Newly elected AP NGOs president KV Siva Reddy expressed delight that AP NGOs Association has been fighting relentlessly on behalf of government employees, teachers, pensioners and outsourcing contract employees to solve their problems.

AP NGOs Association has elected KV Siva Reddy as their new president and Ch Purshotam Naidu as the general secretary. On Friday, AP Transport Department Employees Association State president M Raju Babu congratulated the newly elected leaders on behalf of the Transport Department Association at AP NGOs home on Friday.

On this occasion, Siva Reddy and Purshotam Naidu said that the government has given in writing to solve about 49 demands made by AP JAC by the end of March. They



demand that the police cases against the association leaders who participated in the peaceful protest should be dropped. They said that many problems related to employees of various departments are pending and pressure will be put on the government to solve them quickly. Some problems related to the employees of the Transport Department have been discussed with the State government and their problems will be solved soon.

Rajubabu said that he spoke to AP JAC leaders on the

problems related to the employees of the Transport Department and asked to solve the problems so that justice can be done to all sections. Along with the president secretaries of the State NGOs, State association vice-president Ramana and East Krishna district president Ulli Krishna were present. Treasurer of State Transport Department Employees Anand Kumar, zonal secretary KVV Naga Murali, leaders G Ushasundari, members Y Ravi Teja and K Lokesh were also present.

Nine people injured in Bengaluru cafe blast

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CCTV footage is being scanned to check if there was any suspicious movement in and around the cafe in Whitefield, where the blast took place.

Karnataka DGP Alok Mohan, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda

and other senior officials are inspecting the premises, which has been cordoned off. NIA and IB officials have been informed, the DGP said. "At 1.08 pm today, the fire department received a call about LPG leakage fire in the cafe. When our officers and teams reached the spot, there was no fire or flame. A bag

which was lying behind a woman who was sitting with six other customers at the eatery exploded. It is suspected that the explosion could have been caused due to some object in that bag," TN Shivashankar, Director of Karnataka State Fire and Emergency Services department told PTI.

Explosion is a bomb blast

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City police commissioner and other officers are at the spot. We will certainly identify who did it," Mohan, who visited the spot said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said no one has suffered serious injuries and the injured -- both staff and cus-

tomers -- are being treated in hospital.

Asked whether an improvised explosive device (IED) was used for the blast, he said, "We are checking. Let's not say anything now itself. The FSL team has come and they are checking. Once they collect (samples from the spot), we will examine."

Govt targeting...

Continued from Page 1

Naidu cited specific instances of harassment, including the cases of TDP MLA Yeluri Sambasavva Rao, former Minister P Narayana in Nellore, and the son of former Minister Prathipati Pullarao, P Sarath. He emphasised that Sarath's involvement in a firm was brief and questioned the legitimacy of the charges brought against him by APSDR, particularly in light of a notice from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DDGI) regarding a hefty fine.

Seeking the intervention of the AP Governor, Naidu urged the immediate cessation of what he described as "illegal and reprehensible tactics" employed by the ruling YSRCP against TDP members.

7 IAS ...

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K Harshavardhan (2005), Secretary to Government in the Social Welfare Department, has been appointed to oversee the Minorities Welfare Department in addition to his current responsibilities until further notice. D Muralidhar Reddy (2006), Vice Chairman & Managing Director of AP Medical Services & Infrastructure Development Corporation, has been assigned to serve as the Chief Executive Officer of SERP on an interim basis until further directives. Additionally, K Venkata Ramana Reddy (2013), Managing Director of A.P. Housing Corporation Ltd, will assume the role of Additional CCLA cum Secretary to CCLA until further orders.

Sunitha diverting ...

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Addressing the media in Vijayawada on Friday, Sajjala questioned why Sunitha was not directing her inquiries towards TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, who was in power when Vivekananda Reddy was murdered. He accused Sunitha of aligning herself with the TDP and engaging in political vendetta ahead of the general elections. Sajjala asserted that Sunitha's actions were an attempt to deflect attention from suspicions that her family members might have been involved in Vivekananda Reddy's murder.

Jagan, Avinash ...

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This gesture was seen as an indirect appeal to the public to support the TDP-Jana Sena Party coalition in the upcoming elections.

In a poignant statement, Sunitha emphasised the presence of the real culprits within society and questioned the message sent to the public when murderers roam free. Accusing Jagan of deceit and betrayal, she called for an investigation into his alleged involvement in the case, asserting that exoneration was possible if he is innocent.

Jana Sena loses steam as...

Continued from Page 1

Jogaiah, in an open letter, expressed his belief that Pawan Kalyan should have negotiated for a more substantial share of seats, suggesting a minimum of 80, along with a rotational Chief Ministerial arrangement between Pawan Kalyan and TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Similarly, Padmanabham lamented Pawan Kalyan's acceptance of a meagre seat allocation, highlighting the dissatisfaction prevalent among the community.

The repercussions of Pawan Kalyan's political manoeuvres have been swift, with the defection of Harirama Jogaiah's son, Chegondi Surya Prakash, to the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). He went on record saying, "Pawan Kalyan is functioning like a dictator."

Surya Prakash's departure underscores the growing disillusionment within the Jana

Sena ranks and signals a broader challenge to Pawan Kalyan's leadership.

Amidst this internal turmoil, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allocated a few seats by the TDP, remains undecided about its participation in the tripartite alliance. As the spectre of elections looms large over the state, the disarray within the TDP-JSP-BJP coalition paints a bleak picture of the opposition's prospects.

The ambition to unseat the ruling YSRCP appears increasingly elusive, with internal strife overshadowing any cohesive challenge.

The TDP-Jana Sena electoral alliance finds itself mired in internal discord, with disagreements over seat-sharing and leadership undermining its unity. Unless these fissures are addressed promptly, the opposition's aspirations to wrest power from the incumbent YSRCP may remain nothing more than a distant dream.

Prathipati Pulla Rao's son remanded

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leader Prathipati Pulla Rao's son, Sarath, has been remanded for 14 days in a GST evasion case. The police arrested Sarath on Thursday night and he was shifted to Vijayawada Sub Jail on Friday morning. The court proceedings lasted for two hours, with arguments presented by both the prosecution and Sarath's lawyers. Ultimately, the judge agreed with the prosecution's arguments and remanded Sarath for 14 days.

Sarath's lawyers pointed out that a similar case has been registered in Telangana, arguing that filing two FIRs for the same crime goes against the rules. However, the judge still decided to remand Sarath for further investigation. The case against Sarath was

registered at Machavaram police station based on a complaint from AP Directorate of Revenue Intelligence officials. The charges against Sarath and six others, including Pulla Rao's wife and brother-in-law, include diverting funds and evading taxes.

Meanwhile, Prathipati Pulla Rao stated that the YSRC government is fabricating false cases against opposition parties to suppress dissent, citing his son Sarath's arrest as an example. He alleged that his son was detained in undisclosed locations, transferred between six police stations for about 16 hours, and brought before the court at midnight. He revealed his son was arrested on false charges because the ruling party could not engage with him politically in the Chilakaluripet Assembly constituency.

Markets record rally

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HCL Technologies, Infosys and Tech Mahindra were the laggards. India's economy grew by better-than-expected 8.4 per cent in the final three months of 2023 -- the fastest pace in one-and-a-half years.

The growth rate in October-December was higher than 7.6 per cent in the previous three years, and it helped take the estimate for the current fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024) to

7.6 per cent, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Thursday. "Better than expected Q3 FY24 GDP and ease in US inflation added buoyancy in both domestic and global markets.

As the general election draws closer, stellar economic growth data raised confidence among investors for a pre-election rally," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
PUBLIC HEALTH & MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

NIT No. 1735KCP/AMRUT2.0/PHWS/TO2024-1
Name of the work: Providing House Service Connections and Distribution Network in Kondapalli Municipality under AMRUT 2.0 for Tranche-1, Estimate Value: Rs. 4619.20 Lakhs. Bidding start date: 04.03.2024 at 11.00 AM. Further details visit: <http://tender.approcurement.gov.in>, Ph.No.: 9849905736. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, P.H. Q.C Circle, Guntur.

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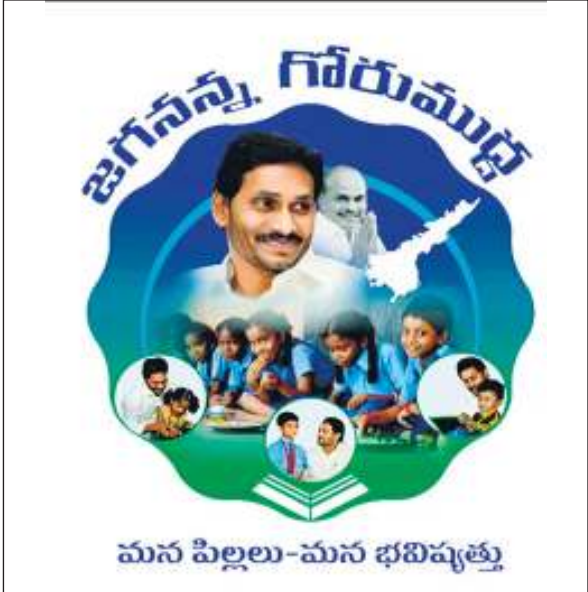
'JAGANANNA GORU MUDDA' INITIATIVE

AP enters into MoU with Food Future Foundation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Praveen Prakash, Principal Secretary of School Education, has highlighted the concerted efforts underway to enhance the implementation of the Jagananna Gorumudda programme. This initiative aims to ensure that students attending government schools receive meals of sufficient nutritional value and quality standards.

Praveen Prakash served as the chief guest at a state-level workshop titled "Jagananna Gorumudda - Food Literacy," held in partnership with the Food Future Foundation at Shamrock International School, Kannur, located on the outskirts of Vijayawada city. During the event on Friday, Praveen Prakash emphasized the importance of integrating 'Health and Wellness Education' into the curriculum, as per the National Education Policy. In pursuit of this objective, an MoU has been established with the Food Future Foundation to explore the incorporation of 'Food



Literacy' as a subject. Prakash highlighted the potential of food literacy to enhance student enrollment and capacity building. He commended Pawan Agarwal, CEO of the Food Future Foundation, for his significant contributions. As part of the collaboration,

the Food Future Foundation will conduct a study on integrating 'food literacy' as a specialized subject within the curriculum of government schools and subsequently present a report to the government. Expressing his satisfaction,

Pawan Agarwal noted his delight in partnering with the Andhra Pradesh government through the MoU to delve into the subject of food literacy within the curriculum. He stressed the critical role of food literacy in educating students about nutrition, foreseeing its potential to instigate significant societal changes.

The representatives from the Food Future Foundation elucidated the potential avenues for food literacy, including student education, teacher training, and coordination, through informative presentations. Subsequently, an interactive session was conducted with teachers and students.

The programme witnessed the participation of various stakeholders, including Sobhika SS, Director of the Midday Meal Scheme, officials from the School Education, Social Welfare, Women and Child Welfare, and Health Medical and Family Welfare departments, along with nutritionists, teachers, students, and parents.

Girl student killed as lorry knocks down bike

PNS ■ ELURU

A girl student, who was studying for graduation, was killed when the bike on which she was a pillion rider, was knocked down by a lorry at Vangur village at FCI godown in Pedavegi mandal on Friday.

Police said that the deceased Palagani Lavanya (18) was studying for graduation in the first year. When she was going to Eluru from B.Singavaram on a motorcycle to write an examination, a lorry knocked down the bike.

She suffered a grievous head injury in the accident and died instantaneously. The accident took place opposite the FCI godown. The driver of the lorry is absconding. Pedavegi SI Rajendra Prasad visited the scene of the accident, registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for post-mortem.



Develop Vijayawada airport, address passengers' needs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



AP Chambers held a meeting with the Airport Director of Vijayawada International Airport in Vijayawada and sought further development of Vijayawada airport to aid trade and commerce at a meeting on Friday. This meeting was organised to understand the status of the new terminal, and the latest developments, and to address the concerns of the passengers.

AP Chambers' President Poturi Bhaskara Rao said, "Earlier, 62 flights were operating from Vijayawada airport, which has now come down to 42. Airport modernisation is also taking time. There is a need to have direct connectivity to major destinations such as Mumbai, Varanasi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, etc. More flights between Delhi to Vijayawada are needed to meet the demand. The connectivity between Vijayawada and Hyderabad; Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada is not convenient due to the timings. Even though Vijayawada airport got international status in 2017, international connectivity is low. Cold storage facilities and air cargo facilities at Vijayawada Airport are crucial

for the food processing sector. International connectivity can be improved through Singapore and Dubai via a hub and spoke model."

Airport Director of Vijayawada International Airport M Lakshminantha Reddy said, "As the Vijayawada International Airport is owned by Airports Authority of India (AAI), it is doing its best to develop the infrastructure at the airport. In the last 7 years, AAI had spent Rs 1,000 crores for the airport. The runway was expanded from 7,500 feet to 11,000 feet and can handle up to Code E aircraft, which is one short of the largest aircraft category Code F."

Speaking about the progress of the new terminal construction, he said, "The new terminal was approved in 2019 and got environmental clearance in

2020-21. But it got delayed due to COVID. It will most likely be completed by the end of this year. The new terminal is going to be used for domestic travel and the existing building will be used for international travel."

On the issue of air cargo from Vijayawada airport, Lakshminantha Reddy said, "Vijayawada airport is working as a feeder airport to Hyderabad and it needs a big thrust to come of this. Two more flights can be launched to New Delhi due to the demand and a direct flight can be operated to Mumbai. But New Delhi and Mumbai airports are already running at full capacity and it's difficult to get a slot for flights from Vijayawada. Despite this, we recommended direct flights to Mumbai and Kolkata."

AP lauded for identification and management of birth defects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh has received appreciation for the identification and management of birth defects in the non-high-focused State category. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Child Health Division, Government of India, launched the observance of National Birth Defect Month at NITI Aayog, New Delhi on Friday.

The theme for the National Birth Defect Month 2024 is 'Breaking Barriers: Inclusive Support for Children with Birth Defects'. The aim is to use a collective voice to raise awareness for all birth defects and improve care and treatment, creating nationwide awareness at facility and community levels on various aspects of birth defects, prevention, early identification and management.

Andhra Pradesh has



designed a robust mechanism of head-to-toe screening of every born child at government health facilities. Besides, the Matru Sishu Samrakshana (MSS) portal update at the delivery points of public health facilities was also developed for online monitoring. Training on birth defects was conducted to all the Medical Officers of Primary, Secondary Health Care in October 2023. Further, the birth defects once identified are being referred to 34 District Early Intervention Centres (DEICs) spread across 26 districts.

Birth defects like cleft lip and

Observance of National Birth Defect Month begins

d left palate, retinopathy of prematurity, club foot, congenital deafness, congenital cataract, neural tube defects, blood disorders, and skin infections acquired at the time of birth are the few health conditions that are being screened by the Medical Officers at the delivery points of government health facilities. Efforts are being made to address the birth defects by treating and providing rehabilitation services at the 34 District Early Intervention Centres besides covering under AarogyaSri at network hospitals, giving free treatment to the children.

Rice shortage disrupts meal scheme

PNS ■ PADERU

A three-month long rice shortage has thrown the essential mid-day meal scheme into disarray at two schools in Ananthagiri mandal, leaving students and parents worried and frustrated. The Puthikaputtu MPP School and GPSTW Bonuru School, catering to around 65 students combined, haven't received their allocated rice quota for the past three months, disrupting the crucial nutrition programme.

Puthuku Puttu MPP School Education Committee president Madala Kondababu voiced his concerns, highlighting the impact on 17 other schools in the surrounding villages. He expressed disappointment that Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) under the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) are bearing the brunt of the irregularities in the



Parents and students of Puthikaputtu tribal village in Alluri Sitarama Raju district staged a protest demanding supply of ration for mid-day meals.

mid-day meal rice supply. Despite complaints to the ITDA project officer, the situation remained unchanged. Responding to the protests and concerns, Paderu ITDA Project Officer Vijay Abishek initiated an immedi-

ate investigation. Initial findings point towards a lapse in the supply chain, with the MDM supplier attributing the shortage to insufficient rice stocks at the designated depot. The prolonged disruption has triggered anxieties within the community

regarding the program's reliability. Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Girijana Sangam (APAGS) president K Govinda Rao emphasised the logistical challenges of supplying resources to remote areas, calling for robust measures to address them. He stressed the need for local officers to proactively monitor rice stocks and streamline distribution to ensure uninterrupted meal provision.

Tribal communities in the region, highlighting the programme's vital role in student health and attendance, have urged officials and suppliers to collaborate and find long-term solutions to prevent similar disruptions in the future.

Efforts are underway to address the immediate rice shortage and implement corrective actions to ensure the smooth functioning of the mid-day meal scheme in these schools.

YSRCP releases 1 LS and 2 ACs list

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP leadership led by party president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has released one more list (ninth) of coordinators/incharges for the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies for the upcoming general elections on Friday night with three candidates one for Lok Sabha and two for Assembly.

The party National General Secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Venumbaka Vijayasai Reddy will be the coordinators/incharges of Nellore Lok Sabha while a senior IAS officer who tendered voluntary resignation recently is fielded from the Kurnool Assembly seat. Interestingly the party high command has replaced Ganji Chranjeevi who was earlier announced as Mangalagiri coordinator / incharges has been replaced with Murugudu Lavanya from a political family.

VPA, CEMS launch skill development programme for youth

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a collaborative effort to empower the local youth, the Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA) and the Centre of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building (CEMS) jointly launched a skill development training programme on Friday. Launching the programme at Gandhigram, Scinda, Deputy Chairperson Durgesh Kumar Dubey emphasised VPA's commitment to fostering skill development by sponsoring seven training courses under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme. These courses, encompassing diverse fields such as courier supervision,



warehousing, inventory control, CNC operation, welding, and electrical work, aim to equip 175 individuals with in-demand skills.

Demonstrating a continuous commitment to upskilling the

community, Dubey said VPA has significantly increased their financial support. They allocated Rs. 25 lakh for skill development initiatives in 2022-23 and another Rs. 64.38 lakh for the current year (2023-24).

Additionally, they plan to establish a dedicated Skill Development Centre in partnership with CEMS. Recognising the significance of fostering entrepreneurial spirit, Dubey encouraged CEMS to equip the younger generation with the skills necessary not only to secure employment but also to become future trainers, creating a sustainable cycle of empowerment.

The programme commenced on Friday with a batch of 25 female trainees from underprivileged backgrounds undergoing training for "Inventory Controller in Warehouses." Officials from both VPA and CEMS were present at the event.

KGH launches dedicated stroke unit

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A specialised Stroke Unit was inaugurated at King George Hospital (KGH) on Friday to combat the concerning rise in stroke cases, particularly among younger individuals. This initiative aims to provide timely and advanced medical care to patients suffering from cerebrovascular accidents (CVA), commonly known as strokes. The unit features a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) equipped with ventilator facilities. This specialised ward will officially commence operations on Friday.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Dr Gopi, Head of the Neuro Department, emphasised the crucial role of prompt medical intervention in stroke cases. He said that recognising symptoms and reaching the hospital within the crucial four-hour window significantly reduces



the risk of stroke-related disabilities. Dr. Gopi further elaborated on the efficacy of thrombolysis injections in dissolving blood clots in ischemic stroke cases, thereby minimising potential complications.

KGH is committed to providing comprehensive stroke care. As Dr. Gopi emphasised,

the new unit is staffed with qualified healthcare professionals, including doctors and nurses, available round-the-clock to administer necessary treatment. Additionally, the ward features modern amenities, including ICU beds with ventilators, to ensure optimal patient care. The

establishment of the Stroke Unit extends beyond offering solely medical services. KGH officials, including Dr. P. Ashok Kumar (Superintendent) and Dr. D. Lakshmitulasi (DCS RMO), stressed the importance of patient education. They aim to raise awareness about stroke prevention strategies alongside offering advanced treatment options.

Dr S Gopi reiterated the criticality of seeking immediate medical attention upon experiencing stroke symptoms. He stressed the importance of reaching the hospital within three to four hours to facilitate prompt diagnosis, essential medical tests, and necessary emergency services. The alarming rise in stroke cases, particularly among younger demographics, necessitates accessible and specialised healthcare facilities.

India, Malaysia launch third edition of 'Samudra Laksamana'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The third edition of the bilateral maritime exercise, Samudra Laksamana, has commenced in the maritime expanse near Visakhapatnam. The exercise, scheduled to conclude on Saturday, underscores the joint dedication of India and Malaysia to cultivate maritime collaboration and boost interoperability among their naval units. The participation of the Indian Naval Ship Kiltan and the Royal Malaysian Naval Ship KD Lekir highlights the dedication of both countries to bolster maritime syn-



ergy. The exercise comprises two crucial phases: the harbour

phase and the operational phase at sea.

A catalyst for advancing quantum technologies

Young Physicists Meet organised by GITAM University

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian government's National Quantum Mission (NQM), with a dedicated budget of Rs 6,000 crore, has emerged as a significant catalyst for propelling India's research and development efforts in quantum technologies, according to Prof Achanta Venugopal, Director of the National Physics Laboratory (NPL) in New Delhi.

Prof. Venugopal, delivering the keynote address at the Young Physicists Meet organised by the GITAM University in association with Indian

Physics Association (IPA) in Visakhapatnam, emphasised the government's unwavering commitment to establishing India as a global leader in the development of Quantum Technologies & Applications (QTA).

Venugopal outlined the objectives of the NQM, stating that the mission aims to create a conducive environment for scientific and industrial research in quantum technology. The NQM aims to build a dynamic ecosystem that encourages collaboration and growth within the Indian quantum technology sector.



Venugopal stressed the government's dedication to offering financial backing for a range of projects, including assisting startups and carrying out research in important fields

such as semiconductor technologies, quantum computing, 6G technologies, and sustainable energy solutions. He urged young scholars and students to seize the chances provided by the NQM in order to help advance indigenous technologies.

Emphasising the mission's potential, Venugopal said by fostering domestic innovation in quantum technologies, India can significantly reduce its dependence on imported technologies. Venugopal underscored the mission's role in propelling India towards a knowledge-based economy,

driven by advancements in indigenous technological capabilities. Other speakers at the event, including Prof K.S. Sri Krishna, Dean of GITAM School of Science, Prof Gurazada Ravikumar, Prof Arun K Pati, Director of the Quantum Ecosystems Technology Council of India (QETCI), and Prof B.V.R. Tata, former scientist at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), discussed various aspects of quantum technology, its applications, and the importance of young researchers in shaping the future of the field in India.

Cong will grant SCS to AP if voted to power: Sachin Pilot

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Congress party senior leader and former Union Minister Sachin Pilot has reiterated the assurance of granting Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh if the Congress is voted to power.

The Congress party organized a public meeting here on Friday for which Sachin Pilot attended as chief guest. Addressing the meeting, Sachin Pilot recalled that the then Congress party-led Central government consented to accord SCS to AP during bifurcation. But the BJP which had to come to power in the 2014 elections, refused to grant the SCS to AP, he alleged.

The two regional parties which ruled the state have forgotten the SCS issue and failed to exert pressure on the Centre for the same. "The Modi-led Centre deceived the farmers



and the unemployed by not fulfilling the assurances. The Centre is not extending due funds to the non-BJP states. Some regional parties have failed to question the Modi-led Centre on the releasing of funds," he slammed.

"The Congress will fulfill its assurance. The Congress will grant the SCS to AP but the party needs the blessing of the people," Sachin Pilot reiterated.

APCC president YS Sharmila released the decla-

ration on SCS at the meeting. Addressing the meeting she said that Rahul Gandhi would make the first sign granting SCS to AP after coming to power. The SCS would exist for 10 years in AP, she asserted.

Stating that the 'SCS is the right of AP people' Sharmila lashed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi betrayed AP by not granting SCS, she slammed. The Prime Minister is also creating hurdles for the

construction of the Polavaram project, she denounced.

The APCC president asked people who they support. "Will you support those who denied SCS to AP or who have assured of granting it immediately after coming to power? I joined the Congress party in AP when it was in a coma to rejuvenate it and to achieve the SCS and other Reorganisation provisions," she made it clear.

She promised to provide the YS Rajasekhara Reddy's welfare

regime to every household and bring SCS. YS Sharmila recalled that Narendra Modi on the same ground assured of granting SCS in the 2014 elections to AP if voted to power. But after coming to power he betrayed the state by denying it, she lambasted.

Taking a dig at Chandrababu Naidu, Sharmila said Naidu was assured of constructing a world-class capital city but failed to do so. Now he is trying to align with the BJP which refused to grant SCS, she criticized.

Coming down heavily on Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, Sharmila alleged that the state had gone 25 years back in respect of development during the Jagan Reddy-headed regime. "Naidu deceived people with 3D graphics and Jagan Reddy has deceived people with three capital concepts," she lambasted.

Eluru dist receives Rs 26.42 cr under 'Vidya Deevana'

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru district has received Rs 26,42,23,737 under the 'Jagananna Vidya Deevana' scheme.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy released Rs 708.68 crore towards the 'Jagananna Vidya Deevana' scheme on Friday at a programme organised at Pamaru in Krishna district for total fee reimbursement for the quarter October-December, 2023. The amount would be directly credited into the joint bank accounts of 9, 44,666 students and their mothers.

A programme was organized on the occasion of the disbursement of the Vidya Deevana amount here on Friday. District Collector Prasanna Venkatesh released a replica of the cheque. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that 32,452 students were being disbursed Rs 26,42,23,737 under the Vidya Deevana scheme and the



amount was being credited into the joint accounts of students and their mothers. The fee reimbursement for the quarter of October-December, 2023, the Collector stated.

The Collector said that the Jagananna Vidya Deevana scheme provides an opportunity to the poor students, who are eligible for higher education but who are studying ITI, polytechnic and

degree to pursue higher studies.

The Collector exhorted the students to excel in education and reach heights using the welfare schemes being implemented by the state government. Social Welfare JD Jayaprakash, district BC welfare officer RV Nagamani and minority welfare officer Srinivasa Rao were among those who were present.



44,733 students to take Intermediate exams in Prakasam

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has said that elaborate arrangements have been made to conduct Senior Intermediate examinations in the district.

Dinesh Kumar inspected the Intermediate examination centre at Narayana Junior College on Friday. He visited all the rooms and observed how the examination was conducted at the centre. He also inspected the CCTV control room and saw the functioning of the equipment.

He directed the Superintendent to conduct the intermediate examinations without flaws. Talking to the media on the occasion, Collector Dinesh Kumar said that 44,733 students are attending the intermediate examinations across the district for which 69 examination

centres were set up. Of the total 44,733 intermediate students, 21,570 were first-year students and 23,163 were second-year students. He said the examinations are held from 9 am to 12 noon. He said that Intermediate theory examinations would be conducted from March 20.

"Required police bandobast was provided to prevent mass copying and irregularities. All Xerox centres around the examination centres were closed during the examination. Two invigilators were appointed to every hall. The CCTVs were connected to the control room. The government machinery has been put on high alert to conduct the intermediate examination in a peaceful atmosphere," the Collector asserted. Chief Superintendent Madhava Rao was among those who accompanied the Collector.

TDP ex-MLA's challenge for open debate leads to tension

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDY

Tension prevailed at Rayavaram village in Anaparthi mandal as former MLA and Telugu Desam party leader Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy dared an open debate on the massive corruption of YSRCP MLA Satti Suryanarayana Reddy.

Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy has been levelling corruption charges against YSRCP MLA Satti Suryanarayana Reddy for the last few months. Their allegations and condemnations reached a peak on Friday as the TDP former MLA Ramakrishna Reddy, along with a large number of his followers, started from his house at Rayavaram to go to Anaparthi for an open debate



with the YSRCP MLA Suryanarayana Reddy.

Sensing the trouble, the police prevented Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy from going to Anaparthi. The TDP activists and the police jostled at the village leading to a tense

situation. The police confined TDP ex-MLA in his car in the village.

However, the police dispersed the TDP activists.

Talking to the media Ramakrishna Reddy said that he wanted an open debate on

the massive corruption of the YSRCP MLA but the police prevented him. Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that the YSRCP MLA grabbed the land of a high school but the officials did not take action. The YSRCP MLA also indulged in Rs 15 crore corruption in the land acquisitions for distribution of house sites to the poor, he slammed.

On February 19, TDP ex-MLA went to the YSRCP MLA Suryanarayana Reddy's hospital in Anaparthi and distributed pamphlets to the hospital staff on the corruption committed by the YSRCP MLA. The YSRCP MLA expressed anger over the TDP ex-MLA distributing leaflets to the hospital staff.

Sarpanches stage dharna demanding funds

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The panchayat sarpanches staged a dharna in front of the Collector's office here on Friday in protest against the diversion of panchayat funds and demanding restoration of their power.

As a precautionary measure, the police blocked the entry into the Collector's office which led to tension for quite some time. The Sarpanches tried to barge into the Collector's office which led to

jostling between the police and the agitating sarpanches. The TDP and Jana Sena leaders along with their party workers rushed them to extend solidarity with the Sarpanches.

State Panchayat Raj Chamber President YVB Rajendra Prasad, General Secretary Birru Prathapa Reddy, and Sarpanches Sangham State President Vanapalli Lakshmi addressed the protesters and slammed the state government for the present situation leading to

Sarpanches taking to the streets.

They alleged that the panchayat funds were diverted to other purposes by the state government including the crores of rupees released by the 14th and 15 Finance Commissions. They decried that the government had usurped the rights of Sarpanches through the village secretariat system. Later they called on the District Collector in a delegation and presented a representation listing out

their charter of demands.

Panchayat Raj Chamber state vice president Y Vinod Raju, Chittoor district unit president Chukka Dhananjay Yadav, East Godavari Sarpanches Sangham President N Santhakumary, secretary Rambhala Ramesh Kumar, Panchayat raj chamber state secretary Jalli Balaraju, district leaders Prabhat, Nandamuri Raja, Chikkam Dorababu, Peddireddi Ramu were among those who took part in the dharna programme.

Naidu is not in top 100 list of influential persons in India

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Once a politician loses power, they become insignificant in existence, that is the case with opposition party leader Chandrababu Naidu. During the latest list of the top 100 influential persons by a media house, Chandrababu and K Chandrasekhara Rao were absent from the list. It is surprising to see their loss of importance, as they were considered among the most powerful until recently.

However, with the loss of political power and Chandrababu's 52-day stint in prison, he has dropped from the top 100 most powerful list. Similarly, Ramoji Rao is struggling to fend off CID interrogations and Supreme Court cases, indicating his diminished ability to influence power centres.

Even KCR, the champion of Telangana State, has been omitted from the list, while the new Telangana CM, Revanth Reddy, has secured a place. The list includes names like Jagan Mohan Reddy, Uddhav Thackeray, Sharad Pawar, Asaduddin Owaisi, and Akhlesh Yadav, among others. While some are currently in power, others are not.

Thus, the point here is not just the loss of power but also the loss of influence in power centre groups, leading to exclusion from the top 100 most powerful list.

Legendary TU142 aircraft finds new home

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In a historic moment, the renowned Indian Navy aircraft TU142, celebrated for its remarkable service, has found a new home as a museum at Kakinada. The inauguration ceremony, graced by Vanga Geetha Viswanath, MP of Kakinada, alongside esteemed MLAs and senior Naval Officers, marked a significant milestone in the nation's maritime heritage. Situated against the backdrop of Kakinada's



picturesque coastline, the museum stands as a testament to India's maritime prowess,

joining the ranks of similar establishments in Vizag and Kolkata.

Commodore N Sudeep, Cmde (Aviation), ENC, captivated the audience with a nostalgic journey through the TU142's illustrious 30-year tenure. From its origins at INS Hansa, Goa, to its later service at INS Rajali, Arakkonam, the aircraft played a pivotal role in India's Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance Anti-Submarine Warfare operations.

The transition of the TU142 from active duty to a museum exhibit signifies not only its enduring legacy but also the

Indian Navy's unwavering commitment to preserving its rich history. As visitors explore its corridors, they are transported back to a bygone era of naval aviation, paying tribute to the dedication and sacrifices of those who served aboard this iconic aircraft. The TU142's presence in Kakinada as a museum ensures that its legacy continues to inspire future generations, reminding all of the remarkable contributions of the Indian Navy to the nation's defense and maritime heritage.

Pawan should take back his words, demands MLA Vishnu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Planning Board Vice Chairman and Central MLA Malladi Vishnu criticized that the TDP-Janaseena meeting was held in such a way that (Dialogues Full and Public Nil). Speaking to the media on Friday in Vijayawada, he strongly condemned the words spoken by Pawan in the Tadepalligudem meeting.

Malladi Vishnu said that Pawan Kalyan's insults against CM Jagan were not appropriate and demanded that the Janaseena chief immediately take back his words spoken in the Tadepalligudem meeting.

Malladi Vishnu stated that the opposition is afraid of the elections. They don't know how to deal with CM Jagan Mohan Reddy in the coming elections. He said that the fear of TDP and Janaseena leaders is visible in their words and that is why they are criticizing the Chief Minister personally.

Finally, Janaseena chief Pawan Kalyan accepted that he had become a puppet in the hands of Chandrababu. Pawan feels that getting 24 seats from TDP is a big success. He said that it is ironic that Pawan criticizes the YSR Congress party which is contesting in 175 seats, forgetting the level.

Malladi Vishnu said that the Kapu brothers distanced themselves from Pawan when they joined the party that killed Vangaveeti Mohanaranga. It is said that the Janasainiks are showing extreme intolerance towards Pawan's

behaviour. He commented that Pawan has pledged the self-esteem of the Janasainiks at Babu's feet. He strongly condemned the opposition for targeting the Chief Minister who is bringing glory to the state. Malladi Vishnu said that Pawan Kalyan's insults against CM Jagan are not appropriate. On this occasion, he demanded that the Janaseena chief immediately take back his words spoken in the Tadepalligudem meeting.



Seminar promotes UTS app, digital transactions in ticketing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Commercial Department of the South Central Railway conducted a seminar on 'Passenger Business' with a focus on proliferating the adoption of the UTS mobile app and the digital transactions in ticketing, on Friday.

K Sambasiva Rao, CCM, PM, said that the South Central Railway is currently in second position among all the zones in the country in the usage of UTS on mobile apps. He said that the current share of UTS on mobile tickets across the zone is 3.41 per cent and the share of

ATVM is 33.79 per cent of the total unreserved tickets issued by the zone. He congratulated the staff of the Vijayawada division for achieving a 3.3 per cent share of total unreserved tickets through the UTS app and a 26 per cent share of the total unreserved tickets through ATVMs for the financial year 2023-24 (April to Jan).

Sambasiva Rao detailed enhancing the adoption of the UTS mobile app among the passengers and steps to be taken to increase the utilisation of Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVMs) available at major stations.



INDIA CORNER

Red Fort, Qutub Minar among top 10 most visited monuments: Eco survey

Monuments such as Red Fort, Qutub Minar, and Humayun's Tomb were among the top 10 centrally-protected monuments across the country, witnessing the highest domestic footfall till February 2023, the Delhi Economic Survey revealed on Friday. Delhi finance minister Atishi presented the Economic Survey 2023-24 in the Delhi Assembly. According to the data, Red Fort witnessed a domestic footfall of 22.01 lakh, Qutub Minar 15.24 lakh, and Humayun's Tomb 10.81 lakh in 2023. Delhi stood fourth among all states and Union Territories (UTs) with a footfall of 8.20 lakh foreign tourists in 2022, according to the data. The top eight international check posts for foreign tourist arrivals in city were Delhi airport, Mumbai airport, Haridaspur land check post, Chennai airport, Bengaluru airport, Hyderabad airport, Cochin airport, and Kolkata airport, the survey revealed. Meanwhile, the rise in the number of domestic tourists visiting the city that started in 2012 continued till 2019 and then saw a dip -- owing largely to COVID pandemic.



Bill Gates visits Statue of Unity, calls it 'incredible engineering feat'

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates on Friday visited the Statue of Unity at Ekta Nagar in Gujarat's Narmada district and termed the 182-meter tall monument dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as an "incredible engineering feat". "An incredible engineering feat! Very Beautiful! A great tribute to Sardar Patel. Thanks for your hospitality!" Gates wrote in the visitor's diary after taking a tour of the memorial, which is the largest such structure in the world. He was welcomed by Statue of Unity CEO Udit Agrawal and state protocol minister Jagdish Vishwakarma. Gates was briefed by official guides about the process of building the giant structure and materials used for its construction. Gates also visited the SoU's viewing gallery located at a height of 135 metres, a Gujarat government release said. He took a guided tour of a nearby garden and enjoyed a traditional Gujarati meal at a cafeteria run by local tribal women, it said.



Five women arrested in connection with Haldwani violence

Uttarakhand Police on Friday arrested five women in connection with the recent Haldwani violence in the town's Banbhoolpura area over the demolition of an illegal madrasa, officials said. This takes the total arrests in connection with the February 8 incidents of stone pelting, arson and firing in Banbhoolpura to 89, Nainital Senior Superintendent of Police Prahlad Narayan Meena said. The five women arrested on Friday are Shahnaz, Soni, Shamsheer, Salma and Reshma, the SSP said, adding that they all are residents of the Banbhoolpura area. Violence in Haldwani had left six persons dead and more than a 100, including police personnel and journalists, injured, the police had said earlier. The rioters had indulged in stone pelting and arson. They had set a number of vehicles and the Banbhoolpura Police Station on fire. Haldwani violence mastermind Abdul Malik was arrested on February 24 and his son Abdul Moid five days later.



PM attacks Mamata Banerjee govt over Sandeshkhali

■ Claims country seething with anger

PNS ■ ARAMBAG (WB)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a scathing attack on the TMC government in West Bengal over atrocities on women in Sandeshkhali, and said the entire country is seething with anger over the issue. Modi also slammed the opposition bloc INDIA for maintaining a stoic silence on the issue of Sandeshkhali horrors.



Speaking at a public meeting at Arambag in Hooghly district, Modi virtually sounded the bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls by stating that the people of Bengal would respond to the wounds they were inflicted with while casting their votes ("Chot ka jawab vote se dena hai"). "Amid achievements, the entire country is watching the

situation of Bengal today. The whole country is sad and angry after seeing what TMC, which beats the drum of Maa, Mati, and Manush, has done to the sisters of Sandeshkhali," Modi said. "Maa, Mati, and Manush" is the self-designated nomenclature of the Mamata Banerjee government since its ascent to power in 2011. "What TMC has done to the

sisters of Sandeshkhali is a matter of shame," he said at the rally. Referring to Khanakul, the birthplace of 19th century social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy which was close to the venue of the public meeting, the Prime Minister said that "the spirit of Roy, wherever it is, must be sad and weeping at the state of affairs in Bengal".

"The TMC leaders of Sandeshkhali exceeded all limits in unleashing violence on the people. The women of Sandeshkhali asked Mamata for help. And what did she do? Instead, she did everything she could to protect those leaders," Modi burst out. The Prime Minister claimed that it was on account of the BJP's sustained leadership in galvanizing protests that the state administration "was forced to finally bow down before the people of Sandeshkhali and arrest the prime accused who was absconding for nearly two months". Modi, evidently, was referring to the arrest of the now-suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh who was arrested on Thursday after managing to evade police net for 55 days.

Delhi: Man hangs self over strained relations with wife

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man committed suicide by hanging while he was on night duty at a sewage treatment plant in Delhi's Vasant Kunj area, police said on Friday. According to police, the reason behind Chandan Das' extreme step is suspected to be his strained relations with his wife. A PCR call was received at 2.58 am regarding the suicide of a worker at the plant in Imperial Club in Vasant Kunj North, a senior police officer said. Police said that Das used to work as an operator at the sewage plant and was on night duty. "He had a dispute with his wife and before committing suicide he made a video call to his mother. After the call, his wife and mother came to the Imperial Club and informed the guard. The crime team has inspected the spot and further investigation is underway," the officer said.

Observing that urbanisation policies have flaws, the Supreme Court has said one of the main reasons for spurt in unauthorised constructions is the government's failure to provide people with affordable houses. Acknowledging that the right to have a roof over head is a fundamental right, the top court said there is a huge gap in the policies between the requirements of the economically weaker sections and what the government was doing at the ground level. The observations by a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta came while hearing a case relating to demolition of commercial and residential units in Lucknow's Akbar Nagar where it imposed an interim stay on demolitions. "Let us be clear on housing. There's a difficulty. Our urbanisation policies have flaws. Really speaking, we have not provided for economically weaker sections. Somewhere,

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rise in unauthorised structures due to policy flaws



we will have to ensure Everyone knows that migration takes place to the cities. But there is a huge gap in the policies between the requirements and what we are able to do at the ground-level. "Why are there so many unauthorised colonies in Delhi? Because DDA (Delhi Development Authority) does not even know where 60-70 per cent of the land is. All has been acquired," the bench observed. The top court was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the demolition of commercial spaces in Lucknow's Akbar Nagar after the Allahabad High

Court dismissed the pleas of the occupants on February 27. Senior advocate S Muralidhar and Shueb Alam, appearing for the petitioners, said the demolition started on February 27 after the high court order. They said residential houses were also being demolished along with commercial spaces. Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, representing the UP government, submitted the matter related to demolition of residential houses constructed on government land on a river front is sub-judice before the Allahabad High Court and judgment has been reserved. The ASG said the occupants put up all kinds of illegal commercial constructions on the riverbank without license or permission. After hearing the submissions, the apex court said, "Till the judgment is pronounced, the Lucknow Development Authority/State government will not carry out demolition. They will abide by the order of the High Court."

33% RS members have declared criminal cases against themselves

■ Their total assets stand at Rs 19,000 cr: ADR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Of 225 Rajya Sabha sitting members analyzed, 33 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves while the total assets of these sitting MPs stood at Rs 19,602 crore, according to poll rights body ADR. Also, 31 of them or 14 per cent are billionaires. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) also showed that 18 per cent of these parliamentarians have declared serious criminal cases which include instances of murder and attempted murder. In an analysis conducted by the ADR and National Election Watch (NEW), two Rajya Sabha sitting members have declared cases related to murder under IPC section 302, while four MPs have declared cases related to attempt to murder under IPC Section 307. "Out of the 225 Rajya Sabha sitting MPs analysed, 75 (33 per cent) Rajya Sabha sitting MPs

have declared criminal cases against themselves and 40 (18 per cent) Rajya Sabha sitting MPs have declared serious criminal cases," the report said. The analysis also delved into the distribution of these criminal cases across different political parties. The BJP leads with 23 per cent of its 90 Rajya Sabha members having declared criminal cases against themselves. The Congress follows closely behind with 50 per cent of its 28 MPs facing similar charges. The ADR analysis said five (38 per cent) out of 13 Rajya Sabha members from TMC, four (67 per cent) out of six members from RJD, four (80 per cent) out of five MPs from CPI(M), three (30 per cent) out of 10 MPs from AAP, four (36 per cent) out of 11 Rajya Sabha members from YSRCP and two (20 per cent) out of 10 MPs from DMK have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.



Manipur Assembly urges Centre to implement NRC

PNS ■ IMPHAL

The Manipur assembly on Friday passed a resolution urging the central government to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state. Speaker Th Satyabrata said, "The House resolves to reaffirm its previous resolution passed on August 5, 2022, and also to urge the Government of India to implement NRC in Manipur in the interest of the state in particular and of the nation in general." In another development, Chief Minister N Biren Singh

informed the House that eight FIRs have been filed regarding the February 15 incident in Churachandpur, where a mob vandalised and partially torched the DC and SP office. Responding to a calling attention raised by Congress MLA K Meghachandra, Singh said, "Eight FIRs have been registered, of which two have been handed over to the CBI." He further mentioned that six police personnel and 43 civilians sustained injuries during the incident, and 20 people involved in the violence have been identified.

Human mind an enigma, there can be myriad reasons for suicide: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The human mind is an enigma and there can be myriad reasons for a man or a woman to die by suicide, the Supreme Court has said while acquitting a man charged with abetting the suicide of his landlady 24 years ago. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Ujjal Bhuyan said it may not always be the case that someone has to abet commission of suicide and circumstances surrounding the deceased in which he finds himself are relevant.

"Human mind is an enigma. It is well neigh impossible to unravel the mystery of the human mind. There can be myriad reasons for a man or a woman to commit or attempt to commit suicide: it may be a case of failure to achieve academic excellence, oppressive environment in college or hostel, particularly for students belonging to the marginalized sections, joblessness, financial difficulties, disappointment in love or marriage, acute or chronic ailments, depression, so on and so forth," the bench said.

In this case, the man, a former tenant, proposed to his landlady, who was returning after dropping her sister's children off at school. The man threatened her that if she did not agree to marry him, he would destroy the families of her sisters, outrage their modesty and kill them. After she reached home, the woman informed her sisters about the incident over the phone. Thereafter, she consumed poison in the house. She was rushed to hospital where she died on

July 6, 2000. The top court said there was no evidence on the basis of which it can hold the appellant guilty of abetting the suicide of the deceased. "While the death of a young woman is certainly very tragic, it cannot be said with any degree of certainty that suicide has been proved; the other essential ingredient constituting the offence under Section 306 (abetment cannot also be said to have been proved," the bench said.

Bihar govt withholds salaries of VCs for not attending meeting

PNS ■ PATNA

In an unprecedented move, the Bihar government has ordered freezing of the bank accounts of all state-run universities, barring one, and withheld salaries of their vice-chancellors for allegedly being absent at a recent review meeting convened by the education department. The department's letter, issued to all VCs barring the official of Kameswar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University, has sought clarification from them as to why they did not attend the meeting to discuss the status of pending examinations and other issues.

Some Congress MLAs sold their souls, went against party ethics: Sukhu

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Some Congress MLAs sold their souls and went against the party ethics to cross-vote in the Rajya Sabha election and they will be made to pay for it by God, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said on Friday. "Those who betrayed the party and played with the sentiments of the people of the state won't be spared even by the Almighty," said Sukhu addressing a public meeting in Dharampur in the Kasauli Assembly constituency of Solan district. He said that six rebel MLAs from Congress abstained



themselves from the house during the passing of the budget and when a coup was planned to take place by the rival BJP. Sukhu accused the BJP of being ill-at-ease with his government's performance in curbing corruption and starting welfare schemes. "I am here for the people of the state, for the development of my state, I am here for you all and not afraid of the conspiracies being hatched against me," he said. "I will not allow the wealth of the state to be looted at any

cost. My people are my strength and I am bound and committed to serve them until my last breath," he added. He also accused Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur, also the former state chief minister, of being power hungry, as he reiterated his claim that his government will complete its five-year tenure come what may. Chief Parliamentary Secretary Sanjay Awasthi said an attempt was made by a few to destabilise the government with money power, which is against the ethos of democracy and Himachal Pradesh has been put to shame by those few.

Double-engine govt guarantees 'jungle raj' in UP: Rahul Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The truth of the double-engine government in Uttar Pradesh is that it is a "guarantee of jungle raj", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday while announcing a statewide protest by party workers against the law and order situation. "The law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh is the biggest example of how the BJP and Modi media together are indulging in the 'business of lies'," he alleged in a post in Hindi on X. Highlighting several recent cases of crimes against women, he said the bodies of minor sisters are found hanging from trees at some places. "Somewhere the audacity of gang rape by BJP members in IIT-BHU campus, and somewhere a woman judge was forced to commit suicide for not getting justice. "This is the condition of that state whose law and order system is being praised tirelessly," Gandhi said. He also mentioned the recent murder of a Dalit student returning after taking her Class 10 exams in Rampur. "It is time to come out of the false image created by Modi media and see the truth that the double engine government is



the 'guarantee of jungle raj', the former Congress president said. "Uttar Pradesh Congress workers will raise their voice for justice by protesting in every district and every tehsil today against the BJP system and this alliance of criminals," he said. Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said, "In Modi's 'Anyay-kaal, at least three women are raped every hour. The latest tragedy struck yesterday, the 29th of February, when two girls were found hanging from a tree in Kanpur, having being driven to suicide after allegedly being raped by the contractor of the brick kiln where they worked." The inaction and unresponsiveness of the BJP's political leadership to women's safety issues only emboldens criminals further, he added in a post on X. "The nation witnessed the Yogi Government put narrow political calculations over justice for the victim when they protected and patronized their rape-accused MLA Kuldeep Sengar in Unnao until 2019. The nation saw the BJP's cynical and ruthless politicking when they forcibly cremated the body of the deceased victim in Hathras in 2021.

LANCET STUDY UNVEILS

From undernutrition to obesity: Double whammy for India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is grappling with a profound nutritional shift, as highlighted by the latest Lancet study, with nutritionists attributing this "double whammy" of undernutrition and obesity to a dual challenge: inadequate consumption of quality foods and easy access to cheap, unhealthy alternatives. The Lancet study, published on Thursday, found that in India, nearly 44 million women and 26 million men were obese in 2022, respectively.

The analysis by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) - a global network of scientists - and the World Health Organization (WHO) also found that about 12.5 million children aged between five and 19 were overweight in 2022. "These numbers are up from 2.4 million and 1.1 million in 1990 for women and men, respectively, while for children, the baseline number was about 0.4 million," said study co-author Guha Pradeepa, from Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), Chennai,



told PTI. Reacting to the study findings, nutritionist Sudha Vasudevan, who was not

involved in the study, noted that while good quality foods are nutrient-dense like fruits and vegetables, unhealthy foods are usually processed, containing high-fat, sugar, salt, and refined carbohydrates. "We had not yet won the war against undernutrition-related health problems, but now we are additionally burdened by those coming from overnutrition or obesity, and resembling the developed nations in that sense," Vasudevan, Senior Scientist and Head of the Department of Foods & Nutrition Research,

MDRF, told PTI. The findings suggest trends of an "epidemiological and nutrition transition" of India, Vasudevan said. "While the developed countries might be economically equipped to deal with obesity and related healthcare burden, India is not and therefore, we are struggling," she said. The Lancet study looked at body mass index (BMI) to understand how obesity and underweight have changed worldwide from 1990 to 2022. It analysed the weights and heights of over 220 million peo-

ple aged five years or older, from across more than 190 countries. The findings also highlighted a major shift in lifestyle over the past decades, including lack of exercise and healthy food, said Pradeepa. The study found that the adult obesity rate in India increased from 1.2 per cent in 1990 to 9.8 per cent in 2022 for women, while for men, it rose from 0.5 per cent to 5.4 per cent. Pradeepa attributed the spike in obesity rate to a combination of biological and social factors.

FIRST COLUMN

cherish the instructions of god

The verses of the Bhagavad Gita offer profound insights into life's purpose



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Let me start with verse # 3.8 of the Bhagavad Gita, which is, "You should always do your duty. Because action is superior to inaction. Maintenance of the body will also not be possible through inaction." We all know what our duties are according to time, place and circumstances. We also know that neglecting our duties impacts our maintenance. For example, a student does not pay attention to his studies. What happens subsequently? He finds it hard to maintain himself. For whose benefit was this verse spoken? Let me take another verse, which is very famous. I am referring to verse #2.47, which goes like this, "You have a right only in action, not ever in predetermining fruits. You should not speculate about the fruit of action; your attachment to inaction also should not be there." For whose benefit was this verse spoken? Do we have any other right except to do our duties? And we must not neglect to do them. As regards the results of our actions, the right to decide them has been kept by God with Himself. The third verse chosen by me is very telling, in which Lord Krishna promises, "People who worship Me with undivided attention, meditating on Me, for these regular practitioners of yoga, I help in getting what one does not have and provide security of what one has." Verse after verse the Lord is cajoling us to do what will fulfil all our desires, which are according to dharma. God couldn't be a party to anything against dharma. Could He? The fourth verse in this connection is: "Where there is yogeshwara Shri Krishna and where there is Arjuna (meaning us), there will be opulence, victory, wealth and morality." (18.78) What are our desires generally? That we should succeed in our endeavours. We would if we were aiming for what is according to morality, i.e. dharma. The same is about




wealth. Don't we need enough resources for our maintenance? Not only wealth, there will be 'saubhagya' (good fortune). Who benefits from all these? We do; God doesn't because He is complete in all respects. (3.22) The next verse is about gaining peace and a perfect destination. Lord Krishna instructs, 'In all respects, take My shelter only. By My mercy, you will achieve supreme peace and the eternal abode.' What is it that we lack after gaining material needs, comforts, etc.? It is peace, which is what God is promising. Not only that, God is also assuring eternal abode, which is free from the defects of this material world. How nice it will be to not be subjected to repeated birth and death? God is prepared to grant this also. God is always wanting to give. He has so much to give if we become deserving. Isn't that fair? How do we become deserving? Lord Krishna describes, 'Develop My consciousness; become My devotee; make sacrifices for Me; and offer obeisance to Me.' (18.65) One may feel that all these activities relate to God. Yes, they do but do they benefit Him? No, far from it; they only purify our existence. And God had to set some conditions to qualify for His special favour. How else was He to reward anyone? Just focus on how easy they are to do. I will take up one more verse, which is, 'Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace.' (18.58) This is quite an amazing offer from God. Aren't we all struggling with one problem or another throughout our lives? We do, but our ego comes in the way. We are not prepared to accept that somebody can be superior to us and to such an extent that we have to take His shelter and His alone. (18.66) We would rather suffer but won't do as instructed by God. Do we realise that our acts will benefit the world if we obey God's instructions? We will become better persons by following dharma – the rules for proper behaviour. We will fit in the System created by God, which is required for the creation to exist eternally. (The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)

Delhi's floral splendour: A tale of tulips and traditions

The Delhi Tulip Festival stands as a testament to resilience, beauty and the enduring spirit of life's eternal dance

Nestled within the heart of New Delhi's diplomatic enclave of Chanakypuri, Shanti Path emerges as a mesmerizing canvas painted with vibrant hues, adorned by a tapestry of tulips in an array of colors - red, white, pink, yellow, and purple. The 'Delhi Tulip Festival', now in its second consecutive year, came to a close on February 21, 2024, having commenced on February 10. Visitors, drawn from distant lands, stood in awe at the spectacle of nature's grandeur, echoing the immortal verses of poets like P. B. Shelley and John Keats. As the festival unfolded, the city's roundabouts and parks, maintained by the New Delhi Municipal Council and the Delhi Development Authority,



RAJDEEP PATHAK

bloomed with the arrival of Spring, welcoming all with renewed grandeur. But what is the story behind these tulips? Originating centuries ago in the ancient lands of Persia, tulips held significance as symbols of love and prosperity. Their journey along the silk routes carried tales of exotic lands and distant horizons, captivating hearts from Istanbul to Amsterdam. It was

in the fields of the Netherlands during the Dutch Golden Age that tulips blossomed into a cultural icon. Despite uncertainty surrounding its introduction to Western Europe, the efforts of individuals like Botanist Carolus Clusius in the late 16th century popularized tulips, leading to the famous 'tulip mania' of the 17th century. By the 19th and 20th centuries, tulip cultivation flourished in the Netherlands, solidifying its position as the world's leading producer. The association between tulips and the Netherlands was further immortalized with the iconic song 'Tulips from Amsterdam' in the 1950s. Intriguingly, it was through diplomatic channels that tulips found their way into the gardens of New Delhi.



Indo-Dutch relations provided fertile ground for this botanical ambassador to take root, inspired by festivals like the 'Amsterdam Tulip Festival' and Srinagar's Tulip Garden. Imported from the Netherlands, these tulips have been lovingly nurtured by skilled gardeners trained by the NDMC's horticulture department.

As the sun casts its golden rays upon the city, tulips burst into bloom, transforming every corner into a canvas of nature's masterpiece. From the picturesque avenues of Shanti Path to the vibrant Tulip Festival Garden, each location becomes a testament to the enduring cycle of life and beauty. Engaging citizens through various competitions

and events, the festival fosters a deeper connection to nature's rhythms and the bonds of community. Sh. Amit Yadav, the NDMC Chairman, revealed that seven types of tulips were planted, with three lakh bulbs sourced from the Netherlands and an additional 40,000 bulbs donated by the Dutch Embassy. From early to late bloomers, each tulip whispers tales of resilience and renewal. This festival not only celebrates beauty but also underscores the importance of stewarding and protecting nature for future generations. The Delhi Tulip Festival epitomizes the fusion of urban elegance and ecological consciousness, enchanting visitors and serving as a beacon for sustainable tourism. Beyond

its aesthetic charm, it stands as a testament to the power of beauty and art in fostering global connections and enhancing a city's allure. As visitors from around the world gather to admire the kaleidoscopic beauty of tulips, the festival becomes a celebration of global heritage, transcending cultural barriers and fostering understanding and appreciation among people of diverse backgrounds. In more ways than one, the festival symbolises the resilience and endurance of nature, standing tall amidst the chaos of urban life. As the curtains draw to a close on the Tulip Festival, the flowers continue to adorn the cityscape with their vibrant hues. Amidst the bustling rhythm of urban life, the tulip

stands as a silent sentinel of hope, its petals a testament to the enduring spirit of life's eternal dance. Today, the tulip serves as a symbol of resilience and endurance, having traversed oceans and centuries to become a cherished emblem of beauty worldwide. While the curtains have been drawn on the Tulip Festival, the flowers continue to stand tall, adorning the cityscape with their vibrant hues. This festival is more than just a local event; it's a part of global heritage, a celebration where visitors from around the world gather to admire the kaleidoscopic beauty of colors spanning far and wide. (The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Sansthan, views are personal)



MONEY MATTERS

Gold jumps Rs 350; silver rallies Rs 400

Gold prices jumped Rs 350 to Rs 63,320 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid strong trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal closed at Rs 62,970 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also rallied Rs 400 to Rs 74,500 per kg, while it settled at Rs 74,100 per kg in the previous close. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,320 per 10 grams, up by Rs 350, taking bullish cues in the overseas market," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,045 per ounce, up by USD 11 from the previous close. Following the release of the Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) price index data, which indicated signs of slowing inflation in the US and raised expectations of a monetary policy rate cut by the Federal Reserve later this year, Gandhi said.



GST mop-up grows 12.5% to over Rs 1.68 lakh cr

The GST collection in February grew 12.5 per cent to over Rs 1.68 lakh crore, buoyed by domestic transactions, the finance ministry said on Friday. The total gross GST collection for the current fiscal (April 2023-February 2024) stands at Rs 18.40 lakh crore, 11.7 per cent higher than the mopup for the same period last fiscal. The average monthly gross collection for the current fiscal stood at Rs 1.67 lakh crore, exceeding Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the last fiscal. "Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collected for February 2024 is Rs 1,68,337 crore, marking a robust 12.5 per cent increase compared to that in the same month in 2023," the ministry said in a statement. This growth was driven by a 13.9 per cent rise in GST from domestic transactions and an 8.5 per cent increase in GST from import of goods.



Maruti's total sales rise 15% to 1,97,471 units

Maruti Suzuki India on Friday said it has reported a 15 per cent year-on-year increase in total wholesales at 1,97,471 units in February. The company had dispatched a total of 1,72,321 units in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) said in a statement. The total domestic passenger vehicle sales grew 9 per cent at 1,60,271 units as against 147,467 units in the month a year ago, it added. Sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 14,782 units as against 21,875 units in February 2023. Sales of compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S, and WagonR, also declined by 10 per cent to 71,627 units as compared to 79,898 units in the year-ago month. Utility vehicles, including Brezza, Ertiga, Grand Vitara, and XL6, recorded sales of 61,234 units last month, growing 82 per cent.



GDP growth in FY24 likely to be within striking distance of 8%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The GDP growth for the current financial year could be within striking distance of 8 per cent, a study by the State Bank of India (SBI) said on Friday, a day after India posted an 8.4 per cent growth in the December quarter, and revised upwards the estimates for the preceding two quarters.

"The third quarter GDP numbers jolted the psyche and cognitive framework of most in markets, while sweeping some by a pleasant surprise. Clearly, right policy prisms and perspectives can trump irrational expectations bordering fault lines," SBI said in its research report 'Ecowrap'.

It noted that defying all estimates, the economy grew 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2023-24 after exhibiting more than 8 per cent growth in the preceding two quarters.

The buoyancy in indirect tax mop-up (32 per cent year-on-year growth), gap between



"The third quarter GDP numbers jolted the psyche and cognitive framework of most in markets, while sweeping some by a pleasant surprise. Clearly, right policy prisms and perspectives can trump irrational expectations bordering fault lines," SBI said in its research report 'Ecowrap'

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA) growth widened.

"For fiscal 2023-24 GDP growth is expected to increase 7.6 per cent and GVA growth

by 6.9 per cent... we estimate fourth quarter GDP growth at 5.9 per cent, which we believe is an understatement. Thus it is most likely that FY24 GDP growth could be within striking distance of 8 per cent," the SBI study said.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) has revised GDP estimates for the first and second quarters of this fiscal to 8.2 and 8.1 per cent from 7.8 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively.

With the revisions, the GDP growth during April-December works out to be 8.2 per cent.

The SBI report further said with the government's efforts to ensure quality of life for all citizens and stopping leakage of benefits through direct benefit transfer, for the first time the per capita GDP at current prices crossed Rs 2 lakh mark in 2023-24.

In constant prices, too, per capita GDP has increased to Rs 1.24 lakh in the current fiscal.



LIC presents Rs 2,441 cr dividend to govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Friday paid a dividend of Rs 2,441 crore to the government.

Smt @nsitharaman receives a dividend cheque of Rs 2,441.44 crore from Shri Siddhartha Mohanty, Chairman - Life Insurance Corporation of India (@LICIndiaForever)," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Office said in a post on X. The dividend cheque was handed over to the finance minister in presence of Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi.

Coal-producing states earned Rs 1.52 lakh cr in last 9 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Coal-producing states earned a revenue of Rs 1.52 lakh crore in the last nine years from royalty, District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET).

State-wise and year-wise data indicate that the coal mining sector is a very significant contributor to the revenue of states including Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, the Coal Ministry said in a statement.

"During 2014-2023, total revenue from royalty, DMF & NMET of all coal-producing states through coal mining sector is Rs 1,52,696 crore," the ministry said.

The compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of the revenue from coal mining during 2014-2023 was 13.80 per cent, it said. Coal mining sector has proved to be a big booster for economic growth of the states that produce fossil fuel.



State governments are entitled to receive 14 per cent of royalty on the sale price of coal and 30 per cent of the royalty as contribution towards the proposed district mineral foundations (DMFs)-- which is meant to support project-affected people---and 2 per cent of NMET from dry-fuel produced by the coal companies and also the private sector.

In case of captive, commercial mines states are also entitled to receive the revenue share offered by the auction holder in a transparent bidding process. Apart from this, state

"During 2014-2023, total revenue from royalty, DMF & NMET of all coal-producing states through coal mining sector is Rs 1,52,696 crore," the ministry said.

governments also benefit from increased employment, land compensation, increased investment in allied infrastructure like railways, road and several other economic benefits.

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING LAW

FIU imposes Rs 5.49 cr fine on Paytm Payments Bank



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) has imposed a Rs 5.49 crore penalty on Paytm Payments Bank for violating anti-money laundering rules, the Finance Ministry said on Friday.

FIU-IND initiated a review of Paytm Payments Bank on receipt of specific information from law enforcement agencies in respect of few entities and their network of businesses engaged in a number of illegal acts, including organising and facilitating online gambling.

The money generated from these illegal operations, i.e. proceeds of crime were routed and channelled through bank accounts maintained by

these entities with the Paytm Payments Bank Ltd, the ministry said.

"The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND),... has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 5.49 crore on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd with reference to the violations of its obligations under the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act)," the ministry said.

The FIU passed its order imposing the penalty on February 15.

The FIU action follows RBI's January 31 directive barring Paytm Payments Bank from accepting fresh deposits or credits in the accounts of its customers from February 29. The date was later extended to March 15.

Indian logistics market to grow at 8.8% annually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian freight and logistics market is estimated to grow at 8.8 per cent annually to USD 484.43 billion by 2029 from USD 317.26 billion in 2024 due to technological advancement, as per a report released at logistic fair LogiMAT India.

LogiMAT India 2024, the satellite show of Europe's biggest intralogistics exhibition LogiMAT Stuttgart, is organised by Messe Stuttgart India Pvt Ltd on February 28-March 1 at India Expo Mart.

According to a statement, the integration of cutting-edge technologies and advancements in intralogistics, automation, warehousing, and transportation management heralds a transformative era for the logistics sector in India.

Indian freight and logistics market is poised for remarkable growth.

LogiMAT India 2024 projections indicate a surge in market size to USD 317.26 billion by 2024, with a projected CAGR of 8.83 per cent, catapulting it to USD 484.43 billion by 2029.

This surge not only signifies robust economic expansion but also holds the promise of sub-



LogiMAT India 2024, the satellite show of Europe's biggest intralogistics exhibition LogiMAT Stuttgart, is organised by Messe Stuttgart India Pvt Ltd on February 28-March 1 at India Expo Mart.

stantial job creation and enhanced business scalability, it stated.

Together, these developments are set to redefine the logistics landscape, ushering in a new era of efficiency and innovation.

Sachin Patil, MD and CEO of Messe Stuttgart said the transformative potential of new technologies and innovations show-

cased at LogiMAT India is immense.

"We envision these advancements to not only attract substantial investments to India's logistics sector, but also to create a significant number of jobs, driving economic growth and prosperity," he added.

Furthermore, these technologies have the potential to scale logistics businesses to unprecedented levels, enabling them to optimise operations, enhance customer service, and achieve greater profitability, the statement said.

By leveraging robotics, automation, AI, and other cutting-edge solutions, logistics companies can streamline processes, reduce costs, and stay ahead of the competition.

Google makes efforts to weed out misinformation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of general elections, Google on Friday announced a collaboration with fact checkers in India for early detection of online misinformation, including deepfakes, and will create a common repository that news publishers can use through the electioneering.

In a blog post, Google said as part of its commitment to enable the news ecosystem to combat misinformation, it will support Shakti, India Election Fact-Checking Collective, a consortium of news publishers and fact checkers in India, working together to aid the early detection of online misinformation, including deepfakes.

"Starting today until the conclusion of the General Elections in India, the project will focus on connecting independent fact checkers and Indian language publishers,



giving them a collaborative platform to share fact checks, research resources and alerts on elections-related viral misinformation and deepfakes, saving crucial time," it said.

Fact-checks in multiple Indian languages and formats, including videos, will be shared and amplified by partnering news publishers, ensuring they reach a wider set of language

users and diverse audiences across the country.

Google working with the fact checkers will create a common repository that news publishers can use to tackle the challenges of misinformation at scale. India goes to polls in April/May to elect a new government.

Shakti, a pan-India network, will be driven by DataLEADS,

in collaboration with the Misinformation Combat Alliance, The Quint, VishvasNews, Boom, Factly, and Newschecker, with support from the Google News Initiative.

In addition, the project will provide news organisations and fact-checkers essential training in advanced fact-checking methodologies, deepfake detection, and the latest Google tools like the Fact Check Explorer, to streamline verification processes.

Google further said that the fact-checking collective will prioritise publishers producing original news in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, and Marathi.

With this launch, the Fact-Checking Collective will continue to onboard new partners and scale the effort to reach most parts of the country.

As India prepares for its general elections, Google said

it recognises the essential role of news publishers, journalists, and fact-checkers in helping people access the trustworthy information they need for informed participation.

"At Google, we have long supported this work by investing in features, resources and partnerships that can help people better evaluate online information. Continuing our commitment to enable the news ecosystem to combat misinformation, we are supporting Shakti, India Election Fact-Checking Collective."

To strengthen fact-checking organisations worldwide, including those in India, Google and YouTube had previously launched the USD 13.2 million Global Fact Check Fund which has helped to enhance the capabilities of local and regional media organisations in producing high-quality, impactful fact-checking content.

Delhi per capita income rises by 22% to Rs 4.61 lakh

ECONOMY TO GROW AT 9.17% IN FY24

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's per capita income increased by 22 per cent in two years to Rs 4.61 lakh in 2023-24, Finance Minister Atishi said on Friday while projecting a 9.17 per cent economic growth for the current financial year.

Tabling the Economic Survey for 2023-24 in the Assembly, the Delhi finance minister said the city's economy has grown at a record pace despite hurdles created by the Centre, LG and officers in the work of the Kejriwal government.

Atishi said that the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Delhi at current prices is likely to reach Rs



11,07,746 crore in 2023-24 with a growth of 9.17 per cent.

"The GSDP of Delhi in 2022-23 was Rs 10,14,000 crore. In post-COVID times, our real GSDP grew at 8.76 per cent in 2021-22 and 7.85 per cent in 2022-23, faster than the rest of the country," she said.

Delhi's contribution to the

national GDP is nearly 4 per cent despite its population being just 1.5 per cent of the total population of the country, she said.

Atishi said that the Delhi government's budget for 2024-25 will be tabled in the Assembly session on March 4. The House extended the ongoing budget session, which began on February 15, till March 8.

This survey report showed the per capita income of Delhi increased from Rs 3,76,217 in 2021-22 to Rs 4,61,910 in 2023-24, up by 22 per cent in two years.

According to official figures of 2021-22, Delhi was placed third in the list of per capita income behind Sikkim and Goa.

Gulshan Devaiah reveals an action-packed avatar in upcoming untitled action series

Following his dynamic performance in *Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota*, where he captivated audiences with his portrayal of the dual characters Karate Mani and Jimmy, actor Gulshan Devaiah is gearing up to immerse himself once again in the adrenaline-fuelled world of action.

In his upcoming untitled action series, he is set to unleash a new level of intensity and skill, promising viewers an unforgettable experience.

Reflecting on his involvement in the project, Devaiah shared, "After *Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota*, this is perhaps the best action I've had to do for any project. The sequences are designed to be fun and entertaining. I am really enjoying this new experience and trying to find

my own way of pulling off such stylised fight sequences. I wouldn't say it's easy, oh no, but what's the fun in doing easy things."

With his upcoming venture into the world of action, fans can anticipate a thrilling ride filled with suspense, excitement, and unparalleled entertainment.

Here's your first look at *Tron: Ares*, premiering in 2025

Today, Disney released the exciting first look at *TRON: Ares*, the highly anticipated, new installment in the groundbreaking *TRON* franchise. The film started production in January in Vancouver and is slated for release in 2025.

TRON: Ares is a follow-up to Disney's 1982 seminal science fiction film *TRON* and the 2010 sequel, *TRON: Legacy*.

Joachim Ronning directs *TRON: Ares* and says, "I'm excited to be part of the *TRON* franchise and bring this new film to fans around the world. *TRON: Ares* builds upon the legacy of cutting-edge design, technology and storytelling. Now more than ever, it feels like the right time to return to the Grid."

TRON: Ares follows a highly sophisticated program, Ares, who is sent from the digital world into the real world on a dangerous mission, marking humankind's first encounter with A.I. beings.

The feature film stars Jared Leto, Greta Lee, Evan Peters, Hasan Minhaj, Jodie Turner-Smith, Arturo Castro, Cameron Monaghan, with Gillian Anderson. Sean Bailey, Jeffrey Silver, Justin Springer, Jared Leto, Emma Ludbrook and Steven Lisberger are the producers, with Russell Allen serving as executive producer.



All aboard the comedy train

Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment, the creative force behind numerous blockbuster hits, has unveiled the cast for its highly anticipated project *Madgaon Express* directed by Kunal Kemmu, with a sneak peek that promises a journey filled with laughter.

It introduces us to the dynamic trio of Divyendu, Pratik Gandhi, and Avinash Tiwary, collaborating for the first time ever. The video begins with showcasing these power packed performers in their memorable OTT avatars - Divyendu as everyone's beloved Munna Bhai, Avinash Tiwary as the daring Dara, and Pratik Gandhi as the charismatic Harshad Mehta.

But hold on tight, because a blast of excitement transforms them into their quirky *Madgaon Express* characters, introducing Divyendu as Dodo, Pratik Gandhi as Pinku and Avinash as Ayush. The film also stars Nora Fatehi, Upenendra Limaye and Chhaya Kadam in pivotal roles!

Madgaon Express follows the journey of three childhood friends who embark on a trip to Goa that goes completely off-track. From the creators of hits like *Fukrey*, *Rock On*, and *Don*, *Madgaon Express* marks the directorial debut of Kunal Kemmu. Along with the cast announcement, the makers have also revealed that the trailer of the film will be released on March 5th, 2024, stay tuned!

A new Suit for Superman!

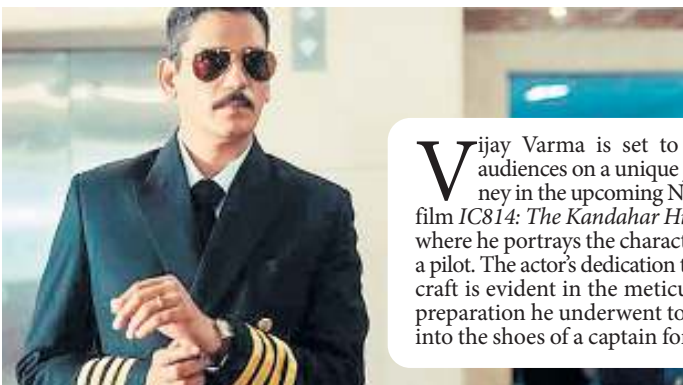
Fans of Superman, get ready! Superman's birthday is coming up, and DC Studios head honcho James Gunn recently revealed some amazing news. The beloved superhero is receiving a makeover that includes a brand-new film and an elaborate new outfit.

Superman's exploits on the big screen will now begin anew. Keep a watch out for the highly anticipated superhero franchise when it releases in 2025, as the developers have further guaranteed! First things first: It's just *Superman* now, not *Superman: Legacy*.

James Gunn is directing the upcoming *Superman* movie, so fans are sure it will be a visual extravaganza with a huge budget at stake. "When I finished the first draft of the script, I called the film *Superman: Legacy*. It was evident that the title was *Superman* by the time I locked the final draft," Gunn added in his Instagram post.

Unpredictably shocking *Superman* reveal! Gunn posted on Instagram, saying, "I'm thrilled to announce that principal photography on *Superman* has begun. It's ironic that this is also Superman's birthday, falling on February 29." Fans are giddy over the logo after seeing a peek of the outfit on Instagram. The new look is eerily reminiscent of Superman from DC Comics from the classic Mark Waid and Alex Ross epic, *Kingdom Come*, which takes place in a parallel future reality.








Here's how Vijay Varma prepared for his pilot character in *IC814: THE KANDAHAR HIJACK*

Vijay Varma is set to take audiences on a unique journey in the upcoming Netflix film *IC814: The Kandahar Hijack*, where he portrays the character of a pilot. The actor's dedication to his craft is evident in the meticulous preparation he underwent to step into the shoes of a captain for this riveting project.





To authentically portray the role, Vijay took the initiative to meet real-life Captain Devi Sharan (also his character name in the film), who generously shared insights into the responsibilities and nuances of managing a flight. This meeting provided Vijay with firsthand knowledge, allowing him to understand the intricacies of a pilot's profession. Adding another layer to his preparation, Vijay visited the Flight Civilization Center, delving into the technicalities and protocols involved in piloting an aircraft. Learning from experts in the field, he absorbed the essential skills required to bring authenticity to his on-screen portrayal. The highlight of his preparation was spending valuable time with Captain Devi Sharan, who guided him through the entire journey of flying an aircraft. Sitting side by side, Vijay absorbed the intricacies of the profession, gaining valuable insights into the challenges and responsibilities faced by a pilot.

On Netflix Day, where exciting announcements unfolded, *IC814: The Kandahar Hijack* took center stage alongside another major project, *Murder Mubarak* featuring Vijay Varma, leaving audiences wanting more of him!




ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD






REALITY CHECK






SPEED BUMP



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 The crime of killing someone

3 This covers your body

7 Baby goats

8 Cardboard box

10 People you like who like you

13 Envious

16 Fires a gun

17 An easy card game

18 A student's table

19 The capital of the United Kingdom

5 One hundred less ten

6 Light open shoes with straps

9 Says again

11 Overlook

12 Spoiled

14 Male children

15 Twirl around

SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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Rules

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

ORCHESTRA

DRINK

STAY

OLDEST

REPAIR

CLUB

SNAIL

STOWAWAYS

SOLUTION

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'My goal is for motorsport races to arrive in Hyderabad and then spread like wildfire'

An interesting Hyderabond here for you, **The Pioneer** brings our conversation with the founder of INDE Racing and Kankanala Sports Group, Abhishek Reddy Kankanala, sharing his association and love for the city.



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Kankanala Sports Group was thrilled to announce INDE Racing as a new team for the 2024 FIM E-Explorer season, after the news that KSG and FIM E-Explorer have inked an exclusive nine-year collaboration to manage races in India. At the recent FIM e-xplorer World Cup, INDE Racing—India's first-ever FIM-licensed team, having its roots in Hyderabad somewhat—soared to unprecedented heights on the global scene. The founder of INDE Racing and Kankanala Sports Group, Abhishek Reddy Kankanala, a *pakka* Hyderabadi, stated that they have always missed a competitive independent team to cheer for, despite the growing interest in motorsports! In an exclusive interview with us for the special weekly column, hoping to innovate, advance sustainability, and foster gender equality in addition to setting new standards for racing in Hyderabad and across the country, everything that the interviewee with Hyderabadi roots has to say is heard.

In an interview with us, the spokesperson recalled, "With badminton, volleyball, and handball, what I have been doing over the last few years is to bring some kind of attention to overall sports in Hyderabad and across." Much to your surprise, he actually lost his voice while cheering for the team and yet continues to go on, "Better images of sports viewers should be posted on social media and on television! In Hyderabad, we make sure that the volleyball court has over twenty cameras so that the sport appears seductive. I really do mean it. I am attempting to compete with how European volleyball is seen in my mind. This year, I hope our league will be the most watched worldwide. Thus, nothing

has transpired overnight; Hyderabad's handball leagues were the starting point. Despite not owning a team, I keep in close contact with every player so that I can now provide them with a global platform. This is the moment when motorsports become relevant."

"I couldn't see any motorsports team representing our country until I arrived," he said in great detail. "Although Hero and TVS are manufacturing teams, their registration is not in India. That, in a way, inspired me to think that we ought to be represented globally as well. Although I was quite active in organising small-scale events in Hyderabad, my goal was to work on a larger scale. We stand for equality as well! I even worry a lot about not being selected for a factory team, which is why INDE."

He acknowledges, "Most of my synergy, whether it's with the Black Hawks or Telugu Talons, is always in tandem in Hyderabad city. Because I am from Hyderabad, I'll use that connection to host it in my hometown one day. That is what I am anticipating from the first race that will take place shortly. My goal is for these races to arrive in Hyderabad and then spread so that the general public may learn more about them. Let's witness it live, starting with a crowd in Hyderabad. Forget about reading about it in the papers or watching it on television. Even though the state government hasn't given its approval yet, Hyderabad should be the first location to start. Everything also depends on the government's backing."

With this news, India will have its first-ever FIM-licensed squad and participate in its first-ever legally sanctioned international competition. It's so thrilling! "I own this, so we are bleeding Hyderabad," he went on (he grins). "Despite having spent nearly twenty years abroad, I still prioritize



my Hyderabadi heritage. For a little while, I worked in Canada, but despite my success there, my heart was still in Hyderabad. I made the decision to return to the city with my family. I have been living in Hyderabad for almost twelve happy years. It is the best city in the world, and I say this with certainty. Mumbai and Delhi used to be fierce rivals to our city, but circumstances have changed, and Hyderabad is growing in new and interesting ways. The way things have changed has been so great that we are happy to show visitors our city."

He adds, "I always feel a connection with the Hyderabadi journalists who show me so much love. I can see that the Hyderabadi media takes great pride in promoting sports around the nation. It is evident in the way people write or talk about my endeavours. I am not sure how, but print media somehow inspires me. However, you also have to appreciate Hyderabad's small-town charm."

"I have travelled to nearly twelve nations in the past two months. Japan's cultural display, for instance, was breathtaking, but I can only picture myself residing in Hyderabad. I have no reservations about who I am as a Hyderabadi; I totally embrace it," with a warm note, Abhishek Reddy Kankanala concluded the interview.



CREATING A MUSICAL SAGA WITH HIS EXCEPTIONAL MASHUPS

TEJAL SINHA

Mashups have undeniably been a favourite of many and a go-to music lately that just mixes up two different moods, two similar moods, or whatever. And that is where we have the talented musician and mashup artist Graverio onboard with us, sharing his inclination towards music, mashups, and a lot more. Well, there's really interesting news for all the music lovers at the end of this interview. So, keep yourself hooked on your couch and give it a read.

His inclination towards music began at a young age, inspired by a deep appreciation for its ability to create connections. Growing up, he found comfort in various genres, which ultimately led him to pursue a career in music. "I'm drawn to the unlimited creative possibilities music offers, allowing me to express myself authentically and connect with others on a deep level. Whether it's through composing, remixing, or collaborating with fellow artists, music has always been a powerful means of self-expression and communication for me," shares the talented artist. Before we go ahead, what's it with Graverio—the name we mean? So, picture this: "I started out as 'Master-B'—yes, I know, not the best choice. And it led to some awkward teasing. So, I decided it was time for a change. While brainstorming with a friend, we came up with 'Graver', but then I thought, 'Nah, that's not quite me anymore.' So, I threw in an 'O' and voila, 'Graverio' was born! It doesn't have some deep meaning behind it. I just thought it sounded cool, plus it's a bit of a nod to how my music gravitates towards different genres. I feel like sometimes you just have to go with what sounds right, even if it's a made-up word."

Interesting one, Graverio! Well, talking about his mashup, he has always focussed on storytelling. Instead of just blending two songs in the same key, he picks tracks that fit together like pieces of a puzzle. It's all about creating a musical saga where each song serves as a chapter in the story. By mixing different elements from each track, he takes his listeners on a journey that keeps them engaged and wanting more. "My process is pretty organic," says the musician. "I listen to a ton of music, like, all the time. When a track really clicks with me, it's like my brain instantly starts humming along, coming up with melodies that fit with it or are inspired by it. From there, I get into blending these melodies with the original track. If it sounds good together and captures the vibes I'm going for, I move on to the next steps, which are mixing, mastering, and maybe even creating a video to go along with it." But again, here's the thing—he's not just about the music. "Before I even start working on a mashup, I make sure to watch the movies associated with the songs." Looking back at the turning point in his

life, it's been the mashup combination of *Let Me Down Slowly* and *Main Dhoondne Ko Zamane Mein*, and, "Let me tell you, it went absolutely viral back in 2021. I'm talking over 200 million views, which is kind of viral! It's hard to put into words just how much it changed my life. Suddenly, doors that were once closed started swinging wide open. I was getting invitations to collaborate with other artists and perform at major events. It was like, overnight, I went from being a relatively unknown musician to having a global audience. But beyond the numbers, what really struck me was the connection I was able to make with listeners through that mashup. It was like the music spoke to people in a way that I never could have imagined. And that, to me, is the true power of music—to bring people together and make them feel special."

When it comes to selecting songs for his mashups, it's all about the connection he has with his audience. "So when it comes to choosing songs, I keep all of that in mind. I know what they're feeling, what they want to hear, and even what mood I'm in myself. It's like we're all on the same page. They trust my judgment and know that whatever song I choose to mashup, it's going to resonate with them. I like to keep things unexpected yet pleasing. That's the secret sauce. So when I decided to mashup *Make You Mine* and *Apna Bana Le*, it was about capturing that unexpected twist while still delivering something that hits home for my audience. And judging

by the response, I think we nailed it."

The toughest part of making mashups, he says, is getting two different songs to fit together effortlessly. It's like trying to mix two flavours in cooking, you want them to complement each other, not clash. You have to match the keys, tempos, and rhythms just right, while still keeping the essence of each song intact. It takes a lot of patience and skill to make it work, but when it does, it's like magic!

Recently, he also released the song *Raabta*, which has received so much love. An ecstatic Graverio says, "Oh my god, thank you for asking about my original music. It means a lot to me. *Raabta* holds a special place in my heart! It's a song born from the depths of a broken heart. It resonates deeply with my own experiences. My personal life hasn't been easy. I've faced my fair share of challenges in love, feeling like an option and experiencing one-sided love, yet I was unable to let go of the love I felt. I collaborated with my friend Priyansh to create the instrumental, and together with one of my favourite artists, SickLot, we brought the lyrics to life. The lyrics hit me hard: *Tere Bina Main Hoon Kya?, Mere Bina Tu Hai Puri, Main Hi Kyun Aakhi, Adhoora Reh Gaya.*"

Arranging the vocal stems, he reveals that he found himself in tears. It was both relatable and immensely powerful. To complement the song, he created a visualiser that depicts the streets where they first met and where they said their final goodbyes. "*Raabta* is more than just a song to me. It's a piece of my soul. While it may not have received the recognition it deserves yet, I believe that one day, it will resonate with many others who have experienced similar heartache. And when that day comes, it will be a celebration of love, loss, and the power of music to heal."

And here comes an interesting revelation that we were talking about at the beginning of this interview. "I've got a version of Alan Walker's *Who I Am* coming your way, and trust me, you'll love it. We're taking a fusion of sounds from all across Pan India—sitar, sarangi, tabla, flute, you name it. I've poured over 100 hours into perfecting this remix, and let me tell you, it's been worth every second. Now, here's where it gets even better! Siddharaj Parmar's flute and Mohak Chhabaria's mix mastering have taken this remix to a whole new level of beauty. And don't even get me started on the vocals!! Peder Elias and Putri Ariani have truly outdone themselves. Their voices are like pure magic, weaving effortlessly through the intricate layers of sound." So yes, get ready to be swept away by this remix. It's a journey through the sounds of India, with a touch of Alan Walker's signature magic thrown in. Trust me, you won't want to miss it!

Mashups have been a thing these days, and today, **The Pioneer** has the mashup star Graverio getting candid about his journey, the mashup process, his recent song *Raabta*, and more.



DIABETIC FEET: Prevention of amputation

Every year, on average, 4,000 to 5,000 people seek care for foot and ankle problems at the Podiatric Outpatient Department (OPD) at KMC Hospital, Mangalore. At the department, super-specialized doctors focus on proper wound care, and keeping feet healthy, especially for those at risk of diabetes-related issues. As a result of their utmost care and attention, very many patients recover, and only fewer than 20 individuals in a year undergo major amputations, meaning they lose their leg. It is significant to note that this accounts for less than 0.5 percent of the cases. Thus, it is gratifying and joyful to note that the limb is saved in most of the patients.

While in the majority of patients, the limb is salvaged, it is essential to understand and take precautions against the risk of diabetes-related foot problems. Experienced and specialist doctors in this specialized field of podiatry emphasize the need to 'know your risk, know your response'. Being aware of the risks associated with diabetes and receiving timely medical treatment is crucial to preventing the loss of limbs. Thus avoiding emotional and financial burdens on the families.

HERE ARE A FEW PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO BE TAKEN BY EVERY DIABETIC PATIENT:

Regular check-ups: Visit your healthcare provider regularly for check-ups, especially if you have diabetes. Early detection of issues can help prevent severe complications.

Manage Diabetes Effectively: Follow your doctor's advice for managing diabetes, including medications, diet, and lifestyle changes. Keeping blood sugar levels in check, significantly reduces the risk of complications.

Healthy Lifestyle: Adopt a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and a balanced diet. Maintaining a healthy weight contributes to overall well-being, reducing the risk of complications.



DIABETIC FOOT CARE

| Do's | Don'ts |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Examine your feet daily and look for injuries.Keep the web space dry (area between two toes).Regularly moisturise your feet.Cut nails regularly and trim them square. Always use footwear while walking.Get regular foot check-ups from a podiatrist or foot specialist for prevention, early detection, and treatment of foot problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not walk barefoot. (both within and outside the home).Avoid submerging your feet in boiling water.Do not use hot water bags, heating pads, or apply any strong counterirritants (e.g., balms).You may burn your foot or feet without noticing.Do not wear tight-fitting elastic socks and shoes.Do not remove callus and corns at home.Do not undergo vigorous oil massages of the feet. |

In conclusion, while the numbers at our center indicate a relatively low rate of major amputations, the overall disease burden is huge, and it is essential to be proactive and educate the healthcare workers and patients about the care to be taken. Understanding the risks, regular check-ups, and adopting a healthy lifestyle are key steps in preventing the loss of limbs. As this year's World Diabetes Theme is 'Know your risk, know your response', let us all take a collective pledge to be vigilant and defeat diabetes, ultimately saving both limbs and lives.

(The author, Dr. Priyatham Kamath, is a consultant in podiatric and diabetic foot surgery at KMC Hospital.)

KAPIL BACKS BCCI STRICTNESS ON DOMESTIC CRICKET

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A few players will suffer, but let it be,” said legendary former India captain Kapil Dev on Friday as he backed the BCCI’s decision to terminate central contracts for lack of commitment to domestic cricket, calling it a much-needed step to protect marquee first-class events like the Ranji Trophy. Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were on Wednesday excluded from the BCCI’s central contracts after ignoring the board’s diktat to play in the Ranji Trophy. The decision evoked mixed reactions with some former players like Kirti Azad and Irfan Pathan backing the out-of-favour duo. Kapil refrained from taking names but said the BCCI’s decision to assert the importance of domestic cricket was long overdue. “Yes, few players will suffer, kuch

logon ko taqleef hogi, hone do lekin desh se badhkar koi nahi hai (some people will feel hurt but let it be because nobody is bigger than the country). Well done,” he said. “I congratulate the BCCI for taking the much needed step to protect the status of domestic cricket. I was sad to see domestic cricket being given the skip by players once they had established themselves in international cricket,” the captain of the 1983 World Cup-winning side observed in his statement. The BCCI, while announcing the central contracts, urged the players to give due importance to domestic competitions. The 25-year-old Kishan did not turn up for Jharkhand throughout the team’s campaign in Ranji Trophy despite not being on national duty after leaving the tour of South Africa in December citing personal reasons. He instead focussed on preparing for the IPL



next month for his franchise Mumbai Indians. Iyer, on the other hand, did not make himself available for Mumbai’s Ranji quarterfinal against Baroda after being excluded

from the Indian team after the second Test against England. He, however, has been picked for Mumbai’s Ranji semifinal against Tamil Nadu starting March 2. “It was high time the message was given and this strong step by the BCCI will go a long way in restoring the prestige of domestic cricket,” he added. Kapil asserted that it was the duty of established stars to play domestic cricket as they owe their success to their respective states. “I have always believed in the process of international players making themselves available to play for their respective states. It helps them extend their support to domestic players. Also it is a nice way to pay back for the services rendered by the state association in grooming a player,” he said. Kapil also expressed his gratitude to the BCCI for enhancing the pension of former cricketers, saying

it has come as a major relief to families of several yesteryear players. In 2022, the board had announced a hike in the monthly pensions of former cricketers — both men and women. Former first-class men’s cricketers, who earlier got Rs 15,000 per month are now getting Rs 30,000, while former Test players, who got Rs 37,500, are now getting Rs 60,000. Women international players, who received Rs 30,000 prior to the revision are now receiving Rs 52,500, while first-class cricketers who retired before 2003 and were getting Rs 22,500 are now getting Rs 45,000. “I am also happy that the BCCI has increased the pension amount of the players. This was a much needed boost to those whose family depends on the pension received,” added Kapil.



We are thrilled to have Shreyas in team for Ranji semifinal: Rahane

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane on Friday backed Shreyas Iyer to put the contractual turmoil behind him and deliver a punchy performance for the team in the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Tamil Nadu, beginning here on Saturday. Shreyas along with Jharkhand’s Ishan Kishan were not considered for the annual central contracts after both the players skipped the Ranji matches of their respective teams in violation of BCCI’s diktat. Shreyas sat out of Mumbai’s quarterfinal against Baroda here while complaining of back pain. “He’s an experienced player. His contribution has been amazing whenever he turned up for Mumbai. We are thrilled to have him in our team for the semifinal,” Rahane told the media here at the BKC Ground. Rahane said Shreyas would not require any extra motivation to do well for Mumbai against TN. “I don’t think he needs any encouragement or advice. He has always contributed with the bat for Mumbai, and him being around other players in the dressing room will also help the team’s cause,” said Rahane. However, Rahane himself is waging a personal battle after scoring just 115 runs from six matches at an average of 12.77 with a lone fifty.

But the 35-year-old did not read much into those anaemic numbers. “It’s just a phase and you have to respect it (not scoring runs). When you’re batting well and scoring runs, it happens consistently. There’s nothing wrong with my batting. I just have to remain positive and back my game and instinct,” he said. Rahane said he needed to bat freely to get back into his run-scoring ways. “I just have to go out there and play freely. I feel as a player you have to be confident and respect a phase, move forward and learn whatever you can. You don’t want to go too far ahead,” he added. Rahane confirmed that opener Prithvi Shaw has recovered from a finger injury which had forced him to bat in the middle-order during the quarterfinal. “His finger was hurt, that’s why he came down the order. We wanted him to go before Musheer (Khan). But obviously, because of the injection’s effect, he had to go after him,” Rahane said. Rahane hoped that Shaw, who has made 389 runs from four matches at an average of 64.83, would find his A game against Tamil Nadu. “Prithvi is really aggressive and he gets those runs very quickly. As a batsman, I don’t think he (has) changed much. He’s hungry to score runs. That’s

what we want from Prithvi. We don’t want him to change his game,” Rahane said. He said Mumbai will adopt a pressure-free approach in this game. “We are playing really well. We don’t want to think about the quarterfinal, semifinal or final. It is just another game for us. If we can do that and be in the moment as a team and individuals, it will help us,” Rahane noted. Rahane was obviously pleased with the hundreds Tanush Kotian and Tushar Deshpande, the No 10 and 11, made in the last outing and said such efforts will add a lot of meat to the whole batting unit. “Everyone is working really hard, especially the bowlers, with their batting. I think when No. 8, 9, 10, 11, contribute with the bat, it becomes really crucial for the team. Those guys have worked really hard throughout the season on their batting, you know, those extra 15-20 minutes after they bowl (at nets). It’s paying off.” Rahane said Kotian has the potential to become an all-rounder. “I’m happy for Tanush because earlier he has made those crucial 70s, 80s and 90s. But I think the hundred he got is a benchmark (for him). He has the calibre to become a good all-rounder,” Rahane signed off.

He is the new Ravi Ashwin: Vaughan on Bashir

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England captain Michael Vaughan feels England have discovered a “world-class superstar” in young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir, who has the skills to emulate the success of India’s Ravichandran Ashwin. Despite England’s five-wicket loss in Ranchi, 20-year-old Bashir, playing only his second Test, impressed as he returned with a match haul of eight wickets. His magnificent performance included a five-wicket haul in the first innings. Ashwin, on the other hand, is regarded as one of the best off-spinners in the history of Test cricket. The senior spinner recently became only the second Indian bowler to snare 500 wickets in the longest format and is set for his 100th Test in Dharamsala next week against England. “One of the great weeks, celebrating another world-class superstar that we’ve unearthed, Shoaib Bashir. That’s what we’re celebrating. Second Test match, eight wickets, he’s the new Ravi Ashwin, and we’ve unearthed him.



“So, we’re celebrating a new superstar in English cricket,” Vaughan said on Club Prairie Fire’s YouTube channel. India handed England their first series defeat under coach Brendon McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes after winning the fourth Test in Ranchi to take a 3-1 lead in

the ongoing series. Vaughan backed England to win the dead rubber in Dharamsala. “They will go with their best XI. It’s going to be cold in Dharamsala and it will suit England. I expect England to win,” Vaughan said.

Made some mental adjustments to convert starts into big scores: Shafali

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Big-hitting batter Shafali Verma says she has made minor adjustments to her approach towards the game in the last one year, which is helping her convert good starts into big knocks in the ongoing Women’s Premier League. Verma struck a half century and stitched a second-wicket stand of 82 runs with Alice Capsey (46) as Delhi Capitals defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by 25 runs in a WPL match here on Thursday night. RCB could only muster up 169/9 in their 20 overs, pursuing a 195-run victory target. “Last time in the WPL, I was getting out in the 30s or 40s. Those knocks taught me a lot. I think because of that, now I want to convert a 30 or 40-run score into a 50 for the team



and for myself,” Verma told ‘Jio Cinema’. “The main change is a slight adjustment in my mindset and I want to take this forward,” she added. Verma’s team is currently top of the table with two wins from three matches. The 20-year-old Verma, who became the youngest to play cricket for India when she debuted as a 15-year-old, also acknowledged the positive impact of playing alongside seasoned Australian Meg Lanning in her WPL team. “When a very experienced person is standing across from you, your body language changes on its own. Playing with a player like that and building partnerships is a great privilege in my opinion. “She has changed the game with her batting,” she said. Delhi Capital will next taken on Gujarat Giants on Sunday.



BCCI to conduct women red ball tournament in Pune

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Women’s red-ball cricket will return to India’s domestic calendar after six years when the BCCI conducts a Senior Inter Zonal Multi-Day Trophy in Pune from March 28. The move comes after the Indian women’s team’s return to Test cricket. The side has played Tests against Australia and England in the recent years. Domestic red ball cricket for women was last held in 2018. “It is a welcome step taken by BCCI. The national team has started playing Test cricket again and we need the next generation of cricketers to play red ball cricket at the domestic level,” former India pacer Amita Sharma told PTI. “I would also want red ball to be played at the state level and not just zonal level. Back in the day we had both those events,” she added. The Maharashtra Cricket Association will be hosting the tournament which will feature six teams, representing East, West, North, South, Central, and North-East zones. They will be competing in a series of five matches to be played across three days each, which is a day more than the two-day games played in the 2018 season. The tournament will begin right after the ongoing Women’s Premier League, which ends on March 17. It will start with the quarterfinals between East Zone and North East Zone and West Zone and Central Zone on March 28 with the semifinals slated on April 3.

Australia 13-2 as New Zealand strikes back late

AP ■ WELLINGTON

The almost comical run out of Kane Williamson for a second-ball duck was one of many setbacks suffered by New Zealand on the second day of the first test Friday as it fell 217 runs behind Australia. That was until the very end of the day when Australia battled for a second time after passing up the chance to make New Zealand follow on. Tim Southee dismissed Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne to have Australia 13-2 in its second innings after it had led by 204 on the first. At stumps Usman Khawaja was 5 not out and nightwatchman Nathan Lyon was 6 not out. Lyon was dropped at slip by Tim Southee off the last ball of the day. Smith was out for a duck to the third ball of the innings, bowled by Southee, and Labuschagne fell to Southee in the fifth over for 2. After falling for 1 in the first innings, it was Labuschagne’s lowest aggregate score in a test in his career. They were the 12th and 13th wickets to fall in the day which mostly had not gone New Zealand’s way. First, New Zealand needed more than a full session to claim one wicket and end Australia’s first innings. In that time Cameron

Green and Josh Hazlewood put on 116 runs to increase Australia’s total from 279-9 after the first day to 383. Green finished 174 not out. Then New Zealand lost three wickets at 12 and two at 29, was 29-5 before Glenn Phillips’ half century from 41 balls slowed its steady downhill slide. New Zealand eventually was all out for 179 in 43.1 overs, a deficit of 204. Phillips made 71 and Matt Henry 42. “Obviously the way Cam Green played with Hazlewood, they put on a massive partnership and that wasn’t exactly ideal for us wanting to wrap up the tail,” Phillips said. “At the end that’s what test cricket is about.” New Zealand always will be able to look back and pinpoint where this match began to get away from it. It started on the second day when Australia was 89-4 and Mitch Marsh made a fast 40 in a 67-run fifth-wicket partnership which seemed to energize Cameron Green. Green went on to reach his century in the last over of the first day and was able to form an heroic last-wicket partnership with Hazlewood which frustrated New Zealand for all of the first session and an additional 20 minutes



before Hazlewood fell for 22. This test match is the first in eight years between New Zealand and Australia in New Zealand, has been much anticipated and this match at the Basin Reserve is sold out on all five days. Watching Australia go from 267-9 on day one when the match was about even to 383 when Australia was totally in charge left fans dispirited. Tom Latham fell for 5 when New Zealand was 12, changing his decision to leave a ball from Mitchell Starc too late and directing the ball back onto his stumps. Then disaster. Williamson played a ball from Starc back past the bowler. Will Young at the non-striker’s end turned to watch the ball, then looked up to see Williamson had set off for a run. Young turned to see the ball heading straight to mid off and looked again to see Williamson bearing down on him on a collision course. As Young swerved to his left, Williamson dodged to his right and the pair collided in mid-pitch as Starc tried to take evasive action. Williamson was stranded as Marnus Labuschagne’s throw hit the stumps directly at the non-

striker’s end. Williamson walked off without looking back. New Zealand had lost two wickets in two balls and that became three in five when Rachin Ravindra drove too freely too early in his innings and sliced the ball directly to Nathan Lyon at point. Wicketkeeper Alex Carey caught Daryl Mitchell (11) off Cummins from the last ball of the 17th over and Young (9) from Mitch March off the first ball of the 18th as New Zealand slumped to 29-5. Phillips and Tom Blundell provided New Zealand’s first real period of competitiveness in all of the second day in a partnership of 84 for the sixth wicket. Both played aggressively and runs came quickly. Phillips reached his third test half century, his second against Australia and his first in New Zealand. But Blundell fell next ball, caught by Travis Head at short leg off Nathan Lyon and the innings sputtered again. Phillips was out for 71 off 70 balls and Henry took his 42 runs from 34 balls with four sixes as New Zealand briefly looked like avoiding the follow-on. But he holed to Labuschagne off Nathan Lyon with New Zealand still four runs short.

Chaari 111: Fairly good comedy drama

PNS | HYDERABAD

PLOT

PERFORMANCES

ANALYSIS

CONCLUSION

REVIEW

PERFORMANCE

TECHNICALITIES

VERDICT

Cast: Vennela Kishore, Murali Sharma, and Samyuktha Viswanathan
Director: TG Keerthi Kumar
Producer: Aditi Soni
Music: Simon K. King
Cinematography: Richard Kevin A
Editing: Kashish Grover
Rating: 2.5/5



MALLI PUTTI VACHINAVA FROM RECORD BREAK IS OUT NOW

Record Break is a movie that every Indian should watch, directed by Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao and produced by Chadalavada Padmavati under the banner of Sri Tirumala Tirupati Venkateswara Films. Recently, the glimpses, teaser, and trailer of this movie were released. The trailer raised expectations for the film. Now the second song from the movie has also been released. Sabu Varghese has provided the music for this song, which is the *Malli Putti Vachinava* song, and Varikuppala Yadagiri is the writer and singer of this song, which is a big asset of the movie. Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao is very ambitious and is going to bring this movie to us in eight languages as a Pan-India movie. The censorship work for this movie is going on, and it will be brought to the audience very soon. On this occasion, Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao said, "We have released the second song from our film *Record Break*, the song *Malli Putti Vachinava*. I am very happy that the teaser trailer that has been released so far has received a good response. During the filming of this movie, our artists and technicians gave a lot of support in all weather conditions. We are going to plan a grand pre-release event and announce the release date very soon."



TAMANNAAH BHATIA IN ODELA 2

Odelas Railway Station, starring Hebbah Patel, a crime thriller, scored huge success in 2022. Directed by Ashok Teja, the movie has set everyone rolling during that time. Now, it is official that the team is working on its sequel, titled *Odelas 2*. They brought on board the sensational actress Tamannaah Bhatia to play the lead role in this second part. Tamannaah gained national recognition for her recent successful over-the-top (OTT) appearances. Therefore, the film's producers intend to release it in a number of languages. Produced by D. Madhu under the names Madhu Creations and Sampath Nandi Teamworks, the film will be directed by Ashok Teja and written by Sampath Nandi. The film's opening took place in Kashi, where the regular shoot also commenced. *Odelas 2* delves far deeper and deeper into its origins. The village, its rich history, customs, and culture are the main focus of the sequel, along with how Odelas Mallanna Swamy, the village's real saviour, constantly defends it from hostile forces. The title poster, released yesterday, appears mystical. It displays Lord Shiva's Trishula, which is also revered as Mallanna Swamy. Hebbah Patel and Vasishta N. Simha are the prominent cast. The VFX is said to be top-notch in the movie, while *Odelas 2* will have well-known technicians taking care of different crafts. Soundar Rajan S. cranks the camera, while Ajaneesh Loknath of Kantara fame will provide the music. Rajeev Nair is the art director.



Ravi Basrur is onboard for Marco

Music director Ravi Basrur, who is known for his music in *Ugraam*, the *KGF* franchise, and *Salaar*, to name a few, has officially gotten onboard for Unni Mukundan's *Marco*. The makers on Friday announced the latest update on their social media. *Marco* will be directed by Haneef Adeni, who also helmed *Mikhael*. The upcoming film is being produced by Shareef Muhammed Abdul Gadhaf under the banner of Cubes Entertainments. The makers have yet to reveal the details of the rest of the cast and technical crew members. Unni Mukundan, in the meantime, is working on a number of movies, including the Tamil movie *Garudan*, *Get-Set Baby*, and the April 11 release of *Jai Ganesh*.



Mohan Krishna Indraganti and Shivalenka Krishna Prasad reunite for Priyadarshi's next

Producer Sivalenka Krishna Prasad is coming up with some unique films like the Samantha Ruth Prabhu-starrer *Yashoda* and the biopic on legendary cricketer Muttiah Muralitharan *800*, among others. All his recent ventures performed well at the box office, and now the producer is collaborating with director Mohan Krishna Indraganti on a new film. The duo has previously joined hands for films like *Gentleman* and *Sammohanam*. They are now producing Priyadarshi's next film. The actor, who is riding high on the success of *Balagam*, is thrilled about this collaboration. The pre-production work for the film is underway, and the shooting of this movie will commence at the end of March.



Shruti Haasan will be the lead singer for AR Rahman's music in Kaadhalikka Neramillai

Actors Jayam Ravi and Nithya Menen are set to collaborate for the first time on screen in the next Tamil movie, *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*. Even though the news was made some time ago, the film's creators just disclosed a significant advancement in the undertaking. Kruthiga Udhayanidhi, the director of *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*, recently informed that actor-musician Shruti Haasan will be singing the song's opening verse. AR Rahman composed the film's soundtrack. Presently, Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi is directing her next film, *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*. Jayam Ravi and Nithya Menen play the main parts in the movie. Kiruthiga shared a picture from the recording studio on her old Twitter account, X, on Thursday. She said, "It was so fun and an absolute delight to record my 1st song of #KadhalikkaNeramillai with @arrahman @shrutihaasan @KavingarSnekan." Shruti Haasan will perform the lead song, while Snehan will write the lyrics. The song's composer is AR Rahman. However, the release date of the song was not announced.

