

Monday Mirchi

The writing is on the wall

When the writing is on the wall, even officials conditioned for long to be mum suddenly become vocal and throw their weight around, leaving the 'tough' administration in a tizzy. With the Telugu Desam Party winning three Graduates MLC seats and the lone MLAs quota MLC seat it had contested in the recent elections, the climate in Andhra Pradesh Secretariat has changed. Officers at all levels, from junior to senior, have become unusually vocal. The corridors of power, previously confined to whispers, are now echoing with clear and bold talk at high decibels, especially on matters concerning outstanding payments. Officers have begun to openly insist on timely payments, regardless of the damage potential to the cash-strapped government. Heralding the change, right on the day of the declaration of MLC elections' results, one of the officers bemoaned loudly that his newspaper bills had not been paid. Taking a cue from him, others are likely to steel themselves in the days ahead in line with the changed political atmosphere in Andhra Pradesh.

Centre to make the most of retired officers

The Government of India has changed rules with scope to engage seasoned bureaucrats from among those who have retired. As the demand for high-performing IAS officers is high in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), the cream of retired IAS officials may be engaged in the wing as consultants. The icing on the cake for these bureaucrats, who will continue to enjoy the glamour quotient of their work, is that there is no age limit for being hired as consultants. Furthermore, some of these retired bureaucrats, especially nousey parkers, could be appointed to probe disciplinary cases against serving officials. This top-up in career progression has enthused bureaucrats who no longer need to pin their hopes on always being in the good books of the state government. Not all bureaucrats in TS are getting the role they want. That apart, the applications for a few posts defined recently are also in big numbers. It would be interesting to see who all will make the moves first.

TSPSC reform may begin with heads rolling

With outraged students and the unemployed as well as enraged opposition parties demanding total overhaul of the Telangana State Public Service Commission following the leak of multiple examination papers, it appears that the mending process will begin with TSPSC Commissioner B Janardhan Reddy being asked to put in his papers. There is a bubbling anger among youth that nobody in TSPSC is being held responsible and accountable. A little bird told yours truly that oversight at the top level may cost Janardhan Reddy his post since he has been directly in the line of fire. The buzz is that heads may roll as part of the reforms. For, during the review meeting with the Chief Minister, K Chandrababai Rao reportedly opined that the situation could have been prevented had the chairman and secretary Anita Ramchandran been more careful

with staff and confidential matters. The buzz is that the changes are expected to be effective once the Special Investigation Team (SIT) submits its inquiry report on the leak of papers to the state government.

What information does Bandi have up his sleeves?

Does BJP TS unit chief Bandi Sanjay have vital information concerning the TSPSC paper leak up his sleeves? This question springs up when we consider the fact that Bandi Sanjay, while he was at a function in Siddipet, suddenly called for a media briefing around 10:00 pm. In less than seven minutes of that interaction, Sanjay made accusations that the Chief Minister's Office too is involved in the TSPSC paper leak. For the unversed, Bandi had claimed that a retired officer with a key role in CMO, who had previously leaked Singareni papers, was instrumental in the leak of TSPSC papers. While newshounds were wondering what information Bandi had and who had tipped him at that late hour, the BJP leader cryptically also said that when TSPSC Commission was setup, three people had decided the Commission's structure and "all of them are involved".

Cops and neighbourhood watch

It looks like cops too need to be wary of neighbourhood watch, though they know it to be an effective method of reducing crime! Otherwise, a cop's sincerity could be questioned based on his neighbours and who he moves with. TPCC chief Revanth Reddy has his own doubts over the objectivity of SIT Incharge for TSPSC leakage A R Srinivas. For, the police officer happens to be a neighbour of Minister KTRama Rao's relative. A R Srinivas and Raj Pakala (brother-in-law of KTR) live in the same locality at Raidurgam. Revanth told the media, ostensibly for private consumption, that A R Srinivas and Raj Pakala speak to each other during evening walks and at social events.

IPS officers detest politicised probes

The Telangana government's decision to constitute Special Investigation Teams (SITs) -- one to counter the central government's CBI in MLAs poaching case and the other on TSPSC paper leak issue - and the notices issued to TPCC president A Revanth Reddy and Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and others have embroiled the IPS officers concerned in avoidable controversies. They now feel torn between the tug of war between the BJP-led government at the Centre and the BRS government in the state for no fault of theirs. IPS officers are working under the BRS government, and they need to act according to the directions of the state government. But their service rules are governed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. So, they are unwittingly getting involved in a proxy war between BRS and BJP. Official circles are now worried that the Union government could use central investigation agencies like IT and ED against officials who do not toe the Union government's line. All they want is cordial relations between the state and the central governments.

-Yours truly

BJP loses its presence in AP Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The BJP has lost its presence in the AP Legislative Council with the defeat of Madhav in the recently held election. The BJP had two members in the Council. They were Somu Veeraj and Madhav. Veeraj's tenure expired while Madhav was defeated in the election. Now the BJP has no representation in the Legislative Council. The BJP with the alliance of the TDP won two seats previously.

Meanwhile, the strength of TDP has declined to 10 seats in the Council. At the same time, the ruling YSRCP's strength in the Council has gone up to 44 from 33.

The total strength of the Legislative Council is 58 of which the ruling YSRCP has 44 seats (Including the Governor quota nominated member). The TDP strength has fallen from 17 to 10. The PDF had five members previously but now the PDF's strength in the Council dwindled to three. Elections were held for 17 MLC seats recently of which the YSRCP has won 17 seats, the TDP has four seats.

4 MLAs fired after internal probe in YSRCP: Mithun

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Mithun Reddy said four party legislators were suspended after the internal party inquiry found evidence that they had violated the whip and cross-voted for a Telugu Desam Party (TDP) candidate in the Legislative Council polls. Mithun Reddy said whoever disagreed with YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, their defeat would be inevitable. The four legislators who were suspended from the YSRCP were Undavalli Sridevi from Tadikonda constituency, Mekapati Chandra Sekhar Reddy representing Udayagiri, Anam Ramanarayana Reddy from Venkatagiri constituency, and Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy representing Nellore Rural. "The Chief Minister had already warned that there were no seats for leaders who indulge in cross-voting. (The TDP chief) Chandrababu Naidu has no ethics. Everyone knows how the TDP leader bought party legislators and deceived TDP founder NT Rama Rao," Mithun Reddy told reporters.

The YSRCP MP dared TDP leader Lokesh to contest the Assembly election from Chittoor. He expressed confidence that the ruling party will sweep the elections by winning 175 seats in the upcoming Assembly elections.

YSRCP leaders lambast MLA Sridevi

VIJAYAWADA: Minister for Industries Gudivada Amarnath has sought to know how Tadikonda MLA Uundavalli Sridevi, who was in the party for the past four years, is now pointing out the flaws in the party. Addressing the media persons on Sunday, the Minister, in response to Uundavalli Sridevi's press meeting, dubbed her an 'Usaravelli' (chameleon) Sridevi and not Uundavalli Sridevi, and that she acted better than the movie actress Sridevi.

Uundavalli Sridevi along with Mekapati Chandra Sekhar Reddy, Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, and Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy was suspended from the YSRCP on Friday for violating the whip and cross-voting for the opposition TDP candidate in the legislative council polls of MLA quota.

The Minister further said that before voting in the MLC Elections, she took her daughter to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and posed for a photo with him. In the garb of being a follower she cheated the CM, and the Minister was fired. The less we talk about traitors like Sridevi, the better, the Minister said. Those who tried to cheat YS Jagan Mohan Reddy were left with no political career as evident in the past, he said. Bapatla MP Nandigam Suresh claimed that suspended Tadikonda MLA Undavalli Sridevi spoke as per Chandrababu's script and under his direction. The press meet was a pre-planned one, he said. It is the usual habit of Chandrababu Naidu to indulge in politics using Dalits. He asked whether Chandrababu had ever appointed any SCs to top positions. Those who cross the party line will be suspended. It was unfortunate that she spoke in such a manner in the press meet, the MP said. Unlike Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is providing opportunities for Dalits to grow politically and in all aspects, he stated. Those who cheat YS Jagan will have no political future, he prophesied. Taking to Twitter the Bapatla YSRCP MP scoffed at the Tadikonda MLA for alleging death threats by the YSRCP and conducting the press meet in Hyderabad. The Chief Minister does not have the habit of thinking of people like you who are sold to others, he tweeted.

Jagan pays price in MLC elections for his frankness

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

In politics, frankness and honesty do not work always. Survival in politics requires tactfulness too. The recent setback of the YSR Congress in MLC elections is nothing but a case of self-incrimination and nothing else.

Ahead of the Assembly elections, the ruling YSR Congress gave a breakthrough to the main opposition TDP with its overconfidence. The TDP won all three MLC seats from graduate constituencies. Generally, ruling parties

will not announce candidates in graduate MLC constituencies. During the YS Rajasekhar Reddy government, the ruling party used to remain neutral. But the YSR Congress unnecessarily announced its official candidates in the MLC graduate constituencies.

If the YSRC had not announced its candidates the TDP also would not have taken it seriously. In that case, the results would have been different. If the ruling party maintains silence the winning candidate may support the ruling party. But the YSR

Congress made a mistake by announcing its candidates. Overconfidence is the reason for this.

The main setback to the YSR Congress and YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is the victory of the TDP MLC candidate from the MLAs' quota. The TDP has only 19 MLAs but the required number of votes in 22. Two YSR Congress MLAs revolted and voted against YSRCP candidates. The TDP does not have the strength to make its candidate win. But surprisingly the TDP candidate got 23 votes against the required 22.

In addition to the two MLAs who revolted another two YSR Congress MLAs also voted for the TDP candidate. After that, the YSR Congress suspended four MLAs from the party. YSR Congress MLAs Undavalli Sridevi and Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy voted for the TDP candidate. Jagan Mohan Reddy is responsible for this. Jagan paid a heavy price in the MLC elections for his frankness.

Based on performance reports Jagan had already told Sridevi and Chandrasekhar Reddy that they will not be

given tickets in the next Assembly elections.

A day before the voting in the MLC elections from the MLAs quota both YSRC MLAs met Jagan. Then also Jagan told them frankly that they will not be given tickets in the next Assembly elections but promised that he would do justice to them.

If Jagan had tactfully dealt with them they both would have voted for the YSRC candidate.

The frankness of Jagan led to the defeat of the YSRC candidate and the victory of the TDP candidate.

Sridevi hits back at Jagan

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She also remarked that she will soon give a return gift to those who are alleging that she sold herself in the MLC elections.

The MLA alleged that she was sent out of the party for refusing to be a 'benami' for YSRCP's illegal acts and unauthorised mining. She said that after using her for four years, the party dumped her citing cross-voting in the MLC elections as an excuse. She also claimed that "YSRCP goons were threatening her".

Sridevi said, "There is a conspiracy to send me out of the State capital region." She also announced that she will stand by Amaravati farmers who have been fighting against the government's plans for the trifurcation of the State capital. Stating that she has no plans to join any other party, she said she would fight for solving the problems of the people of her constituency as an independent MLA.

TDP tried to lure me with Rs 10-cr offer, says Rapaka

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He also said that Undi MLA Mantena Ramaraju directly approached him and had first offered him money for cross-voting in the MLC elections and would also be given a 'good position'.

He stated that he refused the offer and would not indulge in cross-voting. He also said that his close friend KSN Raju, a YSRCP leader, was also approached by the TDP to further offer him money for cross-voting and that he had rejected the TDP's offer upfront and did not even bring the matter before him, Rapaka Varaprasad clarified.

A martyr's son can't be...

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"We have remained silent but not anymore," she said alleging that the prime minister and other BJP leaders have repeatedly insulted her family members but no cases were filed against them.

The BJP, however, slammed the Congress and asked if it was agitating against the country's Constitution or the law under which Rahul Gandhi was convicted or to justify his remarks against the entire backward community of the country.

With several other parties condemning the action against Rahul Gandhi, top Congress leaders Ashok Gehlot and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said the issue had brought the Opposition together and this unity would grow as days go by. Kharge, who led the "Sankalp Satyagraha" protest outside Delhi's Raj Ghat after the police refused permission to hold it at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial, asked why the BJP was feeling hurt if fugitives Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi were being criticised.

"They talk of OBC now, is Lalit Modi OBC, is Nirav Modi

OBC, is Mehul Choksi OBC, they ran away with people's money. If they are fugitives why are you pained if they are criticised."

"You (BJP) punish the person who works to save the country and send those abroad who loot the country," Kharge said. Staunchly defending the former Congress president, Priyanka Gandhi said no cases were registered when her brother was called Mir Jafar.

Asking if a martyred prime minister's son can insult the country, Priyanka Gandhi said, "This is an insult to that prime minister who gave his life."

She said her family gave its blood to the nation and the Congress is ready to do anything to protect democracy and is not scared.

"You have called a martyr's son anti-national, Mir Jafar, insulted his mother in Parliament. The prime minister in Parliament asks why this family does not use the 'Nehru' surname. "You insult the entire family and the tradition of Kashmiri Pandits. But there is no case against you. You don't get a case or a two-year term and no one disqual-

ifies you. Why?" she asked.

She hit out at the BJP over the allegation of dynastic politics. "How much will you insult one person?" Priyanka Gandhi said and asked if Lord Ram, who was sent into exile, was a "parivaarwadi".

"They accuse us of dynasticism. Who was Lord Ram? He was exiled and he fulfilled his responsibilities towards his family and motherland. Was Lord Ram 'parivaarwadi'? Were Pandavas 'parivaarwadi' because they fought to uphold the values of their family. Should we be ashamed that our family members sacrificed their lives for this country?" the Congress leader said.

Priyanka Gandhi said till today, they have been insulting "our family and we remained silent but not anymore".

"Time has come and we are not the ones who will remain silent anymore," she told the outside Rajghat. Targeting the prime minister, she said, Rahul Gandhi was being attacked for asking questions about industrialist Gautam Adani, who she alleged was being protected by the entire ruling establishment.

Nikhat wins her...

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"I am very happy that I have become a world champion for the second time, especially in an Olympic category," Nikhat, who won the 52kg title last year, said after her bout.

The first bout of the day between the two Asians was an exciting affair that went down to the wire.

"Today's bout was the toughest for me, she is an Asian champion and my next target is Asian Games and I might meet her, so I will work hard," Nikhat said.

"It was a roller coaster bout, she got warning, I got warning, she got count so did I. But I went all out."

Nikhat, who has moved down from her preferred 52kg, looked tentative at first as

Tam was the first one to attack. But after a few seconds, the home favourite leapt forward to attack. She then landed two right hooks, followed by straight jabs.

Tam was handed a penalty point for clinching further, tilting the result in Nikhat's favour as she took the first three minutes by an unanimous verdict.

But Tam made a strong comeback as she launched into attack mode. The southpaw landed several punches, forcing Nikhat to play with her head down that earned her a penalty point. The Vietnamese managed to take the round 3-2.

In the final three minutes, both boxers went for broke and attacked each other relentlessly.

New political party for BCs in 2 months

Candidates to contest in all 175 seats



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Phule Ambedkar Rajyadhikara Samiti (PARS) has called upon the Backward Class communities to work arduously to get Chief Minister posts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States, and announced the starting of the new political party in two months.

Speaking at a day-long conference of 100 BC castes hereon Sunday, PARS leader Tatti Arjun Rao announced that the new party would contest all 175 MLA seats in the coming elections in AP.

Arjun Rao said that BCs became CMs of Delhi, UP, Tamil Nadu, and other States but they never got a chance for the top post in Telugu States and this indicates the

injustice being done to BCs. He said that only Bahujan leaders can give comprehensive leadership. He deplored that even after 75 years of independence, the fruits have not reached the masses till today.

He stated that although reservations are being implemented for SCs and STs since 1950, radical changes did not take place in their lives. BCs remained just voting classes.

Another PARS leader Dr. Katikala Sivabhadra Rao deplored the existing Bahujan leaders supporting the upper castes. He said, "It is our responsibility to tell everyone how they will benefit by voting for our Bahujan leaders."

PARS AP State coordinator Nammi Appa Rao Yadav and other leaders spoke.

Only sycophants are...

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adding that that is why he was sidelined and finally suspended from the party.

An extra-constitutional force was appointed as constituency in-charge in his constituency. The CMO, Collector, and SP directed the officials not to cooperate with him. Finally, his security was also curtailed, Ramanarayana Reddy deplored.

"I felt regret for being with those who do not know the democratic values for four years. They have indicated

that they will do whatever they want to do," he slammed.

The government may not survive in the future if it continues to take the advice of such people. Ramanarayana Reddy dismissed the allegations that rebel MLAs sold themselves for money. "We have seen how the government advisors have amassed thousands of crores of rupees money," he said.

He should not think that all earn money like him," he said, ambiguously, pointing his finger toward Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy.

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‘Sankalpa Satyagraha’ held in support of Rahul

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Congress party on Sunday organised a ‘Sankalpa Satyagraha’, a protest programme taken up Statewide opposing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah’s policies.

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president and former MLC Gidugu Rudra Raju participated in the protest programme at the Mahatma Gandhi statue near Kaleswara Rao Market in Vijayawada.

Before the start of the ‘Sankalpa Satyagraha’, Gidugu Rudra Raju garlanded the statue of Mahatma Gandhi and paid great tributes. Later, along with the party leaders and supporters, Gidugu Rudra Raju sat on a day-long ‘Sankalpa Satyagraha’. Several leaders and cadre raised slogans against the Central government’s undemocratic policies.

Speaking on the occasion, Rudra Raju said that Rahul Gandhi’s two-year jail term for defamation was not acceptable. He said that though there have been other instances of BJP legislators being convicted, their membership in the respective legislatures was not terminated.

Further, he said though the court has given him 30 days’ time to Rahul Gandhi to appeal



in higher courts, the BJP has taken a decision swiftly in disqualifying him.

Rudra Raju also pointed out that at the behest of the BJP, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and other Central agencies had questioned the Gandhi family for unreasonably long hours. However, since they found nothing against the Gandhis, he said, the BJP resorted to disqualifying Rahul Gandhi to escape from the questions he was asking in Parliament, Raju alleged.

APCC Working President Janga Gowtham said that the dismal track record of the BJP since 2014, made them feel insecure. They are attempting

to silence anyone who is questioning them, he said. The whopping NPAs and the unsustainable public debt are a result of the BJP’s policies and crony capitalism, he commented.

CPI state secretary K Ramakrishna visited the ‘Sankalpa Satyagraha’ camp and extended his party’s solidarity. He said that the BJP was systematically destroying the democratic institutions in the country for the past nine years. He referred to the broken promises of the BJP including the promise of doubling farmers’ income by 2022 and mitigating the agrarian crisis but he said those were not fulfilled. He said that this is a historic juncture

in Indian democracy and only opposition unity can save India from descending into authoritarianism.

Congress Party Vijayawada City President N Narasimha Rao, PCC Legal Department Chairperson V Gurundham, RTI former Chairperson Tania Kumari, party leaders PY Kiran, Kaza Moinuddin, B Nageswara Rao, Meda Suresh, Meesala Rajeswara Rao, Baig, Imran, Khurshida and others attended.

The Sankalpa Satyagraha concluded after Naraharisetti Narasimha Rao offered lemon juice to Rudra Raju and all participants in the day-long protest.

Palm jaggery to be distributed to school girls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In addition to folic acid tablets, the district administration is planning to distribute palm jaggery in schools on an experimental basis to prevent anaemia in adolescent girls, said NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao.

He conducted a teleconference with all Education, Health, and Social Welfare officials from his camp office in Vijayawada on Sunday.

He hoped that distributing palm jaggery apart from folic acid tablets would control anaemia in girls more effectively. It would start from Kasturba Girls High School, model schools and social welfare hostels on an experimental basis, he said. If the initiative yields good results, then steps would be taken to expand it to all schools in the district with the support of voluntary organisations, he said.

Nara Lokesh promises to cleanse higher edu system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP general secretary, Nara Lokesh, said on Sunday that he is aware of the problems being faced by these institutions and promised to cleanse the whole higher education system after TDP is back into power.

Representatives of the private education institutions managements met Lokesh at Ramayyapeta campsite and submitted a memorandum to him on the problems they are facing. They specifically mentioned that since the education system in the State is completely in the doldrums.

Responding to them Lokesh said that TDP will certainly ensure that quality education is accessible to everyone, including those living in the remotest places in the State. Lokesh assured them that the fee reimbursement scheme will be revived.



Auto Union leaders met Lokesh at Aalapalli in the Puttaparthi Assembly segment and complained that they are being harassed by the officials who are taking advantage of e-challan.

At Pagadala Vari Palli, Lokesh interaction with the BC representatives and promised to enact legislation for their safety within 100

days of the party’s back in power. Pointing out that the TDP has already passed a resolution to include Boyas and Valmiki into STs, he said that the party will take all measures for their welfare.

Lokesh completed his pada yatra in the Puttaparthi Assembly constituency and entered the Penugonda segment on Sunday evening.

APNGOs Assn plans agitation against govt

Not a single issue of employees and teachers was resolved in four years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted Officers (APNGO) Association NTR district president A Vidhya Sagar has exhorted government employees and teachers to get ready to fight the government to resolve their problems. “For the past four years, the State government has not fulfilled any of their demands and is not even paying salaries properly,” he alleged.

The APNGOs Association West Krishna (NTR district) executive committee meeting was held at APNGOs Bhavan at Gandhi Nagar in Vijayawada on Sunday. Addressing the reporters later, Vidhyasagar said that decreasing fitment and house allowance had never happened before. The State government took a year to release G.O. for pay scale regarding wage revision. We are relieved that the State government released GPF and APGLI dues. The government should release surrender leave bills, which have been pending for the past two years, he demanded.

Further, he said government



Vidhyasagar said that decreasing fitment and house allowance had never happened before. The State government took a year to release G.O. for pay scale regarding wage revision

employees and teachers were awaiting three new DAs. “The government said it would release them during festivals, but never did so. Old DA dues have been pending for three years and the pay revision due issue remains unresolved, he said.

Meanwhile, he said that it was time for the new pay revision from July 2023, but unfortunately, the pending pay revisions were not resolved. As per the orders given by the Central government regarding DAs, the State government should release

the Interim Relief (IR) dues orders as early as possible, he said. In the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), the employees’ contribution was not credited to the CPS employees’ PAN accounts. Such a situation would not arise in other States, he commented. The APNGOs Association leaders have conducted discussions with the State government and the Chief Secretary several times, but the government is yet to respond, he said.

Vidhyasagar demanded aboli-

tion of CPS, regularisation of contract employees, and enhancement of the retirement age from 60 to 62 years for all university, government sector and Gurukulam employees. All these were assured by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in his election manifesto, he recalled.

Association district secretary Md Iqbal, leaders P Ramesh, B Satish Kumar, M Raja Babu, BV Ramana, R Srinivasa Rao, D Viswanadh and others were present.

Heavy rush of devotees at Durga temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the Vasantha Navarathri Mahotsavamulu, scores of devotees visited Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri on Sunday and offered special pujas to Durga Devi. In view of the big rush, the authorities have made special arrangements to avoid inconveniences to the devotees. On the fifth day of the Vasantha Navarathri Mahotsavamulu, Durga Devi was decorated with special flowers ‘Tella



Jilledu’, ‘Maredu’, ‘Tulasi’, ‘Maruvam’, and ‘Davalam’ at the Sri Lakshmi Ganapathi Swamy Vari temple near Chinna Rajagopuram and special pujas were performed. In the presence of

Durga Temple Executive Officer (EO) D Bramaramba, the Vedic committee members performed special pujas as per rituals. Also, the temple authori-

ties performed ‘Khadgama-larchana’, ‘Laksha Kumukmarchana’, ‘Chandihomam’, ‘Santhi Kalyanam’ and other Arjitha sevas to Durga Devi.

Trust Board meeting today

The Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam Trust Board meeting will be held at the Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam on Monday. Trust Board chairman Karnati Rambabu will chair the meeting where several issues will be discussed.

Malladi: CM working for women’s empowerment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is working for women’s empowerment, so Rs 19,178 crore has been offered to 79 lakh women through YSR Aasara, said State Planning Board Vice-Chairman and Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu. The MLA participated in the YSR Aasara Utsav held at Gunadala in Vijayawada on Sunday, thanked the Chief Minister and said that Aasara Utsavam has brought a festive atmosphere across the State.

On the occasion, Vishnu recalled that earlier Chandrababu Naidu did not fulfil the poll promises and cheated the public. Still, the Jagan government stood by its words and CM Jagan fulfilled 98.5 percent of the poll promises in three-and-a-half years. He said that in a three-and-a-half years period, Rs 312 crore was spent on women’s welfare in Vijayawada Central Constituency.



Malladi Vishnu said that the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy had brought recognition to Self Help Groups/DWCRA women across the country, but the previous Telugu Desam Party government cheated them and cancelled the zero interest scheme. He alleged that because of Chandrababu Naidu’s negligence, all the thrift groups in any grade have fallen to C grade. He said that after CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy took charge as the Chief Minister, the zero interest scheme was restarted and

DWCRA women were pulled out of the debt mire. With this, the self-confidence of the members of the SHGs increased, he added.

Vishnu said that according to the promise given at the time of previous elections, all loans till May 11, 2019 would be waived unconditionally. He further said that in three installments across the State, Rs 19,178 crore was given to 79 lakh women and revealed that Rs 90,05,60,293 crore was deposited in 3,518 groups in the Central segment.

AP STATE OPEN TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP

Visakha’s Parinithi wins U-12, U-14 titles

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Parinithi Kutti, hailing from Visakhapatnam, won under-12 and under-14 girls’ titles, while Y Krish of Visakhapatnam bagged the under-12 boys’ championship in the AP State Open Tennis Championship held at the Star Tennis Academy at Nidamanuru near Vijayawada on Sunday.

The one-day open tennis championship was organised by the Star Tennis Academy and the Global Sports Foundation. The first such event, the open tennis championship evoked a good response from the players as 60 budding tennis players participated in it.

In the girls’ under-14 category, Parinithi Kutti (Visakhapatnam) defeated Ishitha Patnaik (Visakhapatnam) 6-1 and won the title. Parinithi beat K Harika (Vijayawada) 6-0 to win the under-12 championship, too. Meanwhile, in the under-16 category, Rupa Devi

(Vijayawada) defeated Ishitha Patnaik (Visakhapatnam) 6-3 and bagged the championship.

In the boys’ under-12 category, Y Krish (Visakhapatnam) beat O Akhil (Vijayawada) 6-3. However, in the under-14 category, O Akhil (Vijayawada) defeated Zecshan Khan (Vijayawada) 6-1 and won the title. In the under-16 category, Chaitanya T Venkata Krishna (Vijayawada) beat Hansi Agarwal (Vijayawada) 6-3 to win the championship.

Later, Nidamanuru Sarpanch and senior advocate Seelam Ranga Rao presented trophies and cash prizes to the winners and the runners-up. Speaking on the occasion, Ranga Rao said that sports and games had an important place in student life. The winners would get weightage in the higher education courses and even jobs. Sports and games are part of education. The players should work hard to scale new heights, Ranga Rao said.

National Art Exhibition opens

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) Chief Executive Officer, MD Imtiaz inaugurated the 10th All India Children and Youth Art Exhibition and distributed the prizes to the winners. The event was jointly organised by Dream Young and Children’s Arts Academy and Ananth Diamonds.

On the occasion, he said that artists explore their creative skills in many aspects of society through the art of painting in building a healthy society. He congratulated the winners and their paintings and congratulated the sand artist Venugopal for his art with a slogan of environmental protection. He suggested that young and budding artists sensitise the people through the art of painting. He handed over an eco-friendly bag to the founder of Anantha diamonds Anantha Padma Shekhar and appreciated them for encouraging the hidden talent of the children and youth through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds.

One of the Organisers, Chairman of Anantha



SERT CEO Imtiaz that artists explore their creative skills in many aspects of society through the art of painting in building a healthy society.

Diamonds Jasti Bhanu Prakash said that they organised national-level painting competitions to help to bring out the creative dreams of students on March 8 to mark International Women’s Day. 2,500 winners are awarded prizes and ten thousand participants are given certificates of appreciation for their participation.

Former Minister Vadde Sobhanadriswara Rao, and P Ramesh, founder of Dream Young and Children’s Academy also spoke on the occasion.

Former Principal Commissioner of Income-tax K Ajay Kumar, Chairman of APSCHE Prof K Hemachandra Reddy, Director of AP State Public examination D Devanand Reddy, Assistant Commissioner for GST G Rajeswar, OSD to Chief Whip Dr. M PRabhakar, Chairman AVOPA, AP Mahila Vibhag, Aravetti Nirmala and Chairman of Anantha diamonds Social Service wing Chairman Jasthi Vishnu Priya were present.

CPI, Rythu Sangham leaders to assess crop loss

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The leaders of the CPI and the AP Rythu Sangham will jointly visit the areas in the State, where farmers suffered crop losses, on March 29. The Communist Party of India (CPI) State council has passed a unanimous resolution in this regard.

Due to untimely rains, crops in around three lakh acres have been damaged across the State. However, the State government is not bothered about the crop loss, the

CPI council opined.

The CPI State council meeting was held for two days at the Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada. The meeting discussed various issues including crop loss and height of the Polavaram Project. State secretary K Ramakrishna disclosed the council resolutions to the media persons at the Dasari Bhavan on Sunday.

He pointed out that the State government had not announced any compensation for the crop loss. Even enumeration has not been conducted

yet, he alleged. So, the CPI and the AP Rythu Sangham have decided to visit the areas and conduct a study to prepare a report to be presented to the government, he said.

He demanded that the State government form teams for conducting enumeration of the crop loss. Even after several days, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has not responded to the crop loss, he said.

The former MLA said the CPI would organise mass protests at all district collec-



torates opposing the reduction of the height of the Polavaram project on Monday and Tuesday. He demanded that the State and the Central governments should complete the project as per the original plan. It should be of 150 feet height to store 194 TMC of water. The CPI will organise round-table meetings opposing the reduction of height of the Polavaram project in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday and in Anantapur on Wednesday, he added.

“If the government reduces

the project height from 150 feet to 130 feet, it will not give the desired results,” he said. He made it clear that if the Polavaram project was completed, Krishna Delta and Rayalaseema regions would get sufficient water.

Meanwhile, he said that the CPI national council gave a call to organise programmes opposing Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s undemocratic policies and Adani’s financial irregularities. These programmes will start on Dr BR Ambedkar’s birth anniversary

i.e. April 14, and end on April 15, he added.

CPI State secretary Ramakrishna asked TDP chief and former Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu why he did not respond to the disqualification of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi. Prime Minister Modi is destroying democracy and the silence of Chandrababu is not acceptable, he said.

CPI State assistant secretary M Nageswara Rao, State secretariat members J Wilson, and KVV Prasad were present.



Funds crunch slows down Veligonda project works

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Leaders of various farmers' unions expressed anger over a meagre allocation of Rs 101 crore for the construction works of the Veligonda project in the 2023-24 budget.

The Veligonda major irrigation project, if completed, will provide irrigation water to 4.47 lakh acres in Prakasam, Nellore, and Kadapa districts and drinking water to 15 lakh people in 30 mandals.

The main aim of constructing the project is to provide drinking water to the fluoride-hit areas.

Minister for Municipal Administration Audimulapu Suresh and TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy, who inspected the Veligonda project works recently, announced that the project works would be completed by October 2023. The works cannot be completed with Rs 101 crore allocation, the leaders of the farmers' union said.

Former MLA Kandula Narayana Reddy is taking out a padayatra demanding the government allocate sufficient funds for the completion of the Veligonda project at the earliest. Since no employment is available in the Markapuram



region, a large number of people have migrated to areas seeking livelihood.

The Veligonda project works began about 20 years ago and they are still going on in a tardy manner. The government promised to complete the first tunnel work by August 2023, the second by December 2023, and provide water. But the government is yet to settle the R&R package for the evacuees. The evacuees are expressing concern as there is no clarity on the disbursement of compensation to their lands.

Communist leader Poola

two tunnels are to be dug up to draw the Krishna River water at the Nallamala Sagar area, and the 11 villages submergence villages are to be shifted after implementing the R&R package to the evacuees.

The government has not clarified when the R&R package would be settled. The government has only assured of providing water through tunnels without giving assurance to settle the disbursement of compensations to the evacuees.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, before the 2019 elections assured of completing the project in one year if the YSRCP was voted to power, and he visited the project on February 20, 2020. Later, he promised to complete the project by August 2022. Engineers said that 3 km of digging work is to be completed for the second tunnel. So far only two villages have been shifted from the submergence areas.

In order to complete the Veligonda project, the issues of evacuees should be resolved and the digging works of a second tunnel to be expedited. An amount of Rs 3,500 crore is required to complete the project but the government has allocated Rs 101 crore in the 2023-24 budget for the project.

Subbaiah had striven hard for the Veligonda project. The then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation stone on March 5, 1996, for the Veligonda project at an estimated cost of Rs 980 crore at Gotipadiya near Markapuram.

However, the then Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy laid the foundation stone again for the project at an estimated cost of Rs 5,500 crore in 2004 at Sunkesula. Later the estimated cost of the project escalated to Rs 8,500 crore. Under the project's works, 18.8 KM long

MLA Anna alleges protocol breach by TTD officials, to complain to CM

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Giddalur MLA Anna Rambabu alleged that the protocol is not being followed by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) officials and he would take the issue to the notice of the Chief Minister.

The MLA talking to the media after having darshan of lord Venkateswara at the hill shrine Tirumala, said that the EO Dharma Reddy and his officers were misusing the protocol process. They were work-



ing as they liked without following the protocol. Their unilateral acts would discredit the reputation of TTD, he slammed.

Under the pretext of providing more facilities to the devotees, the officials are not following the protocol, the MLA alleged. "I welcome providing more facilities to the devotees. But at the same time, the officials should follow the rules and guidelines of the temple. All programmes should be organised transparently in Tirumala," he stated.

The EO is showing partiality in following the protocol. The EO is giving importance to his own people and not giving the same to others. The

MLA regretted that the CMO issued a letter, recommending arranging special darshan, but the TTD officials arranged darshan in the general category.

MLA Rambabu said that in front of him and in his presence, the vehicles which were in the protocol were stopped and searched, adding that it amounted to humiliating MLAs. MLA Rambabu said that he would take to the notice of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy the EO's unilateral attitude.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD TO 'DARSAKENDRA'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Rotary Club of Vijayawada presented the Lifetime Achievement Award to film director D Raghavendra Rao at a function held at Vedika function hall near Benz Circle in Vijayawada, on Sunday. The Rotary Club representatives felicitated him.

Speaking on the occasion, Raghavendra Rao said that Vijayawada was the centre of arts and culture and receiving



the Lifetime Achievement Award there was a matter of pride. He praised the services of the Rotary Club, which was a role model for others.

He expressed happiness over winning the award. "I was born at the birthplace of legendary actor and former Chief Minister Dr NTR. I will never forget Vijayawada as it is the native place of NTR," he said.

On young directors, he said that scores of good movies were coming from the new directors in Tollywood. They can ask for technical information regarding cinemas. He was not directing any film at the moment, he said.



Three held for killing tiger; skin, nails recovered

PNS ■ ADILABAD

The Forest Department task force officials arrested three persons for killing a tiger in the Mancherial district. The three were charged with laying a live electric wire trap and killed the tiger, according to Forest Department officials Siva Aswath Singh here on Sunday.

The officials, during the investigation, identified that Bala Chander, Anji and Lakshmaiah, who hailed from Rangampet village in Bellampalli mandal were trying to sell tiger skin and nails. The forest personnel conducted a search and seizure operation and caught red-handed Balachander and recovered tiger nails from him.

On questioning, he admitted to killing the tiger and spilling the beans. The Forest department officials recovered tiger skin and nails from the arrest. The officials exhumed tiger bones and sent them to the forensic laboratory for post-mortem.

A case was registered against the threesome and an investigation is on.



RSS chief Mohan Bhagavat visits Sangameswar shrine

PNS ■ NANDYALA

RSS chief Mohan Bhagavat visited the famous Sangameswar shrine on Sunday and offered prayers.

Mohan Bhavat participated in a special 'pooja' at the Saptanadi Sangameswaram shrine. He visited the neem

linga said to be installed by Dharmaraju at the shrine. The main priest of the temple Telakapalli Raghuram Sharma explained to Mohan Bhagavat the significance of the shrine. The police made elaborate security checks on the RSS chief who is in the Z category security.

Ramoji creating rift between AP, TS: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy has alleged that Eenadu Group chairman Ramoji Rao is trying to create rifts between Andhra and Telangana. By creating differences between the Telugu states, Ramoji Rao and Chandrababu Naidu want to gain political mileage, he lashed out.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Kakani objected to Eenadu news items comparing the policies of Andhra and Telangana states. He dared Ramoji Rao to publish in his paper what Chandrababu Naidu had done for the welfare of farmers during his five-year tenure.

"The Jagan Mohan Reddy-headed government has not declared drought-hit mandals for three years since there is no drought in the state due to copious rains. Can Ramoji Rao publish the same in Eenadu," Kakani asked. During Naidu's tenure, AP suffered droughts and the then government declared drought-hit mandals, he claimed. He asked Ramoji Rao not to publish malicious and misleading news items.

The minister said that the then TDP government had passed a GO on December 4, 2015, to extend crop loss compensation to the affected farmers. The present government is also disbursing compensation based on the GO,



he made it clear.

"Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy pro-farmers and directed the officials to be liberal in extending crop loss compensations to the farmers," he said.

The Minister clarified that no injustice should be meted out to any farmer and indifference would not be tolerat-

"Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy pro-farmers and directed the officials to be liberal in extending crop loss compensations to the farmers"

ed. Along with the crop details registered in e-Crop, the details of the farmers who raised crops before the season (not registered in e-Crop) should also be collected and input subsidy should be given

to all according to those lists, he directed the officials. "We have suspended four rebel MLAs from the party after confirming the facts. They are now speaking as they like and criticising the party. They have won on the YSRCP ticket and now they are supporting another political party," he said and warned them that the people would teach them a lesson.

Kakani Govardhan Reddy reiterated that the four rebel MPs sold themselves in the MLC elections. He defended Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy for his comments that the four MLAs sold themselves and warned the four MLAs to restrain themselves from making baseless allegations.

INCREASE IN PEAK-HOUR POWER CHARGES

Jagadish terms Centre's decision 'economic disempowerment'

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Minister for Energy G Jagadish Reddy on Sunday hauled the BJP-led Centre for the decision to increase the peak-hour power charges by 20 per cent. He described the decision as nothing but "economic disempowerment."

"Peak demand hours are from 5 am to 10 am and again from 6 pm to 10 pm. We are not prepared to accept the recommendations of the Centre to increase the peak-hour power charges," he made it clear.

Speaking at a media conference here, the intention behind the move was to deprive the common people of access to electricity. The BRS government would not allow a "burden" to be

imposed on the poor, he asserted. The decision which was taken by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao in the case of true-up demonstrated beyond any doubt that the State government was determined to protect the interest of the common people. The Chief Minister ensured that Rs 12,000 true-up charges recommended by the Electricity Regulator Commission (ERC) did not lead to imposing a burden on the common people.

The BJP, at the height of the campaign in the 2014 elections, promised to increase the generation of power in the country. Now, the Narendra Modi government was conspiring to deprive the common people of electricity. The BJP-led Centre had prepared plans



The decision which was taken by Chief Minister in the case of true-up demonstrated beyond any doubt that the State overnment was determined to protect the interest of the common people

to withdraw subsidies being provided to the poor. The Centre was not releasing funds to the State because the BRS government rejected the Union government's orders to fix metres to every farm power connection. The Centre refused to release Rs 30,000 funds

because the State government made it clear to the Centre that it would not fix meters to agricultural power connections. The defeat of the BJP is certain, he added.

Grand welcome for AP Kabaddi Association general secretary

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Yelamanchil Srikanth, whose name was confirmed as general secretary of the Andhra Kabaddi Association after the final verdict of the Administrator of the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI), received a grand welcome at the Gannavaram Airport near Vijayawada on Sunday.

Andhra Kabaddi Association working president and international kabaddi player N Arjuna Rao, senior player from Postal Department T Sudhakar, and retired Railway Travelling Ticket Inspector K Rambabu welcomed Srikanth.



Two groups have been trying to get dominance in the Andhra Kabaddi Association for the past four years. Finally, the AKFI has given recognition to the group with G Venkata Reddy as president and Y Srikanth as general secretary.

Also, AKFI administrator SP Garg verified the verdict of the Delhi High Court after hearing the petitions filed by both the groups.

Later, SP Garg held discussions with the two groups in Delhi. He made it clear that as per the Delhi High Court verdict, the AKFI had given recognition to Venkata Reddy and Srikanth-led Andhra Kabaddi Association.

AP govt move on SC status for Dalit Christians hailed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The leaders of the Andhra Pradesh Federation of Telugu Churches (APFTC) have hailed Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for passing a resolution in the AP Legislative Assembly on March 24 to extend Scheduled Caste status to the members of the Scheduled Caste community who have converted to Christianity.

Speaking at a programme organised by APFTC on Sunday, Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Bishop TJ Raja Rao recalled that on February 27 the APFTC leaders met CM Jagan and requested to extend SC status to those who had converted to Christianity from SC. The CM responded positively then and on March 24, the resolution was passed.

Bishop Raja Rao said that even after 75 years of Independence, Dalit Christians were still lagging behind in economic and social status in society. He said that Dalit Buddhists and Dalit Sikhs were given SC sta-

tus, but Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims were denied SC status, which was atrocious.

Krishna-Godavari Diocese CSI Bishop Cornelius said that as per the 1950 Presidential order, Dalit Christians should be accorded SC status. He stated that for decades, SC Christians had been fighting for SC status, for which they even approached Apex Court. He said that CM Jagan sought approval of the House to request the Government of India to extend Scheduled Caste status to members of the Scheduled Caste community who had converted to Christianity.

Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Monsignor M Prasad said that since Independence, Christian organisations had been imparting education through their institutions and established hospitals extending healthcare. In view of this, the political parties should accord SC status to Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims.



Speaker Tammineni facing row over his graduation in Law



MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM ■ VIJAYAWADA

Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram is facing a law graduation controversy as the Opposition TDP is questioning how he completed law graduation without the needed qualification.

After becoming Speaker of the AP Legislative Assembly, Tammineni Sitaram did his three-year graduation in law at Mahatma Gandhi Law College, affiliated with Osmania University. Now his law graduation has become controversial.

Tammineni Sitaram disclosed that he stopped education without com-

pleting graduation. Now the TDP is questioning how he could obtain the law degree without completing graduation. The law graduation put the Speaker in controversy.

The five-year graduation in law can be pursued after completing the Intermediate. If graduation is completed, the three-year law graduation can be pursued. But Sitaram discontinued his graduation and he mentioned the same in his election affidavit.

TDP national spokesperson and former student union leader Nannuri Narsi Reddy disclosed Sitaram's obtaining graduation without the required qualification. He questioned how Tammineni Sitaram got admis-

sion to do law graduation without the required qualification. However, Tammineni Sitaram was not available to comment on the law graduation controversy.

The YSRCP leaders opined that Tammineni Sitaram should give a clarification on his law degree controversy. Significantly, the Osmania University officials are also embarrassed to state how Sitaram was allowed to complete three-year law graduation without the required qualification. If Sitaram joined to do a law degree based on Intermediate qualification, he should pursue a five-year law course. But he obtained a law degree in three years, sources added.

Dirty debate

Our leaders must shed some sanctimony and mawkishness to cleanse the political arena

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a defamation case, the ensuing disqualification from Lok Sabha as a Member of Parliament, and the attendant political row over it reveals—if any revelation was needed—a lot that is wrong and rotten in Indian politics. To begin with, there are the falling standards of political debate: A court in Surat found his rhetorical remark “why all thieves have Modi surname” defamatory. As we mentioned earlier, it was surely in bad taste. A senior leader not only condemned a large section of people just because they share their surname with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but also refused, and refuses, to show any remorse for making the unsavoury remark. An apology might have resulted in the withdrawal of the case or perhaps his exoneration. There is nothing wrong in apologising. After all, our political masters are also human, and it's human to err. They, however, refuse to act like the man on the street, who says sorry when he does anything wrong. Apparently, Rahul doesn't believe that he can err. So, the day he was disqualified from Lok Sabha, he said, “My name is not Savarkar, my name is Gandhi. Gandhis don't apologise to anyone.” It is interesting to note here the fact that he had quoted Gandhi immediately after his conviction—as if his deplorable remark is something any politician could be proud of. But then in politics, self-



righteousness has become an integral part of the belief systems that parties subscribe to and the communication strategies they adopt. On Sunday, the former Congress chief changed his Twitter bio, which now describes him as a 'Dis'Qualified MP.' Evidently, he is wearing the conviction and the disqualification as badges of honour.

The same day, the Congress started a day-long Sankalp Satyagraha at Rajghat in Delhi to show their solidarity with Rahul Gandhi. The entire grand old party is with him. Party luminaries like president Mallikarjun Kharge, general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and senior leaders KC Venugopal, P Chidambaram and Salman Khurshid were among those who participated in the satyagraha. While the GOP has not covered itself in glory, the Bharatiya Janata Party too has not reacted in a manner that can be termed as dignified. Vice-president of Gujarat BJP Gordhan Zadaphia said at a press conference an OBC (other backward class) community has been insulted. In response, Kharge asked, “Is Nirav Modi OBC? Is Mehul Choksi OBC? Is Lalit Modi OBC? They are fugitives.” On her part, Priyanka indulges in sentimentalism and whataboutery. She said on Sunday, “You call my brother, the son of a martyr, a traitor and Mir Jafar. You insult his mother. Your Chief Minister says Rahul Gandhi doesn't know who his mother is. You insult my family every day. But no cases are filed.” Could our political leaders shed some sanctimony and mawkishness? For the same of some swachhata in the political arena.

PICTALK



People buy bananas for 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna.

PTI

Fight for ticket heats up in coastal Karnataka

Too many hands for Kumta seat in coastal Karnataka, writes Manjunath K Shresthi

The southern state of Karnataka with 224 seats is scheduled to the assembly polls anytime in the next two months in 2023. This is subject to the Election Commission of India (ECI) dates. The state's geographical area begins with the Uttara Kannada (U.K) district in north-west Karnataka. One enters Karwar via Polem (Goa state) after crossing the excise check post on NH 66. The state shares land borders with Maharashtra in the north; Telangana/Andhra Pradesh in the East, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south and south west respectively. The Uttara Kannada (U.K) district in the state has 11 taluks and six legislative assembly constituencies (LAC), and two or more taluks make up one assembly constituency. They being: Haliyal-Joida (including Dandeli) 76; Karwar-Ankola (77); Kumta-Honnavar (78); Sirsi-Siddapur (80); Mundagod-Yellapur (81). Bhatkal (79) stands out as the smallest constituency compared to the above areas in the largest UK district. The Kumta-Honnavar (78) constituency has definite-



ly raised political temperatures during an election season, and the heat may become unbearable in the run up to the polls. The BJP has clarity with its choice of candidates and only a formal announcement is expected for most of the seats in the district, barring a few (or only one seat). The five current MLAs from the saffron party in the district might retain their seats (but surprises are not ruled out). The Congress party has one MLA, R.V. Deshpande, representing the Haliyal-Joida assembly seat. Dinakar Shetty twice and the current BJP MLA won the seat from the JD (S) in 2008. In 2013, the seat was won by Congress MLA Ms. Sharada Shetty; Dinakar Shetty con-

tested for the BJP seat in the 2018 assembly election, and defeated his Congress opponent. There's no smooth sailing for the Congress party, as it's now facing a plenty problem for the Kumta-Honnavar assembly seat. It is learnt that there are 15 candidates aspiring for the party ticket. They are old loyal party members who have been in the party for a long time. There's another new entrant, from outside Kumta, who's thrown his hat in the ring. Former Governor Ms. Margaret Alva's son, Nivedith Alva, is also vying for the Kumta party ticket. This new development has taken the party members in Kumta by surprise; and they are trying to push their candidature for

the B Form. There has been a mixed response to Nivedith's entry, as some voiced their dissent and others quietly supported him. None of the Congress ticket hopefuls criticise him, as he wields clout in the party. There is both opposition and support for his entry. Some ticket aspirants have invited him to the Kumta constituency. They have also convinced him of their support in the upcoming elections. Nivedith Alva along with another candidate from Uttara Kannada (UK) district, were conspicuous on the dais, during Rahul Gandhi's one-day recent visit to Belagavi on March 20. If Nivedith gets the party ticket, will he win the confidence and support of Congress members in the constituency? The constituency voters will finally get to decide who they will choose in the elections ahead? And will the Congress party finally be able to increase its tally in the geographically large Uttara Kannada (UK) district in the 2023 elections? There's a lot of answering for Nivedith Alva to do, if he gets the party ticket from the Kumta assembly constituency?

Haryana witnessed a major Sarpanch agitation against the state government. The sarpanchs were on a warpath with the state government on two crucial issues. One, the introduction of an e-tendering process for development works above Rs 5 lakhs and two, the “right to recall” law that allows people to remove a sarpanch if they are not happy with their performance. The state government justified these actions as steps towards “course correction” taken with the intention of bringing transparency and credibility in the working of the Panchayats. They are directly related to the use of developmental funds and the continuation of sarpanchs in power.

These remedial measures were suggested by the report submitted by the Haryana Lokayukta Justice, Hari Pal Verma in December, 2022. The audit report of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for 2017-18 had also listed many cases of irregular expenditure and account books. The report cited many instances of misappropriation of lakhs of rupees. It found that in most cases the records of panchayats were found missing which were supposed to be in the custody of the sarpanchs. It was revealed that nearly 1,100 former sarpanchs had not submitted village development records. The explanation given for this lapse was that the records were either burnt, washed away or soiled. The office bearers of the Association of Sarpanchs put the blame on the panchayat secretaries who had failed in maintaining and submitting the records to the authorities. Recently, on the complaint of a resident of Aashiyaki Tappa Jadhval village in Rewari district, an enquiry conducted by Block Development Panchayat Officer (BDPO), Dharuhera, has found the ‘gram sachiv’, Rohit Kumar and former sarpanch Mahesh Kumar guilty of embezzling Rs 7.44 Lakh in the construction of the pathway. Construction work cost Rs 8,37,399 on paper. However, the inquiry revealed that the cost of work was evaluated as Rs 92,692 causing a loss of Rs 7,44,777 to the state exchequer.



The ‘gram sachiv’ has been suspended and orders for recovery of the embezzled amount from the former sarpanch and gram sachiv have been issued. We find that candidates spend a phenomenal amount of money to win the elections for sarpanch in villages. They lure voters by offering gifts, interest free loans, distribution of liquor and sweets. The intention is to win the elections by hook or crook. This will enable me to recover many times the election investment. After getting elected, the sarpanchs indulge in corruption by siphoning away the money allocated for the village's development.

In order to contain the agitation, the state government announced that sarpanchs could get development works up to Rs 5 lakh executed on a quotation basis. This was earlier Rs 2 lakh and e-tendering mode would be used for works valued at more than Rs 5 lakh. The honorariums of sarpanchs were increased from Rs 3,000/- to Rs 5,000/- and the panches from Rs 1,000/- to Rs 1,600/- by linking these with Dearness Allowance on the lines of government employees. To make

BOTH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNMENT SHOULD DISCHARGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES HONESTLY AND TRANSPARENTLY

the gram sachsiv accountable to the sarpanchs, the provision of recording the comments in the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of gram sachiv by sarpanchs has been introduced. For the social audit of development works in panchayats, a committee would be formed at the village level. This committee would consist of village residents who would keep watch of the development works being undertaken in the village.

A separate engineering wing would be set up for the Development and Panchayat Departments. The panchayats could get works done on quotations for a total amount of Rs 25 lakh in a financial year or up to 50 per cent of the total grant amount of the State Finance Commission, whichever is less. The responsibilities for quality have also been fixed. The technical staff would ensure the quality of the development works through e-tendering. The sarpanchs would be responsible for the quality of works carried out on a quotation basis.

The introduction and implementation of the Panchayati Raj system in the 1980s was a landmark decision of the Government headed by

then Prime Minister, late Rajiv Gandhi. It led to decentralization of financial powers to the local grassroot representatives—the gram pradhans paving way to the implementation of the concept of “Gram Swaraj” envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi and to ensure the utilization of funds meant for panchayats in a transparent manner.

Through the connivance of government functionaries and pardhans, crores of rupees are disbursed annually to PRIs, of which a large amount is misused. The practice of these practices needs to be checked and those found guilty should be punished. Both elected representatives and the government should discharge their responsibilities honestly and transparently. The Haryana government has done a commendable job in checking malpractices by laying down check and balances. This would help in judicial use of funds at the grassroots level.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LACK OF STORAGE FOR FARMERS

Sir — Farmers often struggle to grow fruits and vegetables. But due to a lack of storage options, they have to sell them at very low prices. It is also often the result of natural calamities. When rain falls unseasonably, all stored goods are soaked and damaged. The government intends to implement the godown scheme in the village so that agricultural produce can be stored locally till it fetches a high price. The study will be conducted by a 12-member committee. There are times when the cost of production is not even available.

But transportation costs also have to be paid. Due to lack of price, sometimes the plow is turned in full fields. Therefore, it is not possible for all the farmers to store till they get a reasonable price. Vakhar Corporation has warehouses. Their number is very small, 205. The storage capacity is 17 lakh 60 thousand metric tons. There is capacity.

There are only two things farmers need to do before they can sell at the price they get: take a risk. So this is the government's plan for rural areas. By setting up storage areas in rural areas with all the necessary facilities, improving the quality of its goods, and providing financing and credit facilities, we will be able to achieve our goals. The government is implementing this plan. Through this plan, efforts will be made to invest in the private and cooperative sector in warehouse construction.

The criteria for the scheme, the exact nature of the scheme, how to provide state-of-the-art facilities for perishable goods, and this committee will study. The report is to be given till 13th June. From the point of view of farmers, the scheme “Village There Godown” is commendable. The committee should give its report at the earliest and the government should give justice to farmers through the recommendations of the committee.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Rahul Gandhi's disqualification



Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) heartily wanted not ‘Congress mukt Bharat’ (Congress less India) but Rahul Gandhi less Parliament. Hence their joy no bounds when the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) HH Varma, in Surat in Gujarat sentenced Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to two years in jail in a 2019 criminal defamation case filed against him in which he linked the prime minister's family name to that of two Indian fugitives accused of swindling millions of dollars, Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi.

DIABETIC FOOT CARE

Sir — Most diabetes patients can prevent serious foot complications. Regular care at home and doctor's appointments are your best bet for preventing foot problems. This will help in stopping small problems from becoming serious ones. Wash your feet every day in warm (not hot) water. Don't soak your feet. Dry your feet completely and apply lotion to the top and bottom—but not between your toes, which could lead to infection. Never go barefoot. When you check your feet every day, you can catch problems early and treat them immediately. Early treatment greatly reduces your amputation risk. Check your feet every day for cuts, redness, swelling, sores, blisters, corns, calluses, or any other change to the skin or nails. Use a mirror if you can't see the bottom of your feet, or ask a family member to help. Remember: Diabetes-related foot problems can worsen very quickly and are difficult to treat, so seek prompt medical attention.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Kapil Sibal, a top Indian lawyer and former federal law minister, told the media that while Gandhi was automatically disqualified as a legislator, his two-year jail sentence itself was “bizarre”.

The court granted him bail immediately and suspended the sentence for a month. After Rahul Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison in a defamation case, India's parliament disqualified him.

Though the Opposition not only have accused the prime minister of using the law to stymie political critics, but they have also accused PM Modi of misusing national agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), to go after critics including journalists (“The press must remain free if a country is to remain a democracy,” Chief Justice of India Mr. Chandrachud), nonprofits and media companies.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

VANDALISM BY KHALISTAN SUPPORTERS

Sir — Khalistan supporters' vandalism acts at Indian missions abroad are serious concerns. Khalistan demand is not justified as India cannot be further broken into pieces. But equally wrong are those who want India to be declared a ‘Hindu rashttra’ since people do not want India to become a ‘Hindu Pakistan’. India is a secular country and cannot be based on religion. Action should also be taken against those who raise such obnoxious demands. Secondly, the Punjab Police has launched a major crackdown against radical preacher Amritpal Singh, and his outfit Waris Punjab De. Kejriwal proudly claimed that strict action being taken against criminals by the government had shown that ‘AAP is a hardcore patriotic party’. Amritpal escapes the police dragnet.

Vishal Mayur | Tumkur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

HOW TO DEAL WITH SEIZURES?

Epilepsy is a lifelong condition, and but it can be managed with medication



DR RAVINDRA SRIVASTAVA

In the early human civilisations, it was geography and weather that decided what crops were to be grown in any region. The same crop was consumed by the people of that area. Exports were tough and risky. But, in modern civilisation, Governments directly or indirectly control the food consumed.

Epilepsy accounts for a significant proportion of the world affecting 50 million people. Each year an estimated 5 million people are diagnosed with epilepsy. In India, more than 10 million patients suffer from epilepsy, which represents 20% of the 50 million worldwide. Purple Day is an international awareness day dedicated to raising awareness about epilepsy and reducing the stigma surrounding this neurological disorder. Observed annually on March 26th, Purple Day encourages people to learn more about epilepsy. It encourages people to recognize the signs of a seizure and support those living with this condition. By coming together to raise awareness and support those affected by epilepsy, we can improve the lives of millions of people around the world.



What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder that affects the brain's ability to transmit electrical impulses. These disruptions can cause seizures, which can be mild or severe and affect various parts of the body. Epilepsy is a lifelong condition, and while it can be managed with medication, it cannot be cured. Some people may outgrow epilepsy, while others may have it for their entire lives.

What are seizures?

Seizures are the primary epilepsy symptom. They occur when there is a sudden surge of electrical activity in the brain. The symptoms of a seizure can vary widely depending on the type and severity of the seizure. Some people experience a brief loss of awareness or consciousness, while others have convulsions and lose control of their limbs.

Medically Intractable Epilepsy

Medically intractable epilepsy is a severe form of epilepsy that cannot be controlled with medication. People with this type of epilepsy may experience multiple seizures per day, which can severely impact their quality of life. Treatment options for medically intractable epilepsy may include surgery or implantable devices that regulate brain activity.

Seizure First Aid

If you witness someone having a seizure, it is essential to stay calm and take the following steps:

- Keep the person safe: Clear the area around the person to prevent injury. Remove any sharp objects that could harm.
- Protect the person's head: If possible, place something soft, like a jacket or pillow, under the person's head to cushion it.
- Turn the person on their side: If the person is lying down, turn them onto their side to prevent choking.
- Time of the seizure: Note the time the seizure began and how long it lasted. This information can help medical professionals.
- Do not restrain the person: Do not restrain the person or put anything in their mouth during the seizure.
- Stay with the person: Once the seizure has ended, stay with the person until they are fully alert and oriented.

(The writer is Director, Neurosciences, Primus Superspecialty Hospital)

Open letter to Rahul Gandhi

By questioning Rahul's conviction, the Opposition party is undermining the judiciary



SUMEEET BHASIN



Within a couple of hours of his conviction by a Surat court, the party's legal luminary Abhishek Manu Singhvi spoke at length about the merits of the case. The Congress has a strong battery of lawyers practicing in India's higher courts. There have been occasions in the past when they rushed to the top court for judicial intervention in matters where their leaders are caught in discomfort.

However, the Congress did not approach the judicial authorities for relief from the Surat court sentence. It is not possible that Congress' legal eagles are aware of the Supreme Court order of 2013 which said that a conviction with a jail term of two or more years leads to automatic disqualification of a member of the legislatures—the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state Assemblies. Clearly, staging a political stunt, Congress leaders feigned ignorance that Gandhi was automatically disqualified upon his conviction by the Surat court magistrate. Curiously, Gandhi came to Parliament despite knowing he had already been disqualified.

This must have been clear to him more than to anyone else since it was he who had torn apart an Ordinance approved by the Union Cabinet, presided over by Manmohan Singh, the former prime minister. The Ordinance intended to dilute the Supreme Court ruling of automatic disqualification of membership of a convicted legislator member. If Rahul Gandhi claims that he did not know the import of the Supreme Court ruling of 2013, he is guilty of acting impulsively as an ignoramus. He tore apart the Ordinance at the Press Club of India in the presence of the press corps.

Rahul Gandhi is accused of impulsive behaviour. His willful resorted to defamatory utterances in the past. He is involved in several court cases. He is also on bail in the National Herald case. He has only shown that he is an incorrigible bully of



IT IS WORTHWHILE TO ASK: WHY SHOULD ANYONE LEVEL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST OTHERS WHICH THEY CANNOT SUBSTANTIATE

(The author is a political analyst)

Indian politics, from insulting Manmohan Singh to demeaning Indian democracy on foreign soil in London. The Congress' yearning for sympathy votes is old. The party daydreams that people will vote for it out of sympathy. It has been marginalised under the Gandhi family.

Why should the country sympathise with Rahul Gandhi? What is his contribution to the uplift of the poor of this country? He has been convicted for defaming a community. In his statement that "all thieves have the Modi surname", what message did he intend to convey? Did it not occur to him that he was defaming a hard-working community, spread over the country and abroad?

People must decide if the country's politicians have freedom to say anything against anyone. Some people argue that defamation should not be a criminal offence. But it is worthwhile to ask: why should anyone level allegations against others which they cannot substantiate? This license to defame others has taken Indian politics to a new low. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made libelous insinuations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a television show. The news anchor tried to contest Kejriwal's claims, but he was bullied to stay silent. Kejriwal questioned the educational qualifications of PM Modi. The same news channel reproduced the interview of PM Modi given several years ago from which Kejriwal had selectively quoted.

The Delhi Chief Minister repeated his insinuations against PM Modi in the Assembly. There are millions of youths who pursue distant learning. Kejriwal has

defamed a vast number of youths for such learning which government has promoted for several decades. There are a number of universities, including the Indira Gandhi National Open University, for this purpose.

Also, it is well known that Kejriwal escaped conviction in defamation cases by apologising to the late Arun Jaitley and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari. Gandhi chose not to apologise in the Surat court. Defamatory political discourse, based on mudslinging, has no space in Indian democracy, which is known to be aspirational. Rahul Gandhi has also said that he's "not Savarkar, but Gandhi and Gandhis don't apologise." But not long ago he had apologised to the Supreme Court for making baseless allegations on the Rafale issue.

Members of the legislature must commit themselves to the singular efforts to realise the dreams of the people. This naturally calls for a review of the discretionary powers of the Members of Parliament. It must be asked if it's still relevant for an MP to recommend students for admission in Kendriya Vidyalaya and to exercise similar discretionary powers in extending other entitlements.

There must not be any doubt that the Gandhi family has a feudal mindset. Despite a strong campaign for inner democracy, the Congress coterie defeated the efforts for genuine intra-party democracy. This coterie keeps alive the feudal mindset of the party's ruling family.

Memories are still fresh of how Sitaram Keshri was thrown out of the party by the Gandhi family. People of the country

have not forgotten that the mortal remains of late PV Narsimha Rao, former prime minister, were not allowed into the party office premises for his followers to pay their last respects to the departed soul. As a result of breaking the law and claiming victimhood, the Gandhis have demonstrated the least political decency in the world.

But the law is the same for all. Laws don't discriminate between citizens.

The Opposition protesting against Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha membership after his conviction in a criminal defamation case is as good as a celebration of corruption, which the people in the national capital saw after the arrest of Manish Sisodia, the former deputy chief minister of Delhi, by the Central Bureau of Investigation. The New Excise Policy of the city government is being probed for financial irregularity and conspiracy.

Indian democracy rests on institutions. The judiciary is a crucial institution in the country. By questioning Rahul's conviction, the Opposition party is undermining the judiciary.

Also, Parliament has passed laws. If the Opposition parties believe that some laws need changes, they can certainly change them in Parliament. But for that they need people's mandates. Self-centered politics must stop immediately. Stringent rules should be framed with necessary amendments to the Representation of People's Act. This will guide Indian democracy on the path free of compulsive lying and defamation.

Human resource management is a prerequisite for growth

The top management must be compassionate towards their employees, it ensures productivity and high standards of corporate ethics

In the recent past, Human Resource Management has transformed and become the epicentre of any organisation aspiring for excellence. Day by day the involvement and importance of Human Resource Management have increased and become the central point of the outcome of any Centre of Excellence.

This transition has not been an easy one but over some time all out sustained efforts by the organisations have been made for a complete overhaul of the system. No doubt digitisation has made some difference in HR Processes and Decision Making, however, it's the policies that have triggered the overall changes and brought about the revolution in HRM. First and foremost, has



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

(The writer is s the Group Pro Vice Chancellor with Amity University Noida Campus)

been the WHY factor in the decision-making at the highest echelon of management to decide in which direction you want the organisation to move and once WHY has been clearly defined then the whole process will revolve around it to achieve this aim. This WHY factor can be defined by the Mission and Aim of the Organisation. Having decided the WHY factor one can now clearly move to WHAT type of personnel you want to hire. Clearly define their roles and responsibilities, set the targets, and milestones and carve out a roadmap to be followed by the organisation to achieve its Mission and Aim.

The next step will be when the recruiters start defining the QRs including the Qualification, Expertise,

Experience, Previous Job profile and the notable results achieved. Having decided the WHY and WHAT factors one has to move to the next factor, HOW. This is also an important factor, one has to start planning as to how one wants to proceed in this direction.

The organisation must ensure that the best person for the job is available and thus the search has to be perfect before recruiting anyone. Check out the newspapers which have maximum circulation and accordingly insert a well-designed advertisement in local / all India editions as per the requirement. The head-hunting team of the organisation must search on the job portals, as well as various websites that provide the details of employees, check if

anyone matches the organisational requirement of a specific job and establish contact if they are willing to change before setting up the process of recruitment. Once the database is available, the process of shortlisting begins, making sure that no compromise is made on the QRs laid down for each profile. For every possible job, shortlist at least five persons and conduct personal interviews at various levels to check the suitability of the person for the job. Of these five, the best two must be met by the top management. During the process, it must also be considered what financial package is to be decided. During the interviews, the family background of the candidate must also be examined as that will determine

how much time he /she will be able to devote towards undertaking the task assigned including roles and responsibilities.

Yet another consideration must be, the scope for his/her future growth in the organisation. Once the selection process is complete, the financial package is acceptable and the candidate has joined the organisation, the even more important phase of onboarding must be seamless. The buddy system has proved very beneficial wherein one person is attached to the new joiner to make him feel comfortable and introduce him/her to the systems and practices of the organisation, introduce him /her to colleagues and others as required.

This phase is of relevance

so that the person doesn't feel out of place and adapts to the new environment amicably. Initially, at short intervals, the candidate may be guided and advised to appreciate his/her strong/ weak points and there's ample opportunity available for him to take corrective action. As the organisation grows, the employees must also grow and part of the benefits must also be passed on to the employees. It's very important to retain experienced people so that they effectively contribute to the growth of the organisation. At the same time, the organisation must also continuously evolve ways and means to look after the employees, be it annual increments or various welfare measures so that the employees concentrate on their job

and performance to ensure the growth of the organisation. One of the important aspects must be that top management must be compassionate towards their employees, be it leave or medical cover or such other arrangements so that each employee feels confident that in times of need the person will not be left high and dry to face the emergent condition and this aspect is very important, everyone must be treated with dignity and humanity must prevail.

Finally for any organisation to grow it needs qualified, experienced and dedicated, sincere and loyal employees and this leadership must be provided by the top management with compassion and transparency in their policies and systems.

MONEY MATTERS

RevFin targets financing 20 lakh electric vehicles in next 5 years

Electric vehicles (EV) financing digital platform RevFin Services is targeting to finance 20 lakh vehicles in the next five years, with an aim to grow three to four times every year, according to its CEO & Founder Sameer Aggarwal. With the Indian electric vehicle industry poised for an accelerated growth, he said the company is confident of meeting its target and would continue to raise funds through debt and equity going forward for the purpose. "From a long-term perspective we have taken a very strong position on EVs, and we have committed to financing two million electric vehicles in the next five years," Aggarwal said. Asked if the target is not too steep, considering RevFin has financed 17,118 EVs in the last 51 months, he said, "The monthly loan disbursement is growing month-on-month by about 15 per cent. So overall, it has grown almost four times in the last one year. If we continue the kind of growth that we are currently on we will actually achieve these numbers."



Only 15% insolvency cases reach resolution during Oct-Dec

Only 15 per cent of the 267 insolvency cases admitted in company law tribunals during October-December 2022 reached resolution with overall recovery of just 27 per cent of claimed amount, the IBBI data showed. As much as 45 per cent cases were concluded through liquidation, according to a Kotak Securities analysis of the latest data from the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI). On quarter-on-quarter basis, the second quarter of FY23 saw 256 cases in NCLTs (National Company Law Tribunals), massively down from the yearly run-rate of 2,000 cases in FY20. According to the analysis, one-third of all liquidations happened because no resolution plans were received. Of the 1,901 cases resolved so far, in 1,229 cases the banker decided to go in for a liquidation, while in 600 cases, no resolution plans were received.



Korean fund house Mirae Asset eyes Rs 1.5 lakh cr AUM by Dec

Mirae Asset Investment Managers India hopes to close the current year with an AUM of Rs 1.5 lakh crore, up from Rs 1.20 lakh crore in December 2022, on the back of aggressive growth in systematic investments plans and its forte of equity-linked funds. Mirae Asset is the only Korean fund operating in the country and since its entry in 2008, it has grown to become the 12th largest fund house in the country with an AUM of Rs 1.16 lakh crore as of February 2023. Mirae Asset is fully-owned by the Mirae Financial Group of Seoul that globally manages over USD 225 billion assets. Mirae, whose large-cap fund has an AUM of over Rs 30,000 crore, and an emerging fund with Rs 24,000 crore, has two subsidiaries in the country -- wealth management and a zero-brokerage equity broking arm.



RBI may go in for 25 basis point interest rate hike

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With retail inflation remaining above the comfort level of 6 per cent and most global peers including US Fed continuing hawkish stance, the Reserve Bank of India too may go in for a 25 basis points hike in the bi-monthly monetary policy to be announced on April 6, opined experts.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank will be meeting for three days on April 3, 5 and 6 to take into account various domestic and global factors before coming out with the first bi-monthly monetary policy for fiscal 2023-24.

The two key factors which the committee will deliberate intensely while firming up the next monetary policy are elevated retail inflation and the recent action taken by central



banks of the developed nations especially the US Federal Reserve, European Central Bank and Bank of England.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been raising benchmark rates since May 2022 to contain inflation which has been largely driven by external factors, especially the disruption of the global supply chain following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war.

In its last policy meeting held in February, RBI had raised the policy rate or repo by 25 basis points to 6.50 per cent.

Having remained below six per cent for two months (November and December 2022), the retail inflation breached the comfort zone warranting action by the Reserve Bank.

The Consumer Price Index

(CPI)-based inflation was 6.52 per cent in January and 6.44 per cent in February.

"Given that CPI inflation has been 6.5 per cent and 6.4 per cent in the last two months and that liquidity is now near neutral, we may expect the RBI to raise rates once again by 25 bps and probably change stance to neutral to signal that this cycle is over," opined Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

India Ratings and Research Chief Economist D K Pant too expects the central bank to raise policy rate by 25 bps (basis points).

"This is likely to be last rate hike in present policy tightening cycle," he said, and added that inflation trajectory from here is going to decline due to impact of past policy rate hikes, softening of global commodity prices, and base effect.

Govt hikes duty on X-ray machine imports to 15%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has hiked customs duty on import of X-ray machines and non-portable X-ray generators to 15 per cent with effect from April 1.

Currently, portable X-ray machines and non-portable X-ray generators and apparatus attract 10 per cent import duty.

The changes in the customs duty rate was brought in as part of the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2023, which was passed by the Lok Sabha last Friday.

The new rates would be effective from April 1, 2023, the amendment said.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said this is intended to improve barriers to manufacturing in India.

"This will encourage 'Make in India' to reduce import dependence in the niche sector," he said.

Govt caps maximum GST cess rate on pan masala, tobacco

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has capped the maximum rate of GST compensation cess that would be levied on pan masala, cigarettes and other forms of tobacco and linked the highest rate to their retail sale price.

The capping of the cess rate was brought in as part of the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2023, which was passed by the Lok Sabha last Friday.

As per the amendment, the maximum GST compensation cess rate for pan masala will be 51 per cent of the retail sale price per unit. In the current regime, the cess is charged at 135 per cent ad valorem.

The rate for tobacco has been fixed at Rs 4,170 per thousand sticks plus 290 per cent ad valorem or 100 per cent of the retail sale price per unit.

So far, the highest rate was Rs 4,170 per thousand sticks plus 290 per cent ad valorem.

The cess is levied over and



above the highest Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate of 28 per cent.

Changes in schedule-I of GST compensation cess Act, brought in via amendment in Finance Bill, has capped the maximum cess that can be charged on Pan masala and tobacco products.

Tax experts, however, said to ascertain the exact compensation cess applicable following this change, the GST council will need to issue a notification.

AMRG & Associates Senior

Partner Rajat Mohan said the latest amendment in the GST Compensation cess law is an enabler that will permit the GST council to introduce applicable tax rates through a notification.

"This change marks a significant shift in taxation policy for pan masala and tobacco-supplying companies. Though this policy will arrest tax evasion to a great extent in this sector, it still may prove to be a regressive plan from an economic standpoint," Mohan said.

Markets to track global factors in holiday-shortened week



May face volatility: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets may face volatility in a holiday-shortened week ahead amid monthly derivatives expiry, besides global factors and foreign fund trading activity would continue to dictate terms, analysts said.

Factors such as movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee would also guide the trend in equities.

Markets would remain closed on Thursday for Ram Navami.

"While volatility may increase locally before the March Futures and Options (F&O) expiry, the position of major international banks will continue to play a significant role in the direction of the market globally.

"The market will also keep an eye on the geopolitical situation because there is still tension between Russia and Ukraine and there is also some tension developing between the US and Syria. But, the market is not paying much attention to this. Due to FIIs' aggressive selling in recent months, the institutional flow will also

be crucial," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Last week, the BSE benchmark fell 462.8 points or 0.79 per cent, while the Nifty slipped 155 points or 0.90 per cent. Both the benchmarks ended in the negative territory for the third week in a row.

Three major factors that contributed to the market's volatility were the global banking crisis, the US Federal Reserve's rate increase, and the Finance Bill amendment, Meena added.

"This week is a holiday-shortened one and we expect volatility to remain high due to the scheduled expiry of March month derivatives contracts. Besides, global cues, foreign flows and movement in crude could further add to the chopiness," Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Global markets have been turbulent amid worries over turmoil in the banking sector and uncertainty about what the Federal Reserve and other central banks will do with interest rates going forward.



Tatas to supply only seats, interior panels for Vande Bharat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The order placed by the Railways is for the supply of seats and interior panels for Vande Bharat trains and "not to manufacture its coaches", a Tata Steel official has clarified.

As part of the Rs 225 crore order, Tata Steel will supply light-weight seats for 23 coaches of Vande Bharat rails and fibre-reinforced polymer composites-based interior panels for 16 coaches of the high-speed train, Debashish Bhattacharjee, Vice President (VP) - Technology & New Materials Business of Tata Steel, told.

Some sections of the media have reported that Tata Steel has bagged orders for manufacturing coaches of Vande Bharat trains, which is "incorrect and baseless. We have not received the order to manufacture its coaches," he said.

"Tata Steel has bagged the seats and interior panels order through a competitive bidding process executed by the national transporter (the Railways). We appeared as L1 for the prestigious order," he said, adding that the value of the order is Rs 225 crore.

The company will supply the composite solutions from its partner manufacturing facilities spread across India to Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, the company official said.

SOFT DRINKS TO SOAPS Reliance unveils big price war plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After stirring a price war in the soft drink segment with the relaunch of Campa, billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance has entered the personal and home care segment of FMCG, offering products at 30 to 35 per cent lesser price.

Experts say "the jury is out" and a competitive offering from Reliance would attract the customers to try its products and evaluate performance, quality and perception in comparison to the same from the established brands.

Products of RCPL, the FMCG arm and wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Retail Ventures Limited (RRVL), are available only in selected markets but the company is building a dealer network on a pan-India basis, and



the availability of its products will be scaled up across modern and general trade channels.

"They are creating a distinct and dedicated distribution network comprising traditional dealer/stockists as well as modern trade b2b channels," said an industry source.

It articulates ambitions to be a relevant player in the USD 110-billion FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) segment, largely dominated by players as HUL, P&G,

Reckitt, and Nestle.

RCPL has priced its Glimmer beauty soaps, Get Real natural soaps, and Puric hygiene soaps at Rs 25, which is much lower than the products of leading brands such as Lux (Rs 35 for 100 gm), Dettol (Rs 40 for 75 gm) and Santoor (Rs 34 for 100 gm) etc, while prices of its Enzo 2 litre front load and top load liquid detergent is Rs 250 (on Jio Mart) in comparison to a 2-litre pack of Surf Excel Matic priced at Rs 325.

For Enzo front-load and top-load detergent powder, it had priced at Rs 149 for 1-kilogramme pack (on Jio Mart).

Front-load and top-load refer to the two categories of washing machine.

While, in the dish wash segment, it has started with the attractive price point of Rs 5,

10 and 15 for bars and has also launched liquid gel packs at price points of Rs 10, Rs 30 and Rs 45.

RCPL, which competes with HUL's Vim, Jyothy Lab's Exo and Pril in the dish wash category, has also introduced a Rs 1 sachet of liquid gel in the category.

It is yet to announce the price of Enzo detergent bars.

Earlier this month, RCPL relaunched the iconic soft drinks brand Campa, entering into the turf of US cola majors PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. It had priced competitively at Rs 10 for a 200-ml bottle and Rs 20 for a 500-ml bottle.

According to the online market and consumer data platform Statista, the Indian soft drinks segment is estimated at USD 8.85 billion.

FPIs invest Rs 7,200 crore in Indian equities in March so far

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pumped Rs 7,200 crore into the Indian equities so far this month, mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group companies by the US-based GQG Partners.

Going ahead, FPIs are likely to be cautious in the near term since there is a risk-off sentiment in equity markets globally due to the stress in the US banking system and the crash in

banking stocks, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. The stress appeared in the US banking system after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank earlier this month.

Most global equity markets witnessed a sharp recovery, even as macro sentiments remained volatile as frailties in European and US banks were under focus. "On the economy front, the US Federal Reserve

increased the Fed Fund rates by 25 basis points while voicing confidence in the stability of the US financial system. FPIs flow are expected to remain volatile given the tight central bank monetary policy," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

According to the data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) invested Rs 7,233 crore in Indian equities till March 25.



Five of top 10 firms lose Rs 86,447 cr in m-cap

Infosys, TCS, SBI hit hard

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Five of the top 10 most valued firms together lost Rs 86,447.12 crore in market valuation last week, with Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and State Bank of India taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark fell 462.8 points or 0.79 per cent. While Reliance Industries Limited, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys and State Bank of India suffered erosion from their valuation, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, ITC, HDFC and Bharti Airtel posted gains.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys tumbled by Rs 25,217.2 crore to Rs 5,72,687.97 crore. The valua-

tion of State Bank of India fell Rs 21,062.08 crore to Rs 4,51,228.38 crore, and that of TCS tanked Rs 21,039.55 crore to Rs 11,42,154.59 crore.

The mcap of Reliance Industries declined by Rs 13,226.53 crore to Rs 14,90,775.40 crore, and HDFC Bank dipped Rs 5,901.76 crore to Rs 8,71,416.33 crore. However, ICICI Bank added Rs 10,905.18 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 5,94,888.25 crore.

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever rallied Rs 7,542.19 crore to Rs 5,82,816.11 crore, and ITC climbed Rs 3,664.01 crore to Rs 4,70,360.22 crore. Bharti Airtel's mcap jumped Rs 2,787.57 crore to Rs 4,24,964.64 crore, and that of HDFC advanced Rs 384.89 crore to Rs 4,69,845.34 crore.

Most private firms lack risk management function: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 67 per cent of private companies do not have an adequate risk management function, and over 52 per cent are still not equipped with formal risk management processes, said a report by risk advisory firm MGC Global.

Over 50 per cent of the survey participants were affiliated with companies that reported revenues of over Rs 1,000 crore.

It was conducted with an outreach to over 60,000 professionals in management and board-level roles in various

sectors in India to assess the corporate governance on a range of pertinent practices in their respective companies, MGC Global said in a release.

According to the survey titled 'State of Corporate Governance in India, 2023', about 67 per cent of closely held companies and 38 per cent of public companies were found to have inadequate practices for risk management. In addition, several companies are at risk of cronyism due to less than one-third of the board being independent directors.

This survey also found out



that around 45 per cent of respondents from private companies have less than one-third of their board comprising

independent directors. This could lead to cronyism and impact objectivity in decision-making.

"This year, we had launched a survey with a wide and cross-sector outreach and had looked closely at the state of governance on the ground in an environment that has been witnessing a significant change in terms of the development and adoption of governance practices," said Monish G Chatrath, Managing Partner, MGC Global.

With data theft on the rise and with the advent of data protection regulations, such as GDPR, it is encouraging to see that 89 per cent of public companies have policies and

procedures relating to cyber security and data protection in place, the report said.

The survey also found that women are grossly under-represented on boards of 96 per cent of private companies and 51 per cent of public companies; shareholder engagement is restricted to annual general meetings in 67 per cent of public companies; codes of ethical business conduct were not published in 25 per cent of private companies; and CEOs, CFOs and HR directors play the roles of ombudsman in 41 per cent of public companies.

Tend to resonate more with positive parts: Dia Mirza

Actor Dia Mirza says she is delighted to see diverse parts written for women today, but she tends to gravitate more towards “positive” characters that can be imperfect.

Mirza said fans will see her in a different light in her latest release *Bheed*, directed by Anubhav Sinha which hit the screens on Friday.

In the social drama, the actor plays the role of Geetanjali, an elite woman stuck on the road amid the pandemic-induced lockdown making it impossible for her to reach her child.

“It all depends on the imagination of the filmmaker. We all suffer from being stereotyped and the problem of being boxed. The choices that we make, the things that we say, we can create our own path.”

“I am quite kicked with the diversity of parts but I tend to resonate more with positive parts. Also, human beings even while they are positive, they can also be flawed. I find that interesting. I guess people will get to see a bit of that in *Bheed*,” the 41-year-old actor told PTI in an interview.



Over the years, Mirza said her choices have evolved and today she consciously chooses parts that are closer to reality.

“Early part of my career went in understanding who

I am, what I want, and what I don't want. Today, the kind of roles that I am playing are connected to reality, connected to everyday life of people, and their struggles and issues.

“And I learn about all this from whatever work I do in the social sphere. Besides, with life experiences you grow as a person and that starts reflecting in the choices that you make,” said the former Miss India Asia-Pacific, who received wide acclaim for her small yet impactful role of an ambitious single mother in Sinha's 2020 drama *Thappad*.

Recalling early 2000s — a period when she played leading lady in movies such as her debut *Rehnaa Hai Tere Dil Mein*, *Deewaanapan*, *Dum*, and *Tumko Na Bhool Paayenge* — Mirza said she was struggling to overcome failure as well as seek good work opportunities.

“I was so young when I joined (the film industry) and I have seen a lot of setbacks. When your films don't work, the media, the industry are so harsh. They make it look like it is your fault that your films didn't work,” she said.

“With these experiences, you go through the challenge of not finding work when you believe you deserve more work. And then you realise that if you keep waiting for people to give you what you want, you will never have it. You will have to trust what you are able to offer and meet opportunities with preparedness,” she added.

In her over 10-year career, the actor said the length of the role has never been a concern for her. Her film credits include titles such as *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, *Sanju*, and *Parineeta*.

The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes to release in India in November

The *Hunger Games* prequel *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* will be released in Indian theatres on November 17, studio Lionsgate announced on Sunday.

The studio also released a teaser poster of the movie, which is based on the 2020 book of the same name by author Suzanne Collins.

The story is set decades before the adventures of Katniss Everdeen, who was played by Jennifer Lawrence in four *The Hunger Games* films.

Directed by Francis Lawrence, *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* features an ensemble cast of Tom Blyth, Rachel Zegler, Peter Dinklage, Hunter Schafer, Josh Andres Rivera, Jason Schwartzman and Viola Davis.

The film will see 18-year-old Coriolanus Snow (Blyth) be the last hope for his failing lineage, as the once-proud Snow family has fallen from grace in a post-war Capitol.


“He will be battling his instincts for both good and evil, as he sets out on a race against time to survive and reveal if he will ultimately become a songbird or a snake. This prequel will also explore the dystopian world of districts during the 10th Hunger Games,” the official description read.

Rohit Jain, Managing Director, Emerging Markets Asia, Lionsgate, said the company looks forward to the India release of *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*.

“With *John Wick: Chapter 4* hitting it out of the park, we are excited to announce the global theatrical release date of *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. Lionsgate is certain that fans in India will be looking forward to this release, as their beloved dystopia makes its comeback to the big screen. The most anticipated release of the year has plenty in store for fans - get ready for another big title to hit the cinemas near you,” Jain said.

Lionsgate and PVR Pictures will be releasing *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* in theatres across the country.





Reese Witherspoon, Jim Toth had ‘zero romance’ towards end of 12-year marriage

Actress Reese Witherspoon and her husband Jim Toth reportedly had ‘zero romance’ towards the end of their 12-year marriage.

The actress, 47, recently announced she and Jim, 52, made the decision to split up in an emotional statement shared with her 29.2 million Instagram followers, reports mirror.co.uk.

The former couple got married on March 26, 2011, in a beautiful ceremony in Ojai, California.

And now, a source has claimed that the duo lost any romantic feelings for each other after the years.

“There’s no big scandal or drama, just two people who essentially became co-parents and don’t really have any romantic feelings for each other anymore,” the insider claimed.

The source continued to Page Six that Witherspoon “once liked the fact that (Jim) was just a solid, dependable and stable guy.”

At the time, Jim worked as a talent agent and co-head of motion picture talent at Creative Artists Agency, where Reese was a client.

In an emotional statement on Friday, Reese shared with fans: “We have some personal news to share... It is with a great deal of care and consideration that we have made the difficult decision to divorce.”

“We have enjoyed so many wonderful years together and are moving forward with deep love, kindness, and mutual respect for everything we have created together.


“Our biggest priority is our son and our entire family as we navigate this next chapter. These matters are never easy and are extremely personal. We truly appreciate everyone’s respect for our family’s privacy at this time.”

According to reports, no records of a divorce filing could be found in Los Angeles Superior Court.


The couple shares a son named Tennessee James, 10. Reese also has two children, Ava, 23, and Deacon, 19, from her first marriage to Ryan Phillippe.

FUN


ARCHIE



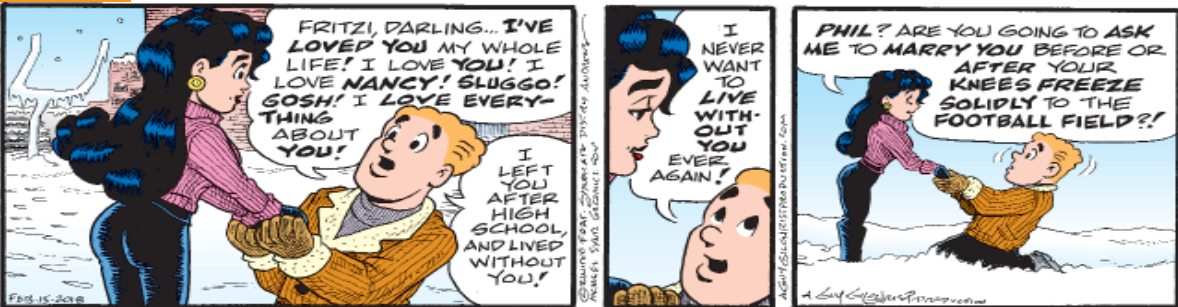
CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD




NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



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JUNIOR CROSSWORD 744

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ACROSS

- Train stops
- Tumble over and over
- Young cows
- A tall type of building
- A feeling of rage
- Bees make this
- One third of twenty-one
- Instructions for cake making
- The part along the side or end of something
- Always ready to give away or share what you have

DOWN

- A thing with handles for carrying an injured person
- Let
- Say this when you get hurt
- Complete quiet
- Tell a fib
- People unknown to you
- The late part of the day
- A machine that can record television programmes
- A type of blood vessel
- Poole

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.

Theatre; still a foundation for many actors

SHIKHA DUGGAL

In your dreams theatre is a dying art. So many years in this industry, getting to know multiple artists — there's always been this intuition that theatre is just facing some social issues but it's never at the death's door.

There is a definitive scope in theatre, look at the creative side of this developing art. We have old staggers who had already taken this art form to par excellence and it continues. Ratna Pathak Shah is one of the biggest theatre artists who set a benchmark in cinema, or if you talk about the recent trending man Manav Kaul, who always found something special on stage.

So on the special occasion for all the theatre enthusiasts, we bring to you a story from the renowned faces, who always have given their all in a life performance for their audiences.

Saurabh Shukla

Saurabh Shukla is a part of Zee theatre's *Khamosh Adalat Jaari Hai*. He is also a national award winning actor, who didn't have anyone to back him up. He is known for a single take action!

"A time-honoured, ancient form of art, and the history of theatre goes way back to the beginning of culture in human society. Though one of the oldest forms, it has evolved over time and different cultures have amalgamated to create distinct kinds of theatre like Greek or Sanskrit theatre. Each one had its own identity, and then the intermingling of cultures made it possible for modern theatre to emerge. But the catch is — success is often defined by the perceptions of the external world so it is wrong to think that doing theatre will guarantee that you will be successful," says the actor, adding that success for him means becoming progressively better at your craft, that's where theatre helped him in that quest. The point for him was always that creativity is a very personal journey and the satisfaction it brings to you is something



Theatre is a magical place where stories come to life. Celebrating beauty, creativity, hard work and artistry on World Theatre Day, *The Pioneer* interacts with few of the renowned faces of the theatre world, who take us through their journey of making it big on stage.

only you will know. "Theatre all over the world, except I would say at Broadway and some other box-office driven places, is not an economic activity but is fueled mostly by the passion of people who are trying to do something new, especially at an experimental level! It's the search for meaning and for art which defines it and gives you ample time to improvise.

For instance, if you are on a film set, a day costs a humongous amount of money, and each moment must be made to count. Whereas in theatre, the final show happens generally after a few months and you slowly, organically start figuring out things. Theatre gives you time to think and to explore its various aspects and that makes it a great learning

platform. Here, an actor is not just an actor but she/he also helps in putting the sets and the costumes together, contributes to the music and the lighting, improvises and becomes immersed in the totality and richness of that medium! I believe that theatre is never done in isolation and even a solo performance will at least have one other person deeply

invested in its success."

Delnaaz Irani

Never failing to impress the audience is also Delnaaz Irani, she is seen in Zee Theatre's *Shireen Shah*. She still hasn't left her unity with theatre format.

"Theatre gives you a sense of community and builds an extended family that you cannot find anywhere else. Everyone is working towards one goal and it's not just the actor that's important here. Theatre comes to life when everyone does their part honestly and efficiently. Theatre has an immense impact on its audiences, actors and anyone who is a part of it. I do feel that theatre lets you connect with your inner self more because it's such a special and intimate form of art. It also strengthens your connection with the concerns and issues of the world and opens your mind to views other than your own. It makes you both reflective and introspective! Get involved in a theatre project at least once because it is a life-changing experience."

Geetanjali Kulkarni

We also have Geetanjali Kulkarni on board with us, who is part of Zee Theatre's *Piya Behrupiya* and a popular face of Marathi cinema. She has always embraced the vibrant culture of theatre as far as we can remember. When modern Indian theatre developed, we saw her emerging. Participating in theatrical dramas, she is celebrating theatre from

a really long time.

"Even when language was not developed; through sounds, body language, expressions, and gestures, the human race shared its experiences and stories. It is also very important in today's time because it channels our emotions, allows self-expression, makes us question ourselves, the society, human relationships and traditions. So catharsis is needed for any society and theatre provides that in a very simple way. With just one performer and one spectator, you can create theatre and there is no need for anything else! I think live performances are even more important in today's time when we are becoming so dependent on technology. In fact, there are many studies that also say that theatre has helped people who are going through depression recover. It has even been used as a reformative tool in prison! In Natya Shastra, it is said that the spectator is 'swadhyay', or someone who is discovering the self along with the actor. There are many films which have raised political issues, and discussed human rights or women's rights as well. What sets theatre apart and gives it more power is that it is not an expensive medium and can reach out to people without much financial investment! It can reach out to communities, to children and the youth because it can be done anywhere. Cinema is dependent on a lot of financial considerations whereas theatre is more accessible, more viable, more available.

That's why it has the capacity to make more of a difference." All of these known artists are making differences in their own way. We call them the players of the highest calibre!



A bite of Mexico in India

California Burrito takes pride in serving authentic Mexican cuisine to the Indian crowd. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Bert Mueller, the co-founder of the popular chain discusses California Burrito and how he plans to steer multiple restaurants amidst inflationary pressures.

AMARTYA SMARAN

Bert Mueller is the co-founder of California Burrito, a popular chain of restaurants that take pride in serving authentic Mexican cuisine to the Indian crowd. Bert set foot on Indian soil for the first time in 2010. He landed in Jaipur and signed up for a programme to dig deeper into the Indian culture. The young music and public policy student stayed with an Indian family for over six months. One fine day, one of his contemporaries cooked some delicious Mexican food and the Indian family took a liking to it. The family's reaction to Mexican



food planted the idea in his mind to perhaps start a business and introduce Mexican cuisine to Indian nationals. Thus, he opened the first outlet of California Burrito in Bengaluru in October 2012.

In conversation with *The Pioneer*, the co-founder discusses California Burrito and how he plans to steer multiple restaurants amidst inflationary pressures.

"Honestly Good," remarked Bert when asked about the company's motto. "For us, this means we serve simple, quality ingredients that shine by themselves without any gimmicks. It also means we seek to promote a sustainable food culture where all stakeholders are treated with respect (customers, employees, suppliers, and our great planet!) Our commitment to sourcing only the freshest and most high-quality ingredients is unwavering, as we endeavor to provide customers with food that is not only delicious but also honest and wholesome."

Bert says he saw tremendous potential for the country while he was studying in Jaipur, and he really appreciated what was happening in India. "I studied in Jaipur, the pink city— Is anyone here from Jaipur? I love Jaipur. I love the people of Rajasthan - it's a tremendous place and I loved studying there but when I was studying there, I was amazed: no Mexican food? None! There wasn't a single Mexican place in the entire city. But thinking about it, why would there be? Mexico is very far away! So no one was serving Mexican food," shared the restaurateur while talking about what pushed him so hard to start a company in India.

He further explains that Mexican food was really popular in the US. More so than the Americans, the Indian diaspora really loved it. So, Bert thought, why not bring Mexico food to India?

Well! his friends felt he went crazy and to prove them wrong, he got a job at one of the largest Mexican chains in America. He shares, "I did a lot of research on Indian food trends and wrote a business plan, and then started asking people for the investment. The money came in slowly - most people we asked didn't feel 22-year-old Americans would do very well starting a food business in India. But we moved to India, set up a Tumblr blog, and started posting pictures of us looking at kitchen equipment, testing corn chips, visiting bakeries, and inspecting properties. And people were impressed - and then started asking to invest!"

Having done his research, he figured that Indian and Mexican cuisines surprisingly share similarities and draw the attention of those who enjoy bold flavors. He appreciates us Indians for our adventurous palate and willingness to try new and different types of food.

Bert adds: "With a diverse array of regional cuisines and a long history of culinary experimentation, Indians are no strangers to bold and complex flavors. In fact, many Indians take pride in their love of food and are always eager to explore new tastes and textures."

Speaking of the time when the company went through a turbulent period during Covid-19, he shares, "During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost everyone in the QSR industry was negatively impact-

ed. We pivoted quickly and focused all our energies to hero the delivery business— menu, portion, packaging, prep time etc. We bounced back stronger than ever and have just had our highest sales month ever this month! I attribute this success to the incredible dedication and hard work of our outstanding team, who weathered the storm with us and never gave up. Their unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality food and exceptional customer service has been crucial in our journey to recover from the pandemic's impact. I couldn't be prouder of our team and am excited to see what the future holds for us!"

With inflation posing a real major challenge to the food and beverage market in particular, the founder says most brands have opened many stores in the past 24 months and the real estate competition is high. "Despite inflationary pressures and an over-saturated quick service restaurant market, we have managed to differentiate ourselves and build a loyal consumer base that values our commitment to serving fresh and real Mexican cuisine. My view is by staying true to our values and listening to our consumers, I am sure we will weather any challenge we face!" avers the passionate businessman.

"We are focused on opening stores in the cities we are in, promoting Mexican cuisine to more people in all our micromarkets and fulfilling our ambitions of real Mexican flavors and honestly good food. The outcome of this will be approximately 50 new stores opening over the next 2 years," ends Bert Mueller.

Almonds before meals for improved blood sugar levels

Two new research studies with almonds, one conducted over three days and the other over three months, demonstrated benefits to blood sugar control for Asian Indians with prediabetes and overweight/obesity — and the three-month almond intervention broke new ground, reversing prediabetes, or glucose intolerance, to normal blood sugar levels in nearly one quarter (23.3%) of the people studied.

In both studies, 60 people ate 20 g (0.7 oz) of almonds, around a small handful, 30 minutes before breakfast, lunch, and dinner throughout the study durations. Researchers expressed their enthusiasm for these almond studies and the first-of-its-kind statistically significant reduction in measures of prediabetes by calling the reversal of prediabetes through diet "the holy grail of medicine." Better glucose control over time through dietary strategies like including almonds could help stave off diabetes progression. Nearly 70% of individuals with prediabetes will develop diabetes within their lifetime.

Both studies were randomised controlled trials funded by the Almond Board of

California. The researchers hypothesized that the almond snack before major meals, known as "preloading," would reduce glucose and insulin fluctuations after meals and reduce overall hyperglycemia compared to the control diet. The findings complement the breadth of research on different populations on how almonds support healthy blood sugar as part of a balanced diet.

"Results from our studies indicate almonds might be a key differentiator in helping regulate blood glucose levels as part of a dietary strategy. These results showcase that the simple addition of a small portion of almonds before each meal can quickly and drastically improve glycemic control in Asian Indians in Jaipur with prediabetes in just three days. Eating 20 g of almonds 30 minutes before an oral glucose load showed a significant decrease in blood sugar and hormones. Almonds' nutritional makeup of fiber, monounsaturated fats, zinc, and magnesium work together to help provide better glycemic control and reduce hunger," said lead author Dr. Anoop Misra, professor and chairman, Fortis-C-DOC Centre of Excellence for Diabetes, Metabolic Diseases, and Endocrinology (New Delhi). "Our outcomes provide a promising dietary strategy for reducing prediabetes progression and returning people to normal glucose regulation."



Satwik-Chirag win Swiss Open title

PTI ■ BASEL

Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty capped off their impressive campaign with a title win, beating China's Ren Xiang Yu and Tan Qiang in the final of the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Sunday.

The second-seeded Indian pair, the 2022 World Championships bronze medallist, was solid in defence and dished out an attacking game to outwit the world No. 21 pair 21-19, 24-22 in 54 minutes.

It was the first title of the season for India with Satwik and Chirag putting to rest the disappointment of last week's All England Championships where they had exited in the second round.

Overall, it was the fifth career world tour title for the Indian pair, who had claimed the India Open and French Open last year, besides securing the Thailand Open in 2019 and Hyderabad Open in 2018.

Satwik and Chirag had also won the Commonwealth Games gold in 2022.

The title run also meant India continued its love affair with the Swiss Open, with PV Sindhu (2022), Saina Nehwal (2011, 2012), Kidambi Srikanth (2015) and HS Prannoy (2016) claiming the crown in the past.



The two pairs had contracting march to the final with Satwik and Chirag playing three three-game matches on their way to the summit clash, while Tan and Ren didn't drop a game.

Tan had forged a world No. 10 pairing with He Jiting in 2019, winning the 2021 World Championships silver medal, while Ren had been ranked as high as 16 with his former partner Ou Xuanyi.

Playing the Chinese pair for the first time, Satwik and Chirag turned up the heat at the right moments, displayed their attacking prowess and steely nerves to come out victorious.

A service error from Chirag was a dampener but India managed to lead 3-1 early on before the Chinese drew parity at 6-6. There was another service error for height from Satwik before the Indians entered the break with a three-point cushion.

The Indians tried to keep the rallies flat and short and it worked, as they led 15-10 and then 18-13.

However, Tan and Ren soon narrowed down the gap to 17-18.

But, a precise smash from Chirag, which bisected the court, gave India two game points. Satwik sailed one long before sealing the game with a winner to take the first advantage.

The second game was an extremely close affair as the rivals

fought tooth and nail.

After trailing 2-4 early, Chirag went on the attack from the front court to draw level.

The Chinese pair kept fighting and clawed back at 8-8 with Tan finding a winner at the forecourt with a drop.

Satwik smashed one into the net before the Chinese made a service error to hand a two-point advantage to the Indians at the mid-game interval.

The Indian duo quickly extended the lead to 14-11 with Satwik producing a powerful smash. Tan and Chirag then engaged in a terrific rally but the latter went long as the Chinese kept breathing down the neck of the Indian pair.

With Satwik erring twice, China was back on level par at 16-16. In the end, a straight smash from Chirag earned India two championship points. After another exciting rally, Chirag went long to squander one opportunity.

A lucky net chord helped China draw parity at 20-20 before Tan sent one into the net to gift another match point to the Indians.

However, once again, a return bounced from the net as China saved another championship point.

Tan and Ren then grabbed a game point of their own with Chirag erring, but China lost it with a shot going into net.

Indian lifters bag two bronze on Day 1 of World Youth C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian weightlifters Dhanush Loganathan and Jyoshna Sabar won bronze medals in their respective categories on the opening day of the IWF World Youth Championships in Durres, Albania.

Competing in the women's 40kg event, 14-year-old Jyoshna had a combined lift of 115kg (53kg in snatch and 62kg in clean & jerk) as she came in third on Saturday night.

Jyoshna won silver in the snatch section but was sixth in the clean and jerk category in the seven-lifter field.

Dhanush, on the other hand, heaved a total weight of 200kg (88kg+112kg) to finish third behind Filipinos Prince K. Delos Santos and Eron Borres in the men's 49kg event.

The 16-year-old won a silver medal in the snatch category.

Lifters between the age of 13-17 are eligible for youth competitions.

Gauff loses out to Potapova, Rybakina rallies in Miami

AP ■ MIAMI

American Coco Gauff was knocked out of the Miami Open on Saturday after an intense three-set battle with Anastasia Potapova while Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina earned a hard-fought comeback win against Spain's Paula Badosa.

Three-times Miami winner Victoria Azarenka fell to Poland's Magda Linette but third-seed Jessica Pegula advanced with a 6-1, 7-6 (7/0) win over fellow American Danielle Collins.

Potapova showed determination, stamina and some powerful baseline hitting as she beat South Florida-based Gauff, the world number six, 6-7 (8/10), 7-5, 6-2.

The two hour, 41 minute match in the early afternoon heat ebbed and flowed before Potapova took a firm grip in the third set.

The win was Potapova's third career victory against a top 10 opponent and her first against Gauff after two losses.

"I think I just let it go, and I started to focus on my tennis and going for my shots and not



thinking what she is going to do," Potapova said of her turnaround performance.

Gauff was disappointed with a performance where she failed to find a consistent rhythm.

Potapova will play Chinese starlet Zheng Qinwen in the round of 16 after she beat 12th seed Liudmila Samsonova 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in 3 hours and 7 minutes.

Rybakina rallied from a set down to sink Badosa 3-6, 7-5, 6-3. She extended her winning streak to 10 matches as she kept on course to claim the Miami-Indian Wells "Sunshine Double".

Azarenka fell in three sets to the lower-ranked Linette 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-4 ending her hopes of a fourth Miami title.

Linette, who had not won a set off of Azarenka in their two prior meetings, converted five of her eight break points and will now face Pegula for a place in the quarter-finals.

Former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko defeated 13th seed Brazilian Beatriz Haddad Maia for the fourth time in as many meetings to reach the fourth round with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 win.

Samra clinches 50m 3P bronze in shooting WC

PTI ■ BHOPAL

India's upcoming shooter Sift Kaur Samra came up with an inspired performance to clinch her second senior medal at the international level, beating a tough field to win the 50m rifle 3P bronze on the penultimate day of the ISSF Rifle/Pistol World Cup here on Sunday.

On a day when China continued their domination, with Zhang Qiongyue winning gold in the event, Samra, the reigning national champion, scored a total of 403.9 points in the ranking round to finish third, even as Zhang (414.7 points) and Czech Republic's Aneta Brabcova (411.3) entered the title round.

In the gold-medal round, Zhang defeated her Czech rival 16-8.

India are currently second on the medals table behind China with one gold, one silver and five bronze medals.

China are leading the tally with seven gold, two silver and an equal number of bronze.

On Sunday, Samra added to the bronze medal she had won



last year at the World Cup in Changwon, China.

All eyes were on world championships silver medallist in air rifle Anjum Moudgil in the preliminary round of the 3P event. But Samra was in a different zone on Sunday, shooting superb series in all three positions to emerge second

best at the end of the qualification round with a score of 588.

Samra, 21, who had some of the best scores in the trials held in New Delhi ahead of the World Cup, had three awful 'standing' rounds in the ranking match, which allowed Zhang and Brabcova to race to the top.

Bayern players 'shocked' by Nagelsmann dismissal



AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich midfielders Joshua Kimmich and Leon Goretzka admitted on Saturday that Julian Nagelsmann's dismissal as head coach had come as a "disappointment" and a "shock".

"It's always difficult when a coach goes, and I had a very close relationship with Julian," Goretzka told ZDF broadcaster after Germany's 2-0 friendly international win over Peru.

"In the last year, I've probably seen him more than my family, so it is a shock," he added.

Kimmich said that he and his team-mates were at fault for the departure of Nagelsmann, who was sacked by Bayern on Friday.

"It's always disappointing when a coach is sacked, because it means we have not delivered as players," said Kimmich.

He added that it had been strange to prepare for an international game amid the noise of Nagelsmann's dismissal.

"It's a curious situation,

but that's the football business at the end of the day. There is not much heart, not much love."

Nagelsmann was sacked on Friday after a 2-1 defeat to Bayer Leverkusen saw Bayern slip behind title rivals Borussia Dortmund last weekend.

His successor Thomas Tuchel was presented in Munich on Saturday, with Bayern bosses expressing optimism that the former Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain coach could turn a turbulent season around.

Kimmich, though, admitted that he had no relationship with Tuchel as of yet.

"I don't know him yet," he told ZDF.

Goretzka, meanwhile, seemed to question statements by Bayern sporting director Hasan Alihamidzic that there had been a split between Nagelsmann and the players.

"I'd be stupid to contradict my boss, but personally, I had no split with Julian," he said. "We have to trust our bosses that they are making the right decision for the club," he added.

Morocco stun Brazil for first time

AP ■ TANGIERS

Morocco stunned Brazil 2-1 in a friendly international on Saturday as the north African side recorded a first ever win over the five-time world champions.

Midfielder Sofiane Boufal, a former Southampton star, but now playing with Al Rayyan in Qatar, gave Morocco the lead after 29 minutes, scoring with a powerful turn and drive from a pass by Bilal El Khannous.

Brazil skipper Casemiro

levelled in the 67th minute when his weak shot was fumbled by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

But on-loan Sampdoria midfielder Abdelhamid Sabiri struck the winner with a volley in the 79th minute as Morocco showed that becoming the first Arab or African nation to reach the World Cup semi-finals last year was no fluke.

"I wouldn't say we lacked understanding, it's about putting into practice the ideas of a new coach," said



Manchester United's Casemiro.

"I think we played a good game and did everything as far as possible to win."

Only 10 of the 23-man squad that took Brazil to a disappointing quarter-final exit at the World Cup made the trip to Morocco for the game.

The injured Neymar was again missing with his number 10 shirt passing to Real Madrid youngster Rodrygo.

Brazil also had a new manager in the dugout with interim coach Ramon Menezes having replaced Tite who

stepped down after the World Cup last-eight exit at the hands of Croatia.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) hopes to be able to announce the name of its new coach before the start of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup in September.

According to Brazilian media, the CBF's first choice is Carlo Ancelotti, currently in charge of Real Madrid.

However, he is not expected to make a decision on his future before the end of the European season.

Fuellkrug at the double as Germany sink Peru

AP ■ MAINZ

Two goals from Niclas Fuellkrug helped Germany blow away their World Cup blues with a 2-0 win in a friendly against Peru on Saturday.

Fuellkrug struck twice in the first half to give Hansi Flick's side a welcome victory in their first game since a catastrophic World Cup campaign in Qatar last year which ended with a group stage exit.

"It was all about getting a good start to the year today," said Fuellkrug.

"After what happened at the World Cup, it was important that we started well in 2023, so I'm happy we managed to do that," added Germany goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who deputised in place of the injured Manuel Neuer.

With his side automatical-



ly qualifying for Euro 2024 as hosts, Flick had made clear his desire to experiment with younger players in friendlies against Peru and Belgium.

The Germany coach named a squad which con-

tained five uncapped players and left out big-name stars such as Thomas Mueller, Leroy Sane and Ilkay Gundogan.

But it was 30-year-old Bundesliga journeyman Fuellkrug who made the differ-

ence as Germany eased past a toothless Peru side.

Germany dominated the first half and deserved to take the lead on 12 minutes.

Kai Havertz brought down a long ball from Nico Schlotterbeck in the box, allowing an unmarked Fuellkrug to smash in the opener from close range.

Debutant Marius Wolf fizzed a low cross into the box to set up Fuellkrug for a first-time, close-range finish to double the lead just after the half-hour mark.

Fuellkrug has now scored five goals in as many games for his country, and is well on the way to establishing himself as a regular for Germany.

"I'm getting my opportunities and I'm really happy that I'm linking up so well with the others, so let's hope it continues," he told broadcaster ZDF.

Spain make winning start in Euro qualifying

AP ■ PARIS

Spain won 3-0 against a Norway side missing the injured Erling Haaland in the opening round of Euro 2024 qualifiers on Saturday, while Wales snatched a stoppage-time equaliser to frustrate Croatia.

Dani Olmo turned in Alejandro Balde's driven low cross on 13 minutes in Malaga and Joselu scored twice on his Spain debut to give new coach Luis de la Fuente a victory in his first match in charge.

Three-time European champions Spain next go to Scotland, who saw off Cyprus 3-0 in their Group A opener after Scott McTominay scored twice late on as a substitute at Hampden Park.

Croatia, finalists and semi-finalists at the past two World Cups, conceded a last-gasp equaliser to kick off Group D as Wales debutant



Nathan Broadhead tapped home a flick-on from a long throw.

Turkey came from behind to defeat Armenia 2-1 in Yerevan.

Renato Steffen scored a first-half hat-trick as Switzerland thrashed Belarus 5-0 in a game played behind closed doors in Serbia.

Dennis Man and Denis Alibec were on target as Romania eased to a 2-0 win away to 10-man Andorra, while Israel drew 1-1 at home to Kosovo.

‘Gunasekhar didn’t want the trend of fake jewellery taking space on screen’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The art and production design in every Gunasekhar film is a whole mood in itself. A source exclusively told us, “We have heard the standards set by our forefathers. Let’s talk about the cinematic adaptation of *Shaakuntalam*! In 1940, a Tamil movie called *Shakunthalai* came out, which was directed by a Hollywood director. Subbalakshmi garu acted as Shakuntala in it. Kalidasa brilliantly wrote the story of Shakuntala Dusyanta in the Adiparvam of Mahabharata under the name Abhijnana Sakunthalam. The stage adaptation was excellent. They set the trend. Then Rama Rao made a movie. Santaram did one too! Thereafter, no one has done it for 60-70 years. It is a timeless classic.”

So, whatever the setting or the story be, Tollywood fans come to expect that signature look of his. So many kilos of gold worn by the lead actors is the next talk of the town.

The source continued, “Samantha was so sporting. From the exteriors, she may look like a delicate woman but nonetheless she has a lot of stamina.”

Nowadays, in films jewellery is also digitised but not following that path and instead taking the real inspiration from Rama Rao — the director didn’t want the trend of fake jewellery taking space on screen. Dil Raju, the producer, was ready to invest fourteen crores immediately but then Neelima Guna spoke to Vasundhara Jewellers. They are art lovers. They didn’t start counting commercially, their primary goal differed.”

What will happen to the jewelry once the movie is over? Well, the director has decided to continue to preserve it under the Shakuntalam collection. Well to know how the big banner approached Vasundhara group — we had the insights from the adversary’s end too.

The team responds, “Neelima Guna approached my (Vasundhara Jewellers owner) daughter in law, she had already seen the samples before. Probably, she remembered. She was impressed, it seems! Then she gave us the intricate details as to how she wants her lead actors to wear authentic jewellery. My sister got too involved and for the next six to eight months she was on the project! After the designs were made, minor changes were done here and there. Neeta Lulla was guiding us!”



Nani is ‘overwhelmed’ by the love for *Dasara* in Jaipur

It’s been an exciting few days for Natural actor Nani who is on a promotional spree for his Pan-India film *Dasara* that releases 30th March. After an activity-filled tour in Ahmedabad, the superstar travelled to the Pink City and was welcomed by Jaipur with a thunderous response, speaking volumes for the kind of anticipation surrounding his film ‘Dasara’ up north!

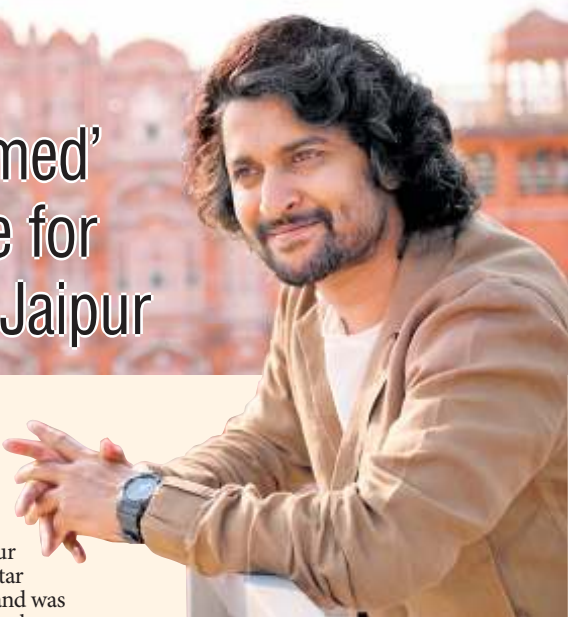
Apart from visiting the monumental Hawa Mahal and exploring the city, the actor got a local taste of Jaipur’s signature paan. Nani has been making headlines for his entry in different cities and after entering on a truck in Lucknow, a chagada in

Ahmedabad and a tractor in Nagpur, he made a grand entry in an open jeep at a college visit in Jaipur. Crowds gathered in large numbers to watch the superstar after the stupendous response the trailer received ever since it dropped.

Written and directed by Srikanth Odela, *Dasara* takes audiences through the socio economic condition, political ambition and power struggle of the Singareni collieries. With an extraordinary storyline and anticipated to have some note-worthy performances, the film has unquestionably been the talk of the town.

Thrilling with high-energy, the trailer of the film gave audiences a glimpse of all the entertainment in store as the superstar takes on his whistle-worthy role. Said Nani, “After Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur and Ahmedabad, I was thrilled to meet the people of Jaipur and ecstatic with all the things they had to say about *Dasara* and how excited they are about the film. The energy and love I’ve received from Jaipur is really overwhelming and I can’t wait for them to watch the film.”

Produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri and Srikanth Chundi, ‘Dasara’ stars Nani, Keerthy Suresh, Dheekshith Shetty, Shine Tom Chacko, Samuthirakani, Sai Kumar. Written and directed by Srikanth Odela with music by Santhosh Narayanan and cinematography by Sathyan Sooryan Isc the film is all set for its big nationwide release on 30th March.



Raashii Khanna desires to do an *Aashiqui* kind of film with Kartik Aaryan

Actress Raashii Khanna has expressed her desire to work with actor Kartik Aaryan in a love story just like *Aashiqui*.

Recently during an interview, while talking about Kartik, Raashii said, “I think with him, I would like to do an intense love story, not a comedy fun genre kind of film but like an intense film like *Aashiqui*.”

“That film I think will be very nice because I love romantic films and I had done a film and that was the film that was immensely loved by the audience so they love me in a love story. So if I have to do with Kartik, probably a film like that.”

On the work front, Raashii Khanna will be making her Bollywood debut alongside Sidharth Malhotra in *Yodha*.



Pawan Kalyan completes shooting for #PKSDT

Pawan Kalyan’s latest film referred as #PKSDT co-starring Sai Dharam Tej was launched last month. Ever since the film has been progressing at jet speed with Pawan Kalyan taking part in the shoot regularly. Even when he needed to take a break for a couple of days to participate in Janasena party 10th formation day celebrations, after completing the meeting at midnight he joined the shoot the next morning.

The film which is a remake of Tamil film Vinodhaya Sitham, has Pawan Kalyan in a prominent role along with Sai Dharam Tej in the lead role. To everyone’s surprise Pawan Kalyan has completed shooting his part except for songs. The same was announced by director in his tweet. He stat-

ed, “Thank you God ?? . We have successfully completed our talkie portion of Kalyan sir. See you all in theatres on July 28.”

It is known that the release date of the film has been announced as July 28. This is the fastest film in Pawan Kalyan’s career to release within five months of its launch. The film has an interesting theme where Sai Dharam Tej after meeting with an accident gets a second chance to live and it is given by a godlike character played by Pawan Kalyan.

PKSDT is produced by People Media Factory in collaboration with ZEE Studios. Thaman is providing the music. Trivikram is penning the screenplay of the film. The film will hit the screens on 28th July.



Mem Famous promises to be a rib-tickling entertainer

Recently *Balagam* has created a trend of pure Telangana flavour films. Now another film is coming in the same zone but this time it is a youthful fun-filled film. After the success of *Writer Padmabhushan*, Lahari Films and Chai Bisket Films are coming together with another interesting project titled *Mem Famous!*

First look of the film was released recently. The makers unleashed the teaser of the movie on Sunday. This movie is about three reckless friends in a village who enjoy life to the fullest, despite being scolded by their parents. They regularly use the term famous. They are not famous but tell people to make them famous. The torn jeans episode, the discussion about the 13th-day ceremony, and posing for photographs at a function are the entertaining parts in the teaser. The video assures that *Mem Famous!* is going to be a hilarious entertainer.

Sumanth Prabhas is playing the lead role, besides directing it. Mani Aegurla, Mourya Chowdary, Saarya and Siri Raasi are the other prominent cast of the movie written and directed by Sumanth Prabhas himself. Anurag Reddy, Sharath, and Chandru Manoharan together are producing the movie.

Sumanth Prabhas who also directed the movie picked a subject that has enough scope for amusement. Shyam Dupati’s cinematography is impressive, while Kalyan Nayak elevated the fun quotient with his background score. The makers announced to release the movie worldwide on 2nd June.

Action producer Kenny Bates onboard for director Koratala Siva’s *NTR 30*

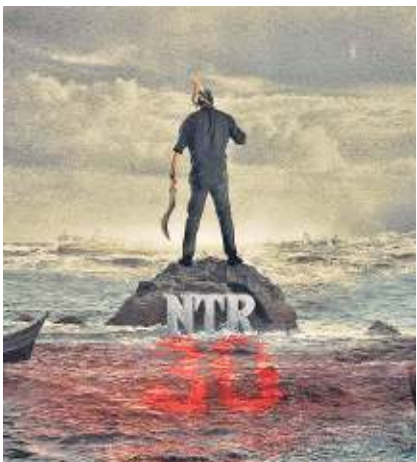
After hosting a grand muhurat puja in Hyderabad on Thursday, the makers of NTR Jr’s next *NTR 30* have released an update for all eager fans. Kenny Bates has now joined director Koratala Siva’s team in the long-awaited actioner which will go on the floors this month.

NTR 30 will mark director Koratala Siva’s second outing with NTR Jr after Janatha Garage’s grand success. Kenny Bates will oversee most of the action sequences in the film. In the past, Kenny Bates has worked on international projects like *Transformers*, *Rambo III* etc.

In the picture shared on social media we can see director Koratala Siva in a deep discussion with Kenny Bates, Sabu Cyril and R Rathnavelu over a miniature sculpture of a boat.

A source close to the filmmaker added, “Director Koratala Siva is leaving no stone unturned to ensure *NTR 30* is the biggest and best film. While he has already been working for more than a year with his dream team on this project, Kenny Bates will be a bonus to this project.”

The film already has Anirudh Ravichander creating music. The makers also have DOP R Rathnavelu, Art director Sabu Cyril and editor



Sreekar Prasad working on this film. The actioner also stars Janhvi Kapoor and is produced by Hari Krishna K of NTR Arts and Sudhakar Mikkilineni of Yuvasudha Arts. It will release on 5th April 2024.

Meanwhile, the director had also expressed being fortunate to collaborate with NTR Jr.

The director said, “I feel fortunate to work with my brother and one of the best actors of our generation for the second time. The film’s backdrop is centered around the far and forgot-

ten coastal lands of India. The people, or rather the villains, in the film neither fear death nor god and there is no sense of humanity among them. The film is a very emotional story that emphasizes the role fear plays in having a moral and humane society. I promise everyone that #NTR30 is going to be my biggest and best film”

The film is produced by Hari Krishna K of NTR Arts and Sudhakar Mikkilineni of Yuvasudha Arts and will be releasing on 5th April 2024.

First single from *Risk* released in Hindi, Telugu Tamil and Kannada

Based on the events of the movie *6 Teens*, the film’s music director Ghanthadi Krishna is producing and directing its sequel titled *Risk*. The movie is being released pan India with dubs in Hindi, Telugu Tamil and Kannada.

The film’s first single *SogasukeSogasu* by Sid Sriram was recently released under the Aditya Music label. The event was graced

by the legendary producer cum director MS Raju, Yalamanchili Ravi shankar of Mythri Movies, hero Aditya Om, Uppal MLA Bethi Subhash Reddy, Telangana BC commission chairman V Ramakrishna Rao, sociologist D Kumara Swami, Raavi Suresh Reddy, Gaddam Ravi, Vijay Varma, Director RK and others from the film team.

The Telugu version *Sogasuke*

Sogasu was released by MS Raju who lauded Krishna’s melodious music composition for the movie. Meanwhile, the Hindi lyrical *ItiKhubsurat* was released by hero Aditya Om, Tamil version *Azhagu* by the MLA BetiSubhash Reddy, and the Kannada version *Sogasi* *Merugu* was released by the Telangana BC commission’s chairman V Ramakrishna Rao.

