

Lok Sabha adjourns amid opposition uproar over NEET

Chennai, June 28 2024: The proceedings of the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day on Friday following opposition demands for a discussion on alleged irregularities in the conduct of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET).

When the House reconvened at 12 noon, opposition members persisted with their demands for a discussion on NEET-related issues. Speaker O m Birla and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju advised opposition members that they could address the matter during the Motion of Thanks on the President's address.



Despite Rijiju's assurances, the opposition continued their sloganeering. Birla reminded the members that they were elected to discuss issues, not disrupt proceedings. "There is a difference between protest on the road and protest inside the House... You want House to run? You don't want to discuss NEET during the Motion of Thanks discussion?" Birla asked.

Lok Sabha member. Earlier in the morning session, opposition members had demanded the acceptance of an adjournment motion to suspend all business and discuss NEET-related matters.

The Speaker, however, insisted on first addressing the obituary references to 13 former members, including ex-Lok Sabha speaker and ex-Maharashtra chief minister Manohar Joshi.

Following the obituary references, opposition members reiterated their demands. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi emphasized the national importance of the NEET issue and called for a dedicated discussion in the House. He urged the acceptance of the adjournment motion.

Speaker Birla, however, declined, stating that the House was scheduled to discuss the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. "You can raise all matters in the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. You will get enough time. But I can't allow you to raise any other issue during the debate on the Motion of Thanks. It was already decided and mentioned in the bulletin too," Birla said.

Amrit Bharat Station Update: Redevelopment works at Villupuram station is in full swing

Chennai, June 28 2024: Villupuram holds significant strategic importance in terms of its rail connectivity. Its location in the northern part of Tamil Nadu makes it a gateway to the southern regions of the state. It connects multiple important rail routes, including the Chennai-Viluppuram-Tiruchirappalli line and the Villupuram-Tiruvanna malai-Katpadi line. This makes it a crucial transit point for trains traveling between various parts of Tamil Nadu and beyond.

ABSS A. Scope of the work Villupuram Railway Station serves more than 5.4 million passengers annually. An allocation of about Rs. 23.29 crore has been earmarked for the station redevelopment under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme including the construction of FOB. These enhancements encompass the following passenger-centric facilities

- A new Arrival Terminal will be constructed with an AC waiting hall, a space for arriving passengers/tourists to rest and relax during their short stay at the station.
- Additionally, new toilet blocks will be constructed, while existing ones will undergo renovation, ensuring clean and hygienic facilities for all passengers.
- 6.00 m wide Foot Over Bridge will be constructed, providing a seamless passage for travelers to access different parts of the station.
- Efforts to improve road connectivity and parking facilities will be taken up.
- The front side road will be upgraded, providing easy access for vehicles, and pedestrian walkways will be developed for the convenience of commuters.
- Passenger platforms will receive significant attention, with the addition of benches, water taps, and shelters, ensuring a comfortable and pleasant experience for travelers.
- Construction of a septic tank, Storm water drains,

Additional submersible pumps to maximize water availability from bore wells and open wells, catering to the growing needs of the station and its passengers.

A 'Feel Good' approach will be adopted to elevate the overall ambiance of Villupuram station. The existing terminal building will undergo renovation, and a new porch will be constructed, adding an element of grandeur to the station's facade.

The introduction of a parcel office building and provision of trolley paths will streamline logistical operations, enhancing the station's efficiency.

To promote inclusivity for differently-abled, platforms will be equipped with 2.10-meter-wide edge strips with tactile coping slabs, facilitating safe and convenient boarding, and alighting for Divyangjan passengers.

Solar power panels, LED lights, Furthermore, low-height masts with LED lights will be installed, promoting energy-savings

B. Status of ABSS works:



- The following works are in progress at Villupuram station:
- Construction of new Arrival building
 - Construction of new enhanced portico to Departure building.
 - Construction of AC waiting hall
 - Upgradation of PF 01 surface
 - Redevelopment of parking area
 - Construction of Entrance Arch
 - Construction of GRP building
 - Construction of parcel office
 - Improvement to waiting halls
 - Construction of 6.00 m wide FOB
 - Improvements to landscaping
 - Improvements to approach road with pedestrians pathway
 - Construction of additional Platform shelters
- Overall, 50% of redevelopment work has been completed and the station redevelopment works which are targeted for completion by the end of August 2024 as planned.
- The redevelopment of Villupuram station under the Amrit Bharat Scheme aligns with the broader goal of developing stations as 'City Centers,' contributing to the integration of both sides of the city. The redesign and modernization of station buildings, along with well-designed passenger amenities and inter-modal integration, will enhance the overall travel experience for the traveling public.

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TN Assembly unanimously passes Stalin's resolution on NEET exemption

Chennai, June 28 2024: In a significant development, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the central government to immediately approve the NEET exemption bill, which advocates for admitting medical students based on their Class 12 marks rather than NEET scores.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, who introduced the resolution, highlighted Tamil Nadu's pioneering role in public health and medical education. He emphasized that the state's historic admission process based on school exam marks ensured equitable opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, enabling quality healthcare delivery across all regions.

Since the NEET exam's introduction in 2017, the CM argued, the system has disadvantaged rural and economically weaker students who lack access to costly coaching classes. He recalled the persistent political and legal opposition from Tamil Nadu, including large-scale protests and campaigns like "NEET Exemption Our Goal."

Stalin pointed out that the NEET exemption bill was initially passed unanimously on September 13, 2021, but faced delays due to the governor's failure to provide assent, resulting in the bill being sent back for reconsideration. Following an all-party meeting on February 5, 2022, the bill was reintroduced and passed again on February 8, 2022.

The resolution noted recent controversies surrounding the NEET exam, including allegations of mass cheating and the unfair awarding of grace marks, which were subsequently revoked, further eroding trust in the examination process.

Highlighting the unity among Tamil Nadu's political parties,

social thinkers, and citizens against NEET, Stalin stated that the demand for NEET's abolition is now resonating across various states. He referenced support from prominent leaders like West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, and Tejashwi Yadav.

The CM concluded by urging the assembly to pass the resolution.

Resolution: "The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) must be abolished as it severely impacts the medical education opportunities of rural and economically disadvantaged students and undermines the importance of school education. This assembly urges the central government to immediately approve the NEET exemption

bill passed unanimously by this legislative assembly, allowing medical admissions based on Class 12 marks. Furthermore, in light of mounting opposition from various states, the central government should amend the National Medical Commission Act to eliminate the NEET requirement nationwide."

The resolution saw wide support from members across parties, including Vellmurugan, Easwaran, Jawahirullah, Sadhan Thirumalaikumar, T. Ramachandran, Nagaimali, Muhammad Sha Nawaz, Selvaperunthagai, and Balmanoj Pandian. However, BJP members, led by Nainar Nagendran, staged a walkout in opposition, insisting on the necessity of NEET.

India's favourite premium hatchback, Maruti Suzuki Swift drives past 3 million sales mark

New Delhi, June 28 2024: India's favourite premium hatchback, the Maruti Suzuki Swift, has achieved the extraordinary milestone of 3 million sales in India. A driver's delight for four generations, the iconic car has established its own glorious legacy and consistently delivered an unmatched driving experience and outstanding performance. Designed for the youthful and spirited, Swift has ignited a passionate community of like-minded 'Swifters' who share a love for driving. The launch of the Epic New Swift in May 2024 has created new benchmarks and propelled the revered Swift legacy to its 3 million sales milestone.

Commenting on the momentous occasion, Mr Partho Banerjee, Senior Executive



Officer, Marketing & Sales, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "The Swift has been more than just a car to the millions who have owned it – it has been a symbol of fun, freedom and exhilaration. With each new generation, the Swift has continued to raise the bar, offering cutting-edge technology, contemporary style, and that unmistakable 'Swift DNA' which continues to captivate customers. This accomplishment fills us with immense gratitude, and we are thankful to all Swift owners across the

country."

Inspired by the iconic Suzuki Hayabusa motorcycle, the Swift was ahead of its time when it was launched in 2005 with segment-first features such as climate control, airbags and anti-lock braking system (ABS). With its unparalleled driving experience, Swift continues to enjoy widespread popularity with its cult fan following and their love for driving. The brand has achieved over 6.5 million sales worldwide, with India being Swift's largest market.

Each new model of the Swift has continued to carry forward the core philosophy of the Swift brand, consistently pushing boundaries for the sporty premium hatchback. The Swift surpassed 1 million sales in 2013 within 8 years since its introduction, the 2 million sales mark was breached in 2018, and now the iconic sporty hatchback has driven past the 3 million sales mark.

In its fourth generation today, the Epic New Swift continues to build on its legacy, winning over customers with its sporty design, spirited yet efficient Z-Series engine and an array of standard safety features such as 6 airbags, Electronic Stability Program+ (ESP®), Hill Hold Assist and more.

Need for good leaders in politics, says Vijay

Chennai June 28 2024: Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam president Vijay emphasized the growing demand for capable leaders across various fields in Tamil Nadu during his keynote address at a "meet and greet" event held in Thiruvannamiyur on Friday.

Addressing the gathering, Vijay remarked, "Meeting you all brings a positive vibe, and I feel a certain chemistry at work here. In Tamil Nadu, there is an increasing demand for good leaders. I'm not just referring to politics. Regardless of the field, there is a

significant need for individuals with great personality and leadership qualities."

He continued, "Similarly, in the future, there will be a need for good leaders in politics as well. It is crucial for students to understand the difference between news and opinion

after choosing their political leaders."

Vijay's speech underscored the importance of strong leadership in various sectors, reflecting the aspirations of the people of Tamil Nadu for competent and inspiring figures to guide them.

BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS, CHENNAI BRANCH OFFICE ORGANIZED "ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR NEW BIS LICENSEES" IN CHENNAI TODAY

Chennai June 28 2024: Bureau of Indian Standards, the National Standards Body of India is a statutory body functioning under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India.

It operates various schemes like Product Certification (ISI mark), Management Systems Certification, Hall Marking of Gold



and Silver Jewellery/Artefacts and Laboratory Services for the benefit of the industry and in turn aiming at

consumer protection. BIS works together with the Licences for enhancing the quality landscape of our nation. For obtaining

BIS licence, the manufacturer must have requisite manufacturing infrastructure, appropriate process

controls, quality control and testing capabilities for the product as per relevant Indian Standard (IS). The product shall also conform to all requirements laid down in the IS. The Bureau grants the licence based on successful assessment of the manufacturing infrastructure, process controls, quality control and testing capabilities of the manufacturer through

a visit to its manufacturing premises. Conformity of the product to the relevant standard(s) is also established through third party testing in the manufacturing premises or a combination of both.

BIS, Chennai Branch Office organized an "Orientation Programme for New BIS Licensees"

scheduled at Chennai on 28 June 2024, to express our appreciation & dedication to maintain the highest standards in their products and services. It provided a platform for the licensees to familiarize with the resources, expertise, and network that BIS offers to support continuous improvement and innovation.

From BIS, Smt. G. Bhavani,

Scientist-E/Director & Head (Chennai Branch Office); Shri B J Gowtham, Scientist-D and Shri Sreejith Mohan, Scientist-D conducted the Orientation Programme. The Top Management Official along with the Quality Control Personnel attended the Programme from the Licensees side. Around 56 licensees attended the Programme.

Teacher-Training Program at CLRI- CHENNAI

Chennai June 28 2024: CSIR-Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai organized a 5-day

teacher-training program "Cultivating Scientific Temperament through Innovative Leather Technology and Sustainable Practices" from June 24-28, 2024 in association with Knowledge and Awareness Mapping Platform (KAMP) an alliance partner of the CSIR- National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research

(CSIR-NIScPR), with Industrial Partner M/S Nysa Communications Pvt. Ltd. (NCPL), Noida.

The program was inaugurated on 24th June, 2024 and participants were introduced to the extraction of collagen from hides/skins and importance of leather research activities and opportunities in CSIR-CLRI, which enlightened the teachers from different streams.

During the training period, various



lectures were organised on (1) Significance of leather and its impact on national growth in terms of revenue and employment generation, (2) Need of new footwear sizing system for India and its advantages, (3) Management of liquid and solid waste of the industries as well as domestic using circularity model, (4) Usages of leather-like materials derived from agricultural waste and (5) Healthcare research activities and products by the

Scientist of the Institute. Further, Demonstrations conducted on Leather processing, leather product making, pattern making for leather bag, and removal of hairs from leathers using the enzymes by the technical expert team of the CSIR-CLRI. More than, 250 teachers from top 25 CBSE and ICSE schools in and around Chennai, participated in this 9th Professional Development program.

Stovekraft introduces 'Electra' - the Ultimate Electric Pressure Cooker system under Pigeon Brand

Chennai June 28 2024: Stovekraft, India's leading kitchen appliances manufacturer, is thrilled to announce the launch of 'Electra', the revolutionary electric pressure-cooking system under its Pigeon brand. Designed to make your cooking experience more convenient, efficient, and safe, Electra is set to unlock culinary creativity and transform the kitchen in Indian households.



Officer of Stovekraft, adds, "Electra is more than a product; it is a paradigm shift in kitchen technology. By combining unprecedented convenience with versatile functionality, Electra is poised to redefine home cooking. We are confident that this innovation will inspire users to explore their culinary potential and create delightful homemade meals effortlessly."

The Electra-Electric Pressure Cooker System stands out with features that cater to consumer needs. It ensures consistency in cooking for perfect results every time. The 'No-Monitoring Needed Functionality' allows users to multitask, and the 'Auto-Off feature' enhances safety. Additionally, it operates without whistle noise, eliminating common disturbances of traditional pressure cookers. The 'Delay Function' allows users to schedule cooking ahead of time, ensuring food is ready when

desired without compromising freshness or flavour. The 'Keep Warm' mode maintains meals at the perfect serving temperature until ready to enjoy, adding extra convenience to the cooking process. These features make it a reliable and convenient kitchen appliance that saves time and energy while creating delicious and nutritious meals for the family.

Expressing his delight on the launch of Electra and sharing his vision for the future of cooking, Mr. Rajendra Gandhi, Managing

Director of Stovekraft, said, "With Electra, we are setting a new benchmark in kitchen innovation. This cutting-edge appliance is not just about convenience; it is about transforming the culinary landscape in Indian homes. Electra epitomizes our relentless pursuit of excellence and our commitment to empowering consumers with state-of-the-art technology that enhances their cooking experience."

Emphasizing on the transformative impact of Electra, Dr Nanda, Chief Marketing

Electra offers a versatile range of cooking modes, including pressure cooking, slow cooking, steaming, sautéing, and baking. This allows users to prepare a diverse array of dishes, from hearty stews to delicate desserts. The user-friendly smart touch interface enhances its appeal, enabling users to easily select cooking settings, adjust temperature and pressure levels, and monitor cooking progress in real time. Even novice cooks can achieve professional-level results with confidence and ease.

Jayant Chaudhary meets Ex-Servicemen and other aspiring Entrepreneurs undergoing training at NIESBUD

Chennai June 28 2024: Jayant Chaudhary, the Hon'ble Union Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India, visited the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) campus today and interacted with the various other trainees and trainers under multiple programs.



He also visited a unique exhibition which was organised featuring products crafted by jail inmates and other successful entrepreneurs who have successfully completed EDP training under NIESBUD. These products prepared by the jail inmates were displayed during the ESDP programmes organized by the Institute at Lucknow and Varanasi Jail. These exhibits showcase the transformative impact of skill development and entrepreneurial training on inmates, reflecting NIESBUD's commitment to promote entrepreneurship and skill development across various sectors and demographics.

The Minister also had the honour of meeting ex-servicemen currently undergoing the Entrepreneurship Development Programme at NIESBUD under the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR), Ministry of Defence. Sponsored by the DGR, this initiative is specifically tailored for retiring Armed Forces personnel, aiming to enhance their entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. The program is designed to ensure these veterans can generate a gainful livelihood post-retirement, whether

through wage employment or self-employment. The Minister commended their dedication and resilience, recognizing the significant contributions they will continue to make to society in their new entrepreneurial roles. More than 3000 ex-servicemen have undergone EDP training at NIESBUD.

A group of Master Trainers from 19 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana are also being trained at NIESBUD under the World Bank-funded SANKALP Scheme of the ministry. The focus is on their capacity building, and inducting them on incubation support, mentoring, and handholding. Shri Jayant Chaudhary also met these trainers, applauded their dedication and emphasized the importance of their roles in empowering people to take up entrepreneurship.

He further reviewed capacity building programme for Fair Price Shop (FPS) owners, designed in consultation with the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD), this program provides FPS owners with a basic understanding of entrepreneurship and further explains various aspects such as credit sources, product

marketing, digital marketing, ad global market trends.

In addition, the Hon'ble Minister of State revisited Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programmes in Fashion Designing and Beauty Therapy for underprivileged youth under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0 at the Livelihood Business Incubation centre on campus.

Under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), NIESBUD organizes the Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme targeting youth aged 18 to 29 years. The Hon'ble Minister met with both trainees and trainers involved in the program and motivated them to fully embrace the entrepreneurial mindset, explore the vast opportunities within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and consider entrepreneurship as a viable and fulfilling career option.

Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Skill Development, Government of India, said "Entrepreneurship is the cornerstone of a thriving economy and I acknowledge the work being done by

NIESBUD in this space. By fostering innovation, creating jobs, and driving sustainable growth, entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in shaping the future. Our mission is to provide them with the necessary tools, support, and mentorship to succeed. Together, we can build a more prosperous and inclusive society," said Shri Chaudhary.

The Hon'ble Minister was accompanied by Ms. Hena Usman, Joint Secretary, MSDE and Director General, NIESBUD, Shri Ravi Shankar, Joint Secretary, Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Maj Gen SBK Singh, DG Directorate General Resettlement (DGR), Shri Ravi Shankar, Joint Secretary, Department of Food and Public, Shri Radha Ramana, GM, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Shri Saransh Agrawal Chief of Staff, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). and Dr. Poonam Sinha, Director, NIESBUD.

All these initiatives collectively underscore NIESBUD's dedication to empowering individuals through skill development and entrepreneurship, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in India.

HP Announces Significant Upgrade to Post Sales Services for Smart Tank Printers Launches "Consider it done" campaign to highlight 24X7 customer support in 10 languages

Chennai, June 28 2024: HP India today announced a significant upgrade to its after-sales service offerings for HP Smart Tank printers, aiming to provide a seamless and uninterrupted experience for customers. As part of this initiative, HP has launched the "Consider it Done" campaign, emphasizing its commitment to 24/7 support in 10 languages for its Smart Tank printer range.

introduced 24-hour, 7-day support via WhatsApp in 10 languages, offering a convenient way to get help anytime. The supported languages include English, Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Malayalam, Assamese, Telugu, Odia, Marathi, and Kannada. For installation and repair needs, customers can also log cases through the HP website, streamlining the support process.

Sunish Raghavan, Senior Director - Printing Systems, HP India said, "At HP we understand Indian businesses and how they take pride in the trust that their customers have on them. Printer breakdowns can significantly disrupt operations, which is why we are committed to offer comprehensive support to minimize downtime. We have re-engineered our

customer service and support for our Smart tank range of printers to ensure we are accessible to our customers 24*7. "Consider it done" campaign is an attempt to connect with the "can do" attitude of these business owners and to give them the confidence that HP smart tank printers will never let them down.

To highlight the 24/7 customer support available with HP Smart Tank Printers, HP has introduced a multi-film campaign for its enterprise customers. The campaign features a business owner as protagonist, showcasing their pride in their work and the critical role HP printers play in their success. When a printer malfunctions, the business owner connects with HP's 24/7 customer support, allowing them to

continue their daily operations without interruption. By addressing printer downtime, HP aims to empower small business owners to focus on what they do best running their businesses and serving their customers. This dedication is encapsulated in the "Consider it done" tagline, emphasizing HP's commitment to reliable and prompt service, which echoes the sentiment and work ethic of business owners.

Conceptualized by Lowe Lintas and released in nine languages, the films, starring Aparshakti Khurana in the North and R.J. Balaji in the South, capture the pride business owners feel and highlight how HP's reliable service supports their enterprises.

Kallakurichi hooch tragedy: CB-CID seeks custody of 11 accused

Chennai June 28 2024: The CB-CID has filed a petition seeking custody of 11 out of the 21 individuals arrested in connection with the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi district. The petition was submitted to a local court on Friday and is expected to be heard on

Monday, July 1. The death toll from the tragedy rose to 64 after another victim succumbed at the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) in Puducherry on Thursday.

To date, 32 people

have died at the Government Kallakurichi Medical College and Hospital, 22 at the Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College and Hospital in Salem, four at the Government Villupuram Medical College and Hospital,

and six at JIPMER in Puducherry.

Currently, 36 people, including one woman, are undergoing treatment in various hospitals. Additionally, 129 individuals, including four women and a transperson, have been discharged.

KFC SURPRISES BGMI FANS WITH A 'WINNER WINNER CHICKEN LUNCH'

Chennai June 28 2024: It's 'Winner Winner Chicken Lunch' for all BATTLEGROUND MOBILE INDIA (BGMI) players this summer, as KFC India collaborates with KRAFTON India, makers of India's most-loved battle royale game for a crispy, crunchy, finger clickin' good partnership!

As a part of this limited time collaboration, KFC and BGMI have a crunchy surprise for chicken lovers and gamers. With the purchase of the KFC Zinger Box, fans have a chance to get their hands on exciting in-game BGMI rewards. The strategic partnership brings together two of Gen-Z's top passion points, food and gaming. It comes at a time when gaming is increasingly gaining popularity amongst young Indians, with the audience base expected to grow to 750 million users by 2025.

With the KFC Zinger Box, consumers can enjoy finger lickin' good crispy chicken, and exclusive in-game rewards. Available for INR. 299/- on dine in or takeaway, the box includes KFC favourites like the Classic Zinger Burger, and 2-piece Hot Wings, along with fries and a refreshing beverage.

The KFC Zinger Box comes with a



unique code, which can be unlocked on the BGMI website. The exclusive code gives fans a chance to collect exciting rewards such as parachutes, bags, hats, jackets, and more to enhance gameplay with friends. Speaking about the collaboration, Aparna Bhawal, Chief Marketing Officer, KFC India, said, "KFC is a brand with culture at its core. We're always exploring distinctive, cutting-edge and culturally relevant partnerships. The idea for a collaboration with BGMI was born when we introduced KFC's Lunch Specials recently. We thought gamers often celebrate a win with a 'Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner,' so why not give it a KFC twist, and do it over lunch? It's an epic partnership, and

we're confident that our Gen-Z consumers are going to find it finger-clickin' good!"

Seddharth Merrotra, Head of Business Development at KRAFTON India, added "As gaming continues to captivate a growing audience in India, our collaboration with KFC brings an exciting opportunity for BGMI players to enjoy their favorite game alongside a delicious KFC meal. This partnership not only enhances the gaming experience but also underscores our commitment to creating unique, immersive experiences for our players. With BGMI and KFC being standout brands in their respective fields, uniting them goes beyond a mere partnership; it's a memorable journey

where every bite and every gaming moment come together to redefine how fans indulge in their favorite pastimes."

To claim the exclusive in-game KFC rewards, consumers can scan the QR code which comes with the purchase of the KFC Zinger Box OR visit www.battlegroundsmobileindia.com/redeem. The KFC Zinger Box with BGMI rewards is available in restaurants across Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi and Pune till 30th August 2024 only.

So, what are you waiting for? Rush to the nearest KFC restaurant, or order online through the KFC app or website (www.online.kfc.in) while the offer lasts.

VARANASI CALLS FOR GLOBAL INNOVATORS TO ENHANCE CROWD FLOW MANAGEMENT AS PART OF \$9M SUSTAINABLE CITIES CHALLENGE

Chennai June 28 2024: As part of the Toyota Mobility Foundation's \$9m Sustainable Cities Challenge, Varanasi has launched a global call for innovators to find data-driven solutions to make the city safer for the millions of people who visit every year for pilgrimage. The Varanasi Challenge is looking for solutions that will allow the city to better manage the growing influx of annual visitors, while making the city more accessible for tourists and local residents, particularly older people and people with disabilities.

Located on the banks of the Ganges River in northern India, Varanasi is widely known as the "spiritual capital" of the nation. The old city of Kashi within Varanasi is one of India's most important pilgrimage sites, with millions of people visiting every year for religious and cultural reasons. The inflow of tourists, however, when coupled with the city's narrow, winding lanes and dense urban fabric, raises potential questions around safety and overcrowding. Previous reports have suggested that Varanasi attracted around 70 million visitors, which reiterates the need to enhance the city's safety and accessibility, especially as most tourists are middle-aged and elderly people.

As part of the Sustainable Cities Challenge, Varanasi is inviting innovators from around the world to develop innovative crowd management solutions that make it easier to accommodate its visitors and make the city safer and more accessible for both residents and visitors alike.

Leveraging technology, data analytics, urban design, behavioral psychology, and crowd science, can provide insights into crowd dynamics and flow, enabling better crowd management and reduced congestion.

In addition to a share of \$3 million of implementation grant funding, participants in the challenge will gain



exclusive insights into the workings of this historic city and a real-world understanding of user-centered design.

Shri. Akshat Verma IAS, Municipal Commissioner, Varanasi Municipal Corporation, said:

"We are very excited to be involved in the Sustainable Cities Challenge. Millions of people visit Varanasi every year for religious, spiritual and touristic activities alike. Our leadership is committed to make Kashi safer and more accessible for all. We look forward to working with emerging innovators from around the world and hope that this challenge will help us identify technologies and the solutions that will benefit citizens, pilgrims and tourists of Varanasi. Kashi, one of the oldest surviving cities in the world, has various opportunities for it to be at the forefront of innovation in participatory and holistic development."

Pras Ganesh, Executive Program Director, Toyota Mobility Foundation, said:

"We are truly looking forward to working with Varanasi on their City Challenge and seeing how innovators from around the world can deliver mobility solutions in this historic and holy city. As Toyota Mobility Foundation, we work under the three principles of innovation, partnership and leaving a sustainable legacy, and believe that this project has the potential to develop innovative but human centric crowd management solutions that can also be applied to other cities facing similar issues."

Kathy Nothstine, Director of Cities and Societies at Challenge Works, said:

"As an important site of pilgrimage, the population of Varanasi grows exponentially throughout the year as people come to visit. This presents challenges for the city. The Sustainable Cities Challenge is a global call for innovative solutions and means that visionaries from across the world can work to develop solutions to these challenges."

Pawan Mulukutla, Executive Director of Integrated Transport, Clean Air & Hydrogen, Sustainable Cities and Transport, WRI India said:

"In 2022, Varanasi's floating population was estimated to be 35 times of its local population. By strategic interventions and effective crowd management measures, the thriving heritage city of Varanasi can become a torchbearer of sustainable mobility for other tourist destinations globally. The Sustainable Cities Challenge fosters technology-driven innovative solutions aimed at transforming the public spaces and streets of the city. The Challenge seeks innovative mobility solutions that can be tested, adapted and scaled to suit local contexts, while advancing low-carbon mobility across geographies."

Mr Vikram Gulati, Country Head and Executive Vice President for Corporate Affairs and Governance, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said:

"Towards the realization of our mission of generating 'Mass happiness', we at Toyota are constantly working towards creating Mobility for All by adopting sustainable, practical, and innovative

solutions. The Varanasi Innovating Crowd Flow Challenge exemplifies this commitment that aspires to the creation of a city that is more accessible, safe, and inclusive in-line with the real local mobility needs. We are truly excited about this project, as it promises to scientifically and systematically streamline the unique mobility needs of the magnificent city of Varanasi."

Varanasi is one of three cities to host challenges, alongside Detroit, USA and Venice, Italy. Over 150 cities from 46 countries around the world entered the challenge after the call to cities was first launched in June 2023.

Applications for the Varanasi Challenge are open from today until the 5th of September. Up to ten semi-finalists will be selected in November 2024 and receive a grant of \$50,000 each. Companies will have the opportunity to directly engage with city leaders, end users, and beneficiaries to customize their solutions and demonstrate them on-ground in the city.

In May 2025, up to five finalists will be granted \$130,000 each to test their solutions in a larger area of the city over an extended period to assess their impact and further customize their solutions. In March 2026, up to three winners will be selected to share final implementation funding of \$1.5 million to further scale their solutions in the city.

The deadline for entries to the Varanasi Challenge is Thursday 5 September 2024. To find out more, visit the Sustainable Cities Challenge website.



SALEM, June 28 2024: Saint-Gobain flagged of a product display van in Tamil Nadu to create awareness among the dealers on SGG SunBan solar control glass for cooler homes and Saint-Gobain Toughened Glass focusing on superior strength and safety.