

Political parties not bothered about Andhra Pradesh’s fiscal health!

What is happening in the debt-ridden state of Andhra Pradesh is a game of one-upmanship among principal political players engaged in handing out freebies to voters. With elections fast-approaching, these parties have set a single-point programme of wooing voters with competitively attractive offers to be able to rule the state, regardless of the deteriorating fiscal health of the state. The state is already neck deep in financial problems due to the implementation of a plethora of welfare schemes. Yet, the two main political parties in Andhra Pradesh are competing to hoodwink people in the name of bringing welfare schemes for people, though the beneficiaries of government's programmes comprise mostly the working class.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) founder NT Rama Rao

brought a novel scheme of giving one kilogram of rice for two rupees to poor people in 1983. NTR's predecessor and Congress chief minister Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy was constrained to take a step in this regard after observing the tremendous response from people when NTR mentioned this scheme at public meetings during his 35,000-km yatra on his 'Chaitanya Ratham'. Everybody, cutting across party lines, welcomed the proposal to distribute subsidised rice through nearly 37,800 fair price shops (then) across the state. Sensing the political fallout of the public response to the subsidised rice scheme proposal of NTR, Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy introduced the same at Rs.1.90 in the state, thinking that it would take the wind out of the sails of NTR. But NTR reacted positively to the then gov-

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ernment's move and expressed his confidence that TDP would end the 35-year rule of the Congress and thereafter effectively implement the subsidised rice scheme for the poor. NTR stormed to power, emerging as the first non-Congress chief minister of AP. NTR came to be identified with the popular scheme so much so that the credit went to him, though the Congress government continued the scheme during its rule in the later years.

Supplying subsidised rice to people in need is understandable. But introducing less productive schemes requiring huge outgo is questionable, especially if they are going to impair the state's fiscal health. Scholarships have been paid to students in schools and colleges annually since the regime of the first chief minister of combined Andhra Pradesh Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy. Yesteryear chief ministers did not insist on linking their names with those schemes for sheer publicity. These days chief ministers inscribe their names as prefixes to every welfare scheme. The term 'Chandranna' could be found in almost every



scheme implemented in the state during the rule of TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu. Now, the term has made way for 'Jagananna', reflecting the name of YSRCP president YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

Presently, with almost everything available at their doorstep in the name welfare schemes, the working class is kicking its habit of working to

earn money for at least two square meals a day. Hence, there is avoidable scarcity of farm labour in rural areas across the state. Even small and marginal farmers are being forced to engage farm equipment and machinery at various stages of cultivation. Some farmers have started engaging groups of farm labourers from distant places like West Bengal and Bihar. In these circumstances, it is irresponsible on the part of major political parties to continue to promise welfare schemes, ignoring the looming fiscal disaster.

Residual AP started its journey with a deficit of Rs. 16,000 crore in the annual budget. So, the state ought to have adopted a careful approach towards financial management. Instead, the successive rulers made visits to World Economic Forum summits at huge costs to the exchequer – at least Rs. 15 crore each – but returned almost empty-handed.

Nobody knows whether any industrial unit of significance has been grounded in the state following MoUs signed at the WEF summits.

The YSRCP government has spent Rs. 2.10 crore on welfare schemes, using mostly borrowed funds. The AP government gets loans at huge interest rates. Such loans are not supposed to exceed 30% of its annual income. Yet, AP has willingly crossed this limit. Amidst this fiscal discipline, the state government has no qualms telling people that Rs. 2.10 crore had been distributed among lakhs of beneficiaries, suggesting that the borrowings were made only for them!

The TDP, at its recent Mahanadu in Rajahmundry, brought out its manifesto full of freebies with a view to return to power. The promised schemes have striking similarities with those launched by YSRCP: offers of paying Rs.15,000 to every schoolgo-

ing child in the family, monthly cash allowance of Rs. 1,500 to women; and unemployment allowance of Rs. 3,000 to youth, among others.

As they say, "a statesman thinks about the next generation, while a politician thinks only about the next election". Going by the skewed approaches of YSRCP and TDP, where would the state go with its mounting debts tomorrow? What path is left for the person who would be ruling the state tomorrow? As things stand, the financial position of AP is so bad that the government can't easily pay salaries to its employees on the first of every month. There is nearly Rs.2 lakh debt burden on the head of every citizen in the state.

It is high time major political parties in the state understood the implications of going to voters with freebies and welfare schemes just to be in power with least regard for fiscal discipline.

Kadapa, Vizag districts secure top national ranks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Dr. KS Jawahar Reddy has announced that Kadapa and Visakhapatnam districts have achieved top positions in the national level implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission. These districts have excelled in providing drinking water through taps to households, earning recognition in the best performing and fastest moving categories.

Dr. Jawahar Reddy explained that the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation oversees two significant programmes aimed at meeting the country's drinking water and sanitation needs: the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) and the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJEM). While



Under the National Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, designed by the Central Government to ensure tap water reaches every rural household by 2024, Dr. YSR Kadapa and Visakhapatnam districts have secured top ranks in the 2023 JJS in two categories at the national level.

SBM-G focuses on achieving complete sanitation in rural India, JJEM aims to provide quality tap water supply to every household. He highlighted the Swachh Survekshan Gramin (SSG) and Jal Jeevan Sarvekshan (JJS) assessment surveys, which rank states, Union Territories, and districts based on their performance in the SBM.

Under the National Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, designed by the Central

Government to ensure tap water reaches every rural household by 2024, Dr. YSR Kadapa and Visakhapatnam districts have secured top ranks in the 2023 JJS in two categories at the national level. Dr. YSR Kadapa district emerged as the top performer in the aspirational districts category by providing tap connections to 75 to 100 percent of households in rural areas from October 1 to March 31, 2023. Visakhapatnam district claimed

the first position in the coverage of household tap connections, ranging from 50 to 75 percent, among the aspirational districts.

Additionally, Visakhapatnam district ranked 3rd out of 168 districts in terms of coverage of household tap connections ranging from 50 to 75 percent. The Chief Secretary mentioned that the Additional Secretary of the Jal Jeevan Mission, in a letter to the state, emphasized that these half-yearly rankings would contribute to determining the annual national best ranks. Commendation letters from the Central Jal Jeevan Mission Additional Secretary, Vikas Sheel, were also sent to the state, acknowledging their achievements.

QUIT TOBACCO TO LEAD HAPPY LIFE

World No Tobacco Day today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tobacco consumption is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases, including cancer, lung disease, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. It is one of the major causes of death and disease in India and accounts for nearly 1.35 million deaths every year.

World No Tobacco Day is observed on May 31. On the occasion, Dr Gutta Lokesh, Consultant - Interventional Pulmonologist, Manipal Hospitals, appealed to tobacco consuming people to quit the habit to dramatically improve their health and help them live longer. Quitting smoking lowers the risk of heart disease, lung disease, kidney failure, infection, stomach problems, diabetes, and cancer. He said that it was not easy for most people, and it could take several tries to completely quit.

AP Governor commemorates 36th Statehood Day of Goa

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor S Abdul Nazeer on Tuesday commemorated the 36th full statehood day of Goa and called the state the 'Pearl of the Orient' for its splendid natural beauty, vibrant culture, hospitable people and breathtaking beauty.

Commenting the people of the coastal state who contributed greatly to national development, the Governor said Goa was known as 'Goa Dourada' or 'Golden Goa', owing to its beauty, prosperity and lucrative ports which facilitated trade with the West.

"Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat programme under which the formation days of different states and UTs are celebrated, aims to forge a strong relationship and bonding among people of the country, and enhance interaction and promote mutual understanding," said Nazeer in a press note shared by the Raj



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under Portuguese rule for 14 more years even after India achieved independence and had to be liberated from European colonial power by the Indian armed forces on December 19, 1961 through 'Operation Vijay'.

Meanwhile, Wajeeta Tarannam, G Tejaswi, Sk Haseena and U Kalyani enthralled the audience with a Goan dance performance while Goan residents Mansi Maruti Harkare, Sahil Betigen, Pooja Vishwakarma and Shantashree Nerekar who are studying in and around Vijayawada spoke of their experiences.

NMC derecognises medical college owned by Sujana

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Previously associated with the TDP, Sujana Chowdary was elected to the Rajya Sabha on a TDP ticket and served as a minister in the Modi cabinet from 2014 to 2018.

After the 2019 general elections, he, along with CM Ramesh and TG Venkatesh, joined the BJP.

Sujana Chowdary shares a close association with TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, and there have been discussions regarding his potential candidacy as a TDP representative from the Guntur Lok Sabha constituency in the upcoming elections. The current seat holder, Galla Jayadev, is currently less active in the party.

CM inaugurates new ‘Home for the sick’



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday visited the Missionaries of Charity Nirmal Hriday Bhavan in Vijayawada and inaugurated its new Home for Sick and Dying Destitutes. The chief minister visited the charity organisation along with his wife Bharati. "At Nirmal Hriday Bhavan, CM Jagan and his wife Bharati interacted with orphans, specially-abled children and old people," said a press note shared by the state government on Tuesday. Nirmal Hriday Bhavan is located near Raghavaiah Park in Vijayawada.

Modi balanced development and welfare: MP GVL

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

GVL Narasimha Rao, a Rajya Sabha MP from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his exemplary governance, emphasising the progress achieved in terms of welfare and development, which had been neglected for decades. However, he criticized Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for prioritising personal power over the state's financial stability.

Addressing a media briefing on Tuesday, GVL highlighted the commitment of the Modi-led Union government to public welfare and its dedication to national infrastructure, defense, education, healthcare, job creation, and the vision of



a self-reliant India. He proudly stated, "We have undertaken developmental initiatives that surpass any undertaken in the past 65 years." GVL attributed India's rise to the world's fifth-largest economy and its leadership in defense to Modi's governance. He also noted that the construction of the new Parliament building, spread across 13 acres at a cost

of Rs 900 lakh, marked a historic achievement.

The MP also mentioned Modi's initiatives, such as providing free gas cylinders to 10 crore women across the country, and expressed confidence that the BJP would emerge victorious in the next elections under Modi's leadership. GVL highlighted the international recognition received by Modi, with Prime Ministers of Italy and Australia acknowledging him as a capable guide for nations worldwide. He pointed out that Andhra Pradesh had received Rs 55,000 crore in NREGA funds during the last nine years, surpassing the allocations to other states. Regarding the TDP manifesto, GVL stated that it was their party's prerogative, and the people of Andhra Pradesh would make their decision in due course.

APSFL to launch...

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The movie "Nirikshan" will be screened as part of the inaugural event and can be accessed through APSFL.

Dr. Reddy highlighted the increasing number of movie enthusiasts and the rise of streaming platforms, such as OTT services. Subscribers will have the opportunity to view new movies live by paying a subscription fee of Rs 99, bypassing the need for OTT platforms. This initiative will be particularly beneficial for rural residents who may find it challenging to visit cinemas in urban areas.

Dr. Reddy reassured stakeholders that this policy will not disrupt theatre owners, management, or actors. Theatre owners need not be concerned about the fallout as APSFL's approach should be viewed as complementary to traditional cinema. He clarified that APSFL will only screen

movies after receiving requests from producers.

To make APSFL more accessible to the people of Andhra Pradesh, the organisation has set a target of laying 55,000 km of optical fiber cable (OFC), with 37,000 km already completed. Fiber net connectivity has been extended to 7,600 villages out of the 11,254 gram panchayats.

The YSRCP government, led by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, has successfully fulfilled its promises to the people over its four-year rule. The government has implemented innovative reforms and made revolutionary decisions in various sectors, including free education, healthcare, agriculture, and industry.

With the launch of the "First Day First Show" concept, APSFL aims to provide a convenient and inclusive movie-watching experience for all its subscribers.

Tammineni's remarks over

Continued from Page 1

The Speaker's statements are not befitting of his role and seem to indicate a conspiracy against Naidu," said Srinivasulu, who confidently predicted the TDP's victory in the upcoming elections.

Meanwhile, TDP politburo member Varla Ramaiah wrote a letter to DGP Rajendranath Reddy, expressing concern over Sitaram's controversial comments about Naidu's security. TDP activists staged protests across the state in response to the Speaker's remarks.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
PANCHAYATI RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

6- PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

NIT No.37 to 38/TO/2023-24. Dated: 29-05-2023

Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for 2 Road works with and Estimated Cost of Rs.966.49 Lakhs under PMGSY-III Grants in Krishna District. Bid upload and download starting date: 01.06.2023 onwards. Further details visit: <https://ipmgsytendersap.gov.in>. Ph.No.6305693265.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer
Panchayati Raj, Machilipatnam, Krishna Dist

Reforms, welfare mark Jagan's four-year rule

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

It has been an arduous journey for YSRCP following a resounding victory in the Assembly elections four year years ago. The party made history by securing a staggering 151 out of 175 seats, leaving the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) with just 23 seats, resulting in a significant shift in the political landscape. As the YSRCP enters its fifth year in power, the State prepares for a fierce electoral battle with the Opposition in 2024.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy remains confident in his people-centric governance model, marked by direct benefit transfers (DBT), groundbreaking reforms in education, health, agriculture, social security, decentralisation, and a unique development strategy harnessing the immense potential of the 970 km coastline. The 5 lakh-strong army of ward/village volunteers facilitates the doorstep delivery of various welfare schemes, while the introduction of ward and village secretariat systems streamlines access to government services.

On the other hand, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Opposition, seeks to appeal to the people through a range of welfare schemes and has launched an unrelenting campaign against the YSRCP government.

For a state where 3.4 crore out of 4.9 crore people reside in rural areas and 55 percent rely on agriculture, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy envisions an "Andhra for All," aiming to ensure welfare reaches even the most marginalized citizens. Skillfully circumventing traditional party structures, he



The unemployment rate has decreased from 5.3 percent (2018-19) to 4.1 percent (2020-21), with 51,669 individuals gaining employment through 536 job melas

has successfully deposited a staggering Rs 2.15 lakh crore directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries, primarily from BC, SC, ST, minority, and economically weaker sections.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has also displayed astute political acumen by cultivating support among BC, SC, ST, and minority communities, forming a cabinet with five deputy chief ministers represent-

ing these sections. Moreover, the recent cabinet reshuffle saw 70 percent (17 out of 25) of MLAs from BC, SC, ST, and minority backgrounds appointed as ministers, thus continuing the trend.

The four-year tenure of Jagan Mohan Reddy's governance boasts significant achievements, including a steady Gross State Domestic Product growth rate of 4.47 percent, surpassing the national average of 3.8 percent. The per capita income has risen from 18th rank (Rs 1.52 lakh in 2018-2019) to 9th rank (Rs 1.70 lakh in 2021). Notably, there has been a remarkable 21.36 percent increase in the average pay of regular wage salaried employees, a stark contrast to the previous TDP government's 5.57 percent decrease.

Furthermore, the unemployment rate has decreased from 5.3 percent (2018-19) to 4.1 percent (2020-21), with 51,669 individuals gaining employment through 536 job melas (source: CMIE).

The state has witnessed a wave of agricultural reforms, leading to a higher Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR). Andhra Pradesh stands as the first state to provide institutional credit to 1.51 lakh tenant farmers. Additionally, the state has climbed to the 7th position in terms of food grain production, compared to the 11th rank in 2019.

With an annual fish production of 51.74 million tonnes, Andhra Pradesh has emerged as the leading fish producer in the country, contributing 29.44 percent to the nation's fish production.

Naidu is a creator of assets, says Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After a brief halt to 'padayatra' on account of Mahanadu, TDP general secretary Lokesh resumed his walkathon on Tuesday. On the occasion he said that the problems of the people discovered during his ongoing 'padayatra' were brought to the notice of TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu.

Lokesh said that Chandrababu Naidu has announced several welfare schemes at the Mahanadu in

the name of Future Guarantee.

Addressing a huge public meeting at Jammalamadugu, Lokesh expressed deep satisfaction at the massive gathering for his public meeting. He felt that he was fortunate enough to undertake his pada yatra on a historic land like Jammalamadugu. Observing that the YSRCP leaders are getting totally disturbed at even the mini-manifesto of the TDP announced at Mahanadu. Lokesh felt that once the main manifesto is announced the chapter of the YSRCP will come

to an end. Stating that the YSRCP leaders are asking as to how the schemes announced in the mini manifesto will be implemented, he made it clear that Chandrababu is a creator of assets and the TDP can easily implement all the schemes.

Lokesh said and promised to create 20 lakh jobs in five years. "I am assuring you all that once the TDP forms the next government job calendar will be announced every year and study circles will be set up in all the districts in the State."



Hyd activists stand in solidarity with women wrestlers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Social activists from Hyderabad stood in solidarity with women wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik who are fighting for justice on harassment they are going through and how they were detained in Delhi recently. The activists also demanded the arrest of the Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh as the situation worsened and wrestlers planned to immerse their medals in the Ganga. The Hyderabad group stood near Hussain Sagar and also protested in front of new Ambedkar statue. Tejaswini, one among them, said, "We were disgusted on how our Olympians were treated by the government and how sexual assault accused was being protected.

Hone skills: Botsa to teachers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has emphasised the need for teachers to enhance their teaching abilities, aiming to provide literacy and numeracy for all students. He urged teachers to play a crucial role in advancing the state's educational progress.

As the chief guest at the valedictory of the six-day foundational training programme, Minister Satyanarayana stressed the importance of teachers engaging with students through various activities such as play, singing, and interactive teaching to achieve desired outcomes. He also highlighted the State government's increased funding for school education and implementation of several reforms.

"We have strengthened the school education system



through initiatives like 'Jagananna Gorumudda', 'Jagananna Amma Vodi', 'Jagananna Vidya Kanuka', and other child welfare programmes," stated Minister Satyanarayana.

He further mentioned the development of school infrastructure under 'Manabadi Nadu-Nedu' and the forthcoming implementation of

digital education. The Minister emphasised the importance of teachers applying the techniques learned in the Gyan Prakash programme within the classroom and assured ongoing training for them.

Commissioner of School Education S Suresh Kumar emphasised that teaching skills hold greater significance than the medium of instruction, as they contribute to achieving the desired quality of education.

State Project Officer of Samagra Siksha B Srinivasa Rao highlighted the potential of teachers in building a better society through value-based education.

Satyanarayana also visited the stalls set up by resource persons who participated in the six-day training programme and unveiled the pamphlet for the 'Gyan Prakash' training programme.

Sexual offenders under watch in Cyberabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad police on May 25 conducted a surveillance programme to monitor 143 sexual offenders in its jurisdiction.

The list of offenders under scanner includes those convicted for crimes against women and children, those who have done heinous crimes of rape and murder as well as offenders involved in sexual offences against innocent minors.

The exercise was carried in all five zones - Madhapur, Rajendra Nagar, Balanagar, Medchal and Shamshabad.

The programme comprised checking current whereabouts of all offenders, their activities in their residential areas plus in their neighbourhood areas, whether offender is involved in any other crime in any other area and the updated residential details of the offenders were recorded.

CM to visit Gudivada in June

He is expected to distribute AP TIDCO houses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is likely to visit Gudivada in Krishna district in June to distribute AP TIDCO houses. The district administration is making arrangements for the visit of the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister's programme coordinator and MLC Talasila Raghu Ram, former minister and Gudivada MLA Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani), Machilipatnam MLA Perni Venkatramaiah (Nani), Krishna District Collector P Raja Babu and Superintendent of Police (SP) P Joshua conducted a review meeting with the higher officials at Gudivada Municipal Office on Tuesday.

As many as 8,912 AP TIDCO houses are ready to be distributed to the beneficiaries at Gudivada, and the distribution programme has been cancelled thrice so far. The district administration is



making arrangements for the programme for the fourth time.

Talasila Raghu Ram, Kodali Nani, Perni Nani, the Collector and the SP had decided to visit the venue to check the arrangements at the AP TIDCO housing complex in the Gudivada municipality limits.

However, due to the unexpected rain, they cancelled

the plan and conducted a meeting with the officials concerned.

Collector Raja Babu said that they would hand over 8,912 TIDCO houses to the beneficiaries of Gudivada municipality. Later, Kodali Nani and Perni Nani directed the officials to make all necessary arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit to Gudivada.

BJP chief challenges oppn parties for debate on development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BJP Andhra Pradesh State president Somu Veera Raju has come down heavily on the Opposition parties over their 'baseless allegations' against the Central government. He has challenged the Opposition parties to take part in a debate on the development works implemented by the Central government in the State.

Addressing media persons at the party office in Vijayawada on Tuesday, Somu Veera Raju explained the development initiatives executed with the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He alleged that even though the Central government had taken up various activities worth thousands of crores of rupees, the Opposition parties were politicising them. "They are making false allegations against the BJP-led NDA government for their own political existence," he said.

He asked the ruling YSRCP

government why it was not distributing the AP TIDCO houses, although they had been completed. "The State government is using the funds of Ayushman Bharat, but why is the government calling the scheme Aarogyasri," he asked. He flayed the State government for not mentioning the Central government's name after receiving funds.

Meanwhile, he challenged the ruling YSRCP and the Opposition TDP to come to an open debate on the Central government funds and the development implemented by the State government. He requested the media houses to come forward to organise a debate.

He alleged that the YSRCP had put the State in the reverse gear in the past four years. He demanded that the government disclose the list of industries coming to the State. He also criticised the State government for not allotting lands for Central projects.



AP BJP president Somu Veerajaru addressing a press conice in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Pic by CH VIJAYA BHASKAR

Cmde Rajneesh Sharma takes over as the Naval Officer-in-Charge, AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Cmde Rajneesh Sharma took over as Naval Officer-in-Charge, Andhra Pradesh from Cmde M Goverdhan Raju, NM at a Ceremonial Divisions held at Naval Base, Visakhapatnam on 30 May 23.

Cmde Rajneesh Sharma is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Pune. He was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 01 Jul 1997 and specializes in Navigation and Direction. He is also a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and Naval War College (NWC), Goa.

He has been the Fleet



Navigating Officer of the Eastern Fleet, Executive Officer of INS Shivalik and has commanded INS Akshay and Fleet Support Ship Deepak. His ashore appointment includes Commander Training Team at INA, Command Plans Officer of Eastern Naval Command

and Directing Staff at Naval War College, Goa. The officer has also done a tenure on deputation with National Coast Guard, Mauritius.

The officer is married to Rekha Sharma who is actively involved in Naval Wellness and Welfare Association.

Rahul to visit New Jersey

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president and former MLC Gidugu Rudra Raju has said that AICC leader Rahul Gandhi will visit New Jersey in the USA on June 4. He gave a call to the Non-Residents of Indians (NRI) to make the

programme successful.

Rudra Raju addressed a meeting of NRIs in New Jersey on Tuesday. As many as 200 NRIs attended the meeting.

He said that the democratic India was facing severe problems and he requested them to give suggestions to Rahul Gandhi to develop the

country. For that, the Congress party was going to organise a face-to-face programme in New Jersey, he said.

AICC secretary in charge Arthi Krishnaji, leaders Rajeshwar Ganganasi, Pradeep Shyamala, Srinivasa Rao, Bh Rama Mohana Rao, B Sujana Sai and others were present.



‘Conservation of environment everyone’s responsibility’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Protection of the environment and conservation of nature and natural resources is the responsibility of each and every individual living on this planet, opined Polavaram Irrigation Project Superintendent Engineer K Narasimha Murthy. An awareness programme on Mission LiFE and a plantation drive was organised by the Forest Department, in coordination with the Water Resources Development and Megha Engineering Infrastructure Limited (MEIL), at the Polavaram irrigation project site on Tuesday. The officials took the pledge of

'Mission LiFE'.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that LiFE meant 'Lifestyle for Environment', which was an India-led global mass movement introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 in Glasgow on November 2021 to encourage 'mindful and deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption' to protect and preserve the environment. The mission has emphasised on 75 key actions for individuals and communities to take across seven themes including 'Save Energy', 'Save Water', 'Say No to Single Use Plastic', 'Reduce e-waste', 'Adopt Sustainable Food Systems',

'Reduce Waste', and 'Adopt Healthy Lifestyles'.

"This initiative is designed with the objective to mobilise over one billion Indians and other global citizens to take individual and collective action for protecting and conserving the environment in the period 2022-28. As part of this, over 80 per cent of all villages and urban local bodies are aimed to become environment-friendly by 2028," he added.

Polavaram Forest Range Officer Daveedu Raju Nayudu said that the AP Forest Department aimed to organise more than 10,000 events by June 5 -- 'World Environment Day' --including awareness

campaigns, plantation drives and cleanup programmes across the State. As part of this, plastic clean-up drives are being held in various habitations involving local fishermen in Papikonda National Park, River Godavari and boating points of Papikondalu Tourism.

Polavaram Project Inspector of Police M Venkateswarulu said that in order to combat global warming, every individual should take the responsibility of planting and protecting trees for the survival of future generations of this plant. Engineers of the Water Resources Department, MEIL, and other officials were also present.



Jagan found a place in hearts of people: Rajini

The Health Minister says 98.5% promises of manifesto fulfilled

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Minister for Health Vidadala Rajini has claimed that 98.5% of assurances, given to the people in the manifesto, have been fulfilled and priority has been given to key sectors including health, welfare and education during the last four years.

Addressing a press conference in Chilakaluripet on Tuesday on the occasion of completing four years in office, the Minister said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had provided a great administration in these four years which will remain forever in history. She cut a cake to celebrate the completion of four years of formation of the YSRCP government.

She said that May 30, 2019 would remain in the history of AP forever as Jagan Mohan Reddy was sworn in as Chief Minister.

Jagan Mohan Reddy has found a place in the hearts of



the poor by implementing various welfare schemes. Every YSRCP activist could say proudly about the good governance provided during the four years and the schemes implemented for the poor, she said.

"The government has brought vital reforms in the Education, Medical, Health and Agriculture sectors. By implementing Amma Vodi, Vidya Deevana, Gorumudda and Vidya Kanuka, the government has taken education to the poor students.

Under the Nadu-Nedu scheme, the government

schools were modernized and all facilities were provided as par with the private schools," she claimed, adding that the government hospitals are being modernized to provide more facilities to the patients.

"17 new medical colleges are being constructed of which 5 medical colleges will start from this academic year. Permissions have already been given to four medical colleges. Family doctor system was introduced to take medical treatment to the door steps of the patient," the Health Minister stated.

Vidadala Rajini said that

the Rythu Bharosa Kendras have come as a boon to the farmers. The farmers are being provided free electricity, zero interest loans, free crop insurance and input subsidy is being extended in a fast manner. She said that 32 lakh poor were given house sites across the state and houses are being constructed in the sites to them.

She highlighted the YSR Cheyuta, Asara, Kapu Nestam, EBC Nestam and YSR zero interest loans which are being implemented by the YSRCP regime as per the assurance.

Taking a dig at the opposition TDP, she lamented that people endured many difficulties during the Naidu led TDP regime. The Janmabhoomi committees had looted the people. All sections of people were deceived during the Naidu regime, she slammed and predicted that the TDP would taste worse than the 1029 elections in the next elections.



Ensure transparency in transfers: Collector

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector P Prashanthi has directed the officials concerned to carry out the transfer process of village and ward employees in a transparent manner. The Collector held a meeting with the officials and reviewed the transfer process here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, she ordered the officials to conduct the transfer process as per the schedule. The transfers should be carried out without giving place to complaints and allegations, she directed the officials. She warned of action if complaints were received on the transfers.

The transfers process would continue till June 10, she said, adding that transfers would be carried out on the basis of three categories. "On medical

grounds, both husband and wife government employees can seek transfer within the district in the single woman category. If they want to go to other districts, they can apply in the husband and wife category only with mutual consent," she explained.

The Village Ward Secretariat employees are advised to apply online till June 3 for district and inter-district transfers, she said, stating that a link has been made available for employees to apply for transfers in the HRMS portal where they register their daily attendance.

Collector Prashanthi directed the officials to complete the examination of applications and objections by June 10. Schedule for transfer within the district is as follows: Submission of vacancy details in respective district offices on

May 28, application for transfer with self-attested details till June 3, online applications reviewed by appointing officer's office till June 6, display of web rank list on June 6, mandals, Allotment of ULBs, keeping the lists with reasons of rejection for transfer in portal, appointing authority should conduct physical counseling on the 8th, 9th, 10th June and issue transfer orders pointing to specific village and ward secretariat. From June 10, if the employee has any grievances, he can file a complaint before the District Collector.

Schedule for inter-district transfer is as follows: Submission of vacancy details by concerned district offices on May 28, application for transfer with self attested details till June 3, the appointing authority of the source district will

send the application to the destination district counterpart, on June 5 in the destination district format.

The State Head of the Department submits the applications to the Secretary by June 8, circulates to the Government, GAD Secretary and issues orders. On the 8th, 9th and 10th of June appointing authority should conduct physical counselling and issue transfer orders showing specific village and ward secretariat. From June 10, if the employee has any grievances, he can file a complaint before the District Collector.

GSWS officer KCH Appa Rao, district agriculture officer Z Venkateswara Rao, DHMO D Maheswara Rao and animal husbandry officer K Muralikrishna and other officials were present.



JSP activists tear off YSRCP flexi: Balineni

PNS ■ ONGOLE

YSRCP MLA and former minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy alleged that the Janasena activists tore off the flexi banners of YSRCP.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, he said that the flex banners of YSRCP were torn off by the JSP

activists at various places and they behaved outrageously on the YSRCP activists. "The YSRCP activists do not indulge in such activities. It is not proper for the JSP activists to destroy the flexi banners of YSRCP. No where the flexi banners of YSRCP were destroyed in the state except in Ongole," Balineni stated.

Take up special drive to identify child labour: District Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh directed the officials concerned to conduct a special drive during the month of June to identify child labour.

The Collector held a meeting with the task force committee here on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector asked the officials to take steps to bring out children from the workplace, send them to schools and provide them a bright future.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that everyone should cooperate to create a child labour-free district. He said that the officials of the Education Department, Police, Labour Department, Children's Rights Protection Organizations, Social Welfare



Department, Medical Department and other departments should identify the child labourers and bring them from work to school.

The Collector directed the officials to evolve a plan in this regard to conduct inspections with the concerned authorities in the month of June. The Collector ordered the District Deputy Labour Commissioner Kumari CH to register criminal

cases and impose fines on the owners who violate these and take children to work.

The Collector asked the officials to conduct frequent inspections at the places where child labour is prevalent. He told the officials to conduct inspections at the railway station, RTC complex, in hotels, in grocery shops and at brick kilns to identify if children are working there.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that the education department should bring the list of the children who have dropped out of school and counsel the parents so that the children can join the schools again. ASP Bhaskar Rao and DEO Ravisagar and social welfare JD Madhusudan Rao were among those who were present.



Police officials told to check ganja, illicit liquor menaces

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg directed the police officials to take stringent steps to check the ganja and illicit liquor menaces in the district.

The SP held a meeting with the Special Enforcement Bureau officials here on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, she told them to avail the technology in investigating procedures and strive hard to ensure that the offenders are punished in the courts. "The vigilance

should be strengthened to contain the brewing of illicit liquor, illegal transport and selling," the SP told them.

The SP also reviewed the illicit mining of sand and transportation. The SP directed the police officials to resolve the pending cases at the earliest. The Police and the SEB officers should conduct joint raids with special vigilance on country-made liquor distilling units and sales centres.

Special measures should be taken to curb illicit liquor,

ganja, illicit liquor, illegal sand, illicit drug traffic and other unsocial activities without further strengthening of the information system.

The SP gave away appreciation letters to the police personnel for performing the best in conducting raids on the country-made liquor brewing units. ASP (Admn.) K Nageswara Rao, SEB ES A Avulaiah, SB SDP B Mariyadas and trainee IPS Ankita Surana were among those who were present.

TDP leader lambasts YSRCP rule

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and former minister Nakka Ananda Babu ridiculed that the people of AP state had witnessed the rule of 'visionary' previously and now they are witnessing the rule of a 'prisoner'.

Talking to the media here on Tuesday, Anandababu said before 2019 the people of the state witnessed the rule of a visionary (Chandrababu Naidu). After 2019, the people of the state are witnessing the rule of a prisonary (Jagan

Mohan Reddy). Now the people of the state are grieving for defeating the TDP, he lashed out.

The state in the regime of YSRCP, has gone back to 20 years in respect of development, he slammed. During the TDP regime, 72% of Polavaram works had been completed, he claimed.

"Jagan Mohan Reddy has ruined the capital city Amaravati. No new industries have been established and some of the existing industries have left. Job notification has

not been issued," the TDP Polit Bureau member lambasted.

Anandababu Babu claimed that the AP government has borrowed to the tune of over Rs 9 lakh crore debts. "Without creating wealth, the state government has solely depended on debts. There is no vision to the Chief Minister who is hoodwinking the people in the name of welfare schemes," he criticised. The YSRCP was shocked with the manifesto unveiled by Chandrababu Naidu in the Mahanadu conclave, he claimed.

2 boys killed as lorry knocks down bike

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Two teenage boys were killed when the motorcycle on which they were going was knocked down by a lorry at Ankalamka temple at Peddaraveedu village on Tuesday.

Police said that a sand-laden lorry knocked down a motorcycle killing Rajanikant and Anvesh. Both the boys died while being shifted to the GGH in Guntur. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.

In another accident, four persons were injured when the

car in which they were travelling rammed a stationary lorry at Rapur village in Nellore district on Tuesday. Police said that a family belonging to Jangalapalli village in Atmakur constituency went to Tirumala on pilgrimage.

When they were going back to their village, their car rammed a stationary lorry in which four members of the family were injured. The condition of one of the injured is said to be serious. The car driver was drowsy at the steering wheel resulting in the car ramming the lorry, police said.



Karnataka Dy. CM Shiva Kumar visits Sundareswara temple

PNS ■ ELURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shiva Kumar worshipped at the famous Meenakshi sameta Iswarya Sundareswar Swamy temple at Chilakapadu village in Undrajavaram mandal in EG district in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday.

Shiva Kumar also participated in the idol consecration programme held in the temple. The priests of the temple blessed him. Later the deputy Chief Minister also participated in the Homam. Later he visited the house of TDP leader and former MLA Arimilli Radhakrishna.

Rain, gales blow painted storks' nests away in AP village, 20 chicks die

PNS ■ VEERAPURAM (SSS Dist)

As many as 20 painted stork chicks fell to their death at Veerapuram village in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Sathyasai district after their nests were blown away due to heavy rain and gales.

Nearly 20 nests were blown away during the gales on Monday, eight from one tree and six each from another two, leading to the deaths of the 20 chicks and injuries to some more of the birds, a forest official said on Tuesday.

Officials managed to gather 15 fallen chicks and a few more grown up ones to treat them for their injuries.

The forest officials entrusted the injured birds to a veterinarian who applied ointment and tied bandages around the wounds. Following their recovery, some grown-up birds flew away while a few others, including some chicks, are still recuperating, Sri Sathyasai District DFO Ravindranath Reddy said on Tuesday.



Officials not only treated the baby birds but also fed them small fishes. Out of the 15 chicks, nine flew away while six remain, he said.

According to the forest officials, up to 2,000 migratory

birds, mostly painted storks, are estimated to be spending time in the two neighbouring villages of Veerapuram and Venkatapuram.

Reddy said that painted storks generally come during

the winter, attracted by the water sources and leave after the season. But one flock came late and continued to stay in the region as they are nesting. These 20 chicks belonged to those latecomers.

The residents of Veerapuram village have embraced the birds and are nurturing them.

Veerapuram is a revenue village under Chilamathur mandal with no reserve forest, but the villagers have happily coexisted with these winged visitors historically.

In March, the DFO presented a freezer to the villagers to stock up some medicines to tend to migratory birds when need. The officer is also said to have given the local sarpanch a salary of sorts for six months, November to March, to supervise their welfare. Though the forest department planned to fund the supply of fish to feed these birds, budget constraints played spoilsport with the idea of populating the water sources in the vicinity with small fish.

ROBBERS TAKE LEAF FROM MOVIE PLOT Gang that posed as IT men to loot gold shop busted

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a heist that seemed straight out of a movie, a gang from Khanapur, Maharashtra, drew inspiration from films like "Special 26" (2016) starring Akshay Kumar and "Gang" (2018) featuring Suriya. Their meticulously planned robbery left the victim oblivious to the crime until the gang had made their escape.

However, the police managed to apprehend four of the accused, one of whom is an employee of the targeted gold shop.

The police have identified the accused as Rahman Gafoor Athar (30), Zakir Ghani Athar (35), Praveen Yadav (32) and Akash Arun Hovil (31). However, several others involved in the crime are still absconding. The police managed to seize 7 gold biscuits while a total of 17 gold biscuits went missing. The police said that the phase II of this operation is still ongoing.

According to the police, the

gang involved collaboration between the accused from Maharashtra and Goa. Zakir Ghani Athar, one of the arrested individuals, had been working at Harshad Gold Melting Shop, located at Pot Market, Secunderabad, for the past one month. The gang planned to steal gold bars from Siddi Vinayaka Gold Shop, where Zakir had insider knowledge. The offenders arrived in Hyderabad on May 24 on a bus and train, and checked into Delhi Lodge at Patny Centre, Secunderabad.

Zakir acquainted them with the plan, showcasing the targeted gold shop to his accomplices, Babu and Lala, on the fourth floor of Navketan Complex. On May 27, all the accused entered the shop posing as IT officials, brandishing fake ID cards.

Within a matter of 10 to 15 minutes, they swiftly confiscated all cellphones and looted the gold biscuits weighing 1,700 grams, valued at Rs 60 lakh. The gang escaped, leaving the confined workers behind.



Spl. CS Dwivedi inspects housing layouts

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Special Chief Secretary Gopalakrishna Dwivedi, along with MLA Kurasala Kannababu, and Collector Kritika Sukla visited Nemam village on Tuesday and inspected the progress of the construction of houses under Jagananna housing colony.

He also inaugurated the protect water scheme over head reservoir constructed at a cost of Rs.48 lakhs and interacted with the villagers on the implementation of welfare and developmental schemes. He has asked the officials to take special initiative and expedite the implementation of various developmental programmes.

Dwivedi said the chief Minister appointed him as the district special officer for the prestigious Jaganannaku chebudam' programme as such inspecting the progress of housing works in housing layouts, Mana badi-Naadu, nedu, village secretariats and Rythu Bharosa Kendra's buildings construction.

Earlier Dwivedi has inspected the housing construction for the Kakinada urban poor in Komaragiri housing layouts along with Kakinada municipal commissioner Dr Mahesh Kumar. He also G Ragampet in Peddapuram mandal and inspected the activities of the center for creation of wealth from garbage. ZP CEO Satyanarayana, Municipal commissioner J Surendra were among those who accompanied them.

INDIA CORNER

Unruly passenger assaults Air India crew member onboard Goa-Delhi flight

A male passenger onboard an Air India flight from Goa on Monday physically assaulted a crew member and the unruly passenger was handed over to the security personnel after landing at the Delhi airport, according to the airline. In recent months, there have been multiple incidents of unruly passenger behaviour onboard aircraft and the latest incident happened onboard flight AI882 enroute from Goa to Delhi. The said passenger verbally abused the crew members and then went on to physically assault one of them on board. On landing at Delhi airport, the passenger continued with the unprovoked, aggressive behaviour and was handed over to the security personnel. We have also reported the incident to the regulator," an Air India spokesperson said in a statement on Tuesday. Further details about the incident could not be immediately ascertained.



Delhi court denies bail to policemen accused of abduction, extortion

A court here has denied bail to five Delhi police personnel accused of abducting two people, extorting money from them and insulting their religious beliefs, saying they betrayed the State, which employed them to protect the life, liberty and property of its citizens and not to harm them. Special Judge Samar Vishal dismissed the bail applications filed by accused Sandeep, Sompal, Amit Kumar, Chander Bhan and Amit, all working with the Delhi Police, noting the allegations against them were serious and they had already tried to influence the complainants Mohd Nawab and Soaib. The accused had sought the relief on the ground that they tried to save the complainants, who were transporting beef in their car, which collided with a scooter. Soon a mob gathered there and tried to communalise the issue, they claimed.



Villagers in Anantnag hold fishing festival to clean waterbodies

Residents of Panzath village here have found a novel way of keeping their water bodies clean. They hold a fishing festival annually in which men of all ages clean the lakes and ponds, all the while managing to catch some fishes too! What sets the exercise apart is that people do not use fishing rods but baskets made of wicker or plastic containers to catch fish. The containers are dipped into the water and then pulled out with trash collected in them, which are then unloaded on the banks of the water body. People, if lucky, find fishes from among the trash. The trash is later discarded. "Today people are gathered here to celebrate the annual fishing day. The main aim of this celebration is to clean the water bodies. Like we wait for the Eid to be celebrated every year, the same way we celebrate this day," Farooq Ahmad Bhat, a local resident of the village, said.



India a major partner in UN's transformation of peacekeeping

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is a "major partner" in the UN's strategy for the digital transformation of peacekeeping, the United Nations peacekeeping chief has said, as he lauded the country's commitment and engagement through key initiatives such as ensuring accountability for crimes against the Blue Helmets.

India is currently the third largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN Peacekeeping, with over 6,000 military and police personnel deployed to Abyei, the Central African Republic, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, the Middle East and Western Sahara.

"India is a major player in the world, in the UN, in multilateralism, and it's a major player in peacekeeping as well, including but not only through the importance of its contribution in terms of troops and police. We're also supported in many other ways, including in terms of the initiatives that we take to improve



peacekeeping," Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix said in an exclusive interview.

The UN peacekeeping chief highlighted the "important role" played by peacekeepers from India, one of the significant troop and police-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping.

Lacroix said that India's "engagement and commitment" in support of peace operations is critical, both politically through its contribution and in support of the department's initiatives. He further underlined the

"role of India in supporting our initiative to make sure that peace operations will be up to speed in terms of digital technologies because this is absolutely critical. We have a strategy for the digital transformation of peacekeeping. And India is a major partner in that regard," he said.

The UN marked 75 years of peacekeeping and commemorated the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on May 29 with this year's theme of "Peace begins with me".

Three Indian peacekeepers, who lost their lives serving under the UN flag last year, were among the 103 military, police, and civilian peacekeepers honoured posthumously with the prestigious Dag Hammarskjöld Medal at a solemn ceremony last week. Border Security Force personnel Head Constables Shishupal Singh and Sanwala Ram Vishnoi, who served with the Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Shaber Taher Ali, who served in a civil

ian capacity with the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) were awarded the medal posthumously at UN headquarters on May 25.

Under its Presidency of the Security Council in August 2021, India, in collaboration with the UN, announced the rollout of the UNITE AWARE platform, a "situational awareness software programme that allows a Peacekeeping Operations Centre to visualise and analyse the ground situation in a conflict zone on a real-time basis."

Earlier this year, India deployed a platoon of women peacekeepers to the UN Mission in Abyei, the country's largest single unit of female Blue Helmets in a UN mission since 2007, heralding New Delhi's interest of increasing significantly the number of women in peacekeeping contingents. The platoon is deployed in Abyei as part of the Indian Battalion in the United Nations Interim Security Force, Abyei (UNISFA).

10 Vaishno Devi pilgrims dead, 57 injured in Jammu bus accident

PNS ■ JHAJJAR

KOTLI/JAMMU

Ten Vaishno Devi pilgrims, most of them from Bihar, were killed and 57 injured on Tuesday as the bus they were travelling in skidded off the road and rammed into the railing of a bridge before falling off it, officials said.

The death toll may go up as Government Medical College Hospital Principal Shashi Soodan said two of the injured admitted there are critical.

The officials said the bus, which was on its way to Katra from Amritsar, met with the accident in Jhajjar Kotli area on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway between 6.30 and 7 am. Katra is a base camp for the pilgrims visiting the famous shrine atop the Trikuta hills.

They said most of the travellers were members of an extended family from Bihar's Lakhisarai and were on pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi temple for a ritual of a child.

‘One cannot malign judicial officers by using social media’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One cannot malign judicial officers by using social media, the Supreme Court observed on Tuesday while dismissing a plea challenging a Madhya Pradesh High Court order that sentenced a man to 10 days in jail for making corruption allegations against a district judge.

A vacation bench of Justice Bela M Trivedi and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra said it was not inclined to interfere in the matter.

"Just because you don't get a favourable order doesn't mean that you will malign the judicial officer. Independence of (the) judiciary doesn't just mean independence from (the) executive but also from outside forces. This has to be a lesson for others also.

"He should have thought twice before casting any aspersions on the judicial officer. He maligned the judicial officer. Think of the damage done to the judicial officer's image," Justice Trivedi observed orally.



The counsel appearing for the petitioner sought leniency from the Supreme Court and said the imprisonment order was excessive.

The lawyer said this is a matter pertaining to personal liberty and the applicant has already been in jail since May 27.

The top court bench then remarked, "We're here to decide on law, not show mercy. Especially to such persons."

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by Krishna Kumar Raghuvanshi, challenging the high court judgment in a suo

motu criminal contempt case initiated against him for making allegations of corruption against a district judge.

The proceedings were initiated against Raghuvanshi in response to a reference made by Additional District Judge SPS Bandela under Section 15(2) of the Contempt of Courts Act.

The reference was based on Raghuvanshi's defiance of the court's orders in a temple-related dispute and his circulation of a letter maligning the court's image, reputation and prestige through WhatsApp.

BJP TO BEGIN MAHA JANSAMPARK ABHIYAN TODAY

To reach out to 1,000 eminent persons in every LS constituency

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will begin its Maha Jansampark Abhiyan, a month-long campaign, on Wednesday, during which it will reach out to 1,000 eminent persons from every Lok Sabha constituency, a party leader said on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters, the party's national general secretary Vinod Tawde said the campaign, which will begin on May 31, will continue till June 30.

"We have prepared a list of 1,000 persons from every Lok Sabha seat in the coun-



try, who have won civilian awards such as Padma or president's medals during their service. With 543 seats in Lok Sabha, the cumulative figure comes to 5.5 lakh people in the country, who will be visited by the BJP's union ministers or senior party functionaries during the reach-out campaign," Tawde said.

Those supporting Kejriwal on Delhi ordinance issue will be seen as corrupt: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All those coming in support of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to oppose the central ordinance on control over administrative services in Delhi will be seen by the people as the "corrupt standing in favour of corruption", the BJP said on Tuesday. The BJP's reaction came after CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury assured his

party's support to Kejriwal on the issue. BJP leader and Union minister Meenakshi Lekhi said the ordinance has been brought to ensure action is taken against those involved in corruption and "make Delhi and India corruption-free." "All those who are standing against the ordinance will be seen by the people as the corrupt who are standing in favour of corruption," Lekhi charged.

Retailers asked not to take consumers' mobile numbers without consent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising complaints, Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh has written to major industry bodies for advising retailers not to take mobile numbers of consumers without their consent at the time of sale of goods or services.

The secretary has recently written a letter to CII, FICCI, Assocham, PHDCCI, Retailers Association of India (RAI) and Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), asking them to advise retailers on this issue.

"I urge upon you to suitably advise the retailers that the mobile number of the consumers should not be taken without their express consent at the time of sale of any goods or services and, providing the same should not be made a mandatory pre-condition for sale," Singh said in the letter dated May 26. The secretary noted that a number of grievances are being registered on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) about the fact that many retail stores are compelling consumers to submit their mobile numbers before purchasing a product.

In case of denial to provide the mobile number, consumers were in many cases denied their rights under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 by retailers, either declining to sell the product or service and/or also rejecting any refund, exchange etc, the secretary wrote.

SC grants protection to woman fearing threat to life from family

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Delhi Police to grant protection to a 20-year-old woman who allegedly ran away from home and is apprehending threat to her life from her family members.

The top court passed the order while declining to interfere with a Madhya Pradesh High Court order cancelling the anticipatory bail granted to a man accused of kidnapping her.

As the matter was being heard by a vacation bench of

Justice Bela M Trivedi and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra, the woman appeared via videoconferencing and requested the court to permit her to appear in-person.

After being granted permission, she appeared before the bench and expressed apprehension that there is a threat to her life from her family members and alleged that her brother is following her.

The woman expressed apprehension that she will be forcibly taken back to her home, where she does not want to go. According to her, she stays in Varanasi and wants



to return there. However, she sought protection.

When the women told the court about her condition, the bench said the high court had cancelled the anticipatory bail

Rs 53,000 fine for official who drained out 41L litres of water from reservoir to retrieve mobile phone

PNS ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government has imposed a fine of Rs 53,092 on an official who allegedly drained out 41 lakh litres of water from a reservoir to retrieve his mobile phone.

The Water Resources department imposed the fine on Rajesh Vishwas, a food inspector posted in Pakhanjore area of Kanker district, an official said on Tuesday.

Vishwas was earlier suspended after the incident at Paralkot weir came to light.

In a letter to him, the department said he drained out water from the cistern of a waste weir using a diesel pump without



seeking permission from the competent authority after his mobile phone fell into it.

This act was illegal under the Chhattisgarh Irrigation Act, it said. Vishwas wasted 4,104 cubic meters of water (41 lakh litres) for which he has

been asked to pay Rs 43,092 at the rate of Rs 10.50 per cubic meter, the letter said.

Besides, a penalty of Rs 10,000 has been imposed for evacuating water without permission, the letter stated.

The official was, thus, asked to pay a total of Rs 53,092 to the department within ten days. Vishwas had gone to the reservoir for an outing with friends on May 21 when his mobile phone fell into the cistern of a waste weir while he was taking a selfie.

He then allegedly roped in villagers and got diesel pumps to empty the water till the phone was finally fished out on May 25.

NCERT drops references to Khalistan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NCERT has dropped references to the demand for a separate Sikh nation Khalistan from the class 12 political science textbook following objections from the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), according to education ministry officials.

The SGPC had last month alleged that the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) misrepresented historical details about Sikhs in its Class 12 political science textbook.

The Sikh body's objection pertained to the mention of the



Anandpur Sahib resolution in the book "Politics In India Since Independence".

The dropped sentences are - "the resolution was a plea for strengthening federalism but it could also be interpreted as a

plea for a separate Sikh nation" and "the more extreme elements started advocating secession from India and the creation of 'Khalistan'".

The statements have been rewritten as "the resolution

was a plea for strengthening federalism".

"Representation from SGPC was received regarding withdrawing objectionable content against Sikh community by misrepresenting Sri Anandpur Sahib resolution. A committee of experts was constituted by NCERT to examine the issue and the decision was taken on basis of the recommendations of the panel," a senior MoE official said.

"A corrigendum has been issued by NCERT. While the physical books for the new academic session have already been printed, the changes will reflect in the digital books," he added.

Industrialist Yash Birla gets HC nod to travel abroad

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has permitted industrialist Yashovardhan Birla, who is facing several cases of fraud and money laundering, to travel to the United Kingdom and Egypt till July 1, noting that he was not a flight risk or likely to abscond.

A vacation bench of Justices Abhaya Ahuja and Milind Sathe on May 26 suspended the Look Out Circular (LOC) issued against Birla till July 1 and directed the immigration authorities to permit him to pass through immigration and board his flight.

The court, while granting

Birla permission to travel only to Egypt and UK, noted that he has travelled and returned to India on many occasions and has complied with all the conditions imposed on him.

"The applicant (Birla) has abided by the terms and conditions imposed on him during earlier travels abroad and has his family in India," the court said. "Prima facie, therefore, at this stage, it does not appear to us that the applicant (Birla) is a flight risk or likely to abscond or not present himself before the Authority/ Investigation or the Court," the high court said in its order.

NATIONAL MONUMENT NOT DEMONSTRATION SITE

Wrestlers will not be allowed to protest at India Gate: Police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The agitating wrestlers will not be allowed to shift their sit-in to India Gate as the national monument is not a site for demonstrations and alternative places for their dharna will be suggested, police sources said on Tuesday.

The country's top wrestlers, who were removed by the Delhi Police from their Jantar Mantar protest site on Sunday, had earlier in the day said they would immerse their medals in the Ganga and sit on a hunger strike "until death" at the India Gate.

"India Gate is not a protest site and we will not allow them (wrestlers) to protest there," a police source said.

"They have not approached us till now with any such request. If they want to protest, they will have to submit a written communication to the DCP concerned, following which a call will be taken accordingly," he said.

The Delhi Police will suggest alternative sites that are designated for protests such as Ramlala Ground and Burari, the source added.

On Monday, the police said they would not be allowed to protest at Jantar Mantar.

The wrestlers had been protesting at Jantar Mantar since April 23 against Wrestling Federation of India

TMC files case against Delhi Police

The TMC has filed a case with the National Human Rights Commission seeking action against the Delhi Police for "manhandling and assaulting" protesting women wrestlers at Jantar Mantar here, party spokesperson Saket Gokhale said Tuesday.

The protesting wrestlers, including Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, were detained on Sunday after they breached the security cordon while trying to move towards the new Parliament building. Soon after, the Delhi Police cleared the site of their over month-long sit-in at Jantar Mantar and said they will not be allowed to return there.

"On behalf of my party TMC (@AITCofficial), have filed a case with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) seeking action against Delhi Police for manhandling & assaulting our protesting women wrestlers.

chief and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, accusing him of sexually harassing women grapplers.

FIRST COLUMN

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Mindfulness can be practised by anyone irrespective of any faith or religion



SAKSHI SETHI

A beautiful life is not stumbled upon rather it is built. It not only allows many alternative views to how one looks at an experience but also allows the individual to go beyond the capabilities of someone who is mindless. Mindfulness is the key to having an adventurous and exciting life. Mindfulness in its simplest form means being able to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment and criticism. Life without mindfulness is no life at all.

The origin of mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist philosophy and practice tradition which is more than two and a half thousand years old. However, this does not mean it is only for monks or priests rather it is a way of connecting with the natural quality of awareness and presence which all human beings have. Mindfulness can be practiced by anyone irrespective of any faith or religion and involves training the mind and doesn't enforce any religious belief system. When an individual gets blinded by their success it begins to change their perspective on their relationships with their peers, friends and families. The individual develops a false impression that their circle needs them more than they do.

Mindfulness means non-judgemental awareness i.e., knowledge of what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment. Various research has shown that meditation is a type that encourages mindfulness and can improve many aspects of individuals' lives. Some people just live on autopilot when in reality there are so many amazing things in our daily surroundings that are meant



to be noticed. Being mindful and becoming more aware of the present moment means noticing the sights, smells, sounds and tastes that one experiences as well as the thoughts, feelings and sensations that occur from one moment to the next. A strong impact is made on health and overall well-being by what and how an individual thinks and feels, how they talk to themselves and what views they take about what's happening in and around them.

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing an individual's attention on the present moment and accepting it without judgment. It is today, one of the most talked about developments in human psychology and innumerable researches are being undertaken across the globe to understand its positive effects and implications.

What mindfulness does is that it allows an individual to reduce their stress and anxiety related to issues in the past or anticipated issues in future? It helps to recognize that it is the present - 'the now' that is more important than any other moment. Remember, a person becomes what he surrounds himself with. Energies are contagious. So, one should choose carefully as it's the individual's chosen environment that makes or destroys them.

(The writer is an educator)

Children with disabilities need robust policies for support

The National Family Health Survey must include specific questions about disabilities to help formulate appropriate policy



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

India has 2.68 crore persons with a disability, according to the 2011 Census. However, with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, of 2016, now recognizing 21 types of disabilities, this number is expected to increase manifold. A robust policy is critical to encompass their aspirations and ensure all persons with disability achieve their full potential and play an active part in nation-building.

This is why the recent decision to drop questions related to disability from the sixth National Family Health Survey (NFHS), scheduled to begin on July 1, 2023, is inexplicable. The NFHS, conducted every three years, collects data on a gamut of development indices vital to inform policy and programmes.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal)

This survey, which covers approximately seven lakh households across the country, is an important tool to gather data on whether people with disabilities have access to basic amenities and other government programmes.

However, at a time when the need to ensure no one gets left behind is doubly important considering the ravages caused by Covid, the exclusion of questions on disability is an opportunity lost to gather disaggregated disability data.

An Opportunity Lost

According to the Disability Rights India Foundation (DRIF), a non-profit working for disability rights, disability disaggregated data is the cornerstone for disability-relevant services. Instead of sharpening its questionnaire related to disability, NFHS has reversed the process by removing disability-related questions altogether.

Considering that India is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this regressive move contradicts its principle of "leaving no one behind" under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. In India, PwDs experience an average loss of 10-17 years in life expectancy. Creating pathways to change this and make health services disability inclusive requires access to comprehensive health data which NFHS could have provided.

Children with disabilities are disadvantaged on most

measures of child well-being. In comparison to children without disabilities, children with disabilities are 24% less likely to receive early stimulation and responsive care; 42% less likely to have foundational reading and numeracy skills; 25% more likely to be wasted and 34% more likely to be stunted; 53% more likely to have symptoms of acute respiratory infection; 49% more likely to have never attended school; 32% more likely to face corporal punishment; 47% more likely to be out of primary school, 33% more likely to be out of lower secondary school and 27% more likely to be out of upper secondary school; 51% more likely to feel unhappy and 41% likely to feel more discriminated against.

Now consider the fact that

one-third of disabilities in children are preventable if detected early and empowered with timely interventions. A roadmap based on accurate data to reach about 20.42 lakh children in the 0-9 age group with some form of disabilities, either congenital or acquired, could be life-changing.

It is no secret that existing disparities were exacerbated by Covid. In the context of education, data shows that before the pandemic, more than 4.1 million girls were not going to school across India. The closure of 1.5 million schools during the pandemic impacted over 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools, including 37 million with disabilities.

A 2020 survey by Swabhimana, a community-based organization working for the rights of persons with disability, in Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Chennai, Sikkim, Nagaland, Haryana and J&K found about 43% of children with disabilities planned to drop out due to hardships in online education.

It is not just the lack of access to educational aids that impedes the well-being of a PwD. They have little or no access to health services as information about disease symptoms and prevention, is not provided in accessible formats such as print materials in Braille, sign language interpretation, captions, audio provisions and graphics.

Women with disabilities are doubly marginalised on account of their disability and

their gender and face greater social barriers, discrimination and isolation. Moreover, women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to experience gender-based violence compared to non-disabled women.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, emphasises prevention of disability through appropriate awareness measures, investigation, and research. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mandates collection of appropriate information on PwDs to enable the formulation and implementation of policies. Can there be a better mechanism than the NFHS to gather data to understand the prevalence and pattern of disabilities?



MONEY MATTERS

Adani Transmission Q4 net profit jumps 85% to Rs 439.60 crore

Adani Transmission Ltd (ATL) has posted an 85.48 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 439.60 crore during March FY23 quarter, helped by higher income. It had clocked a net profit of Rs 237 crore during the January-March quarter of the preceding 2021-22 financial year (FY), the company said in a regulatory filing on Monday. The total income of the company increased to Rs 3,494.84 crore from Rs 3,165.35 crore in the year-ago quarter. For the whole FY23, the net profit rose to Rs 1,280.60 crore from Rs 1,235.75 crore recorded in FY22. Total income during the entire fiscal stood at Rs 13,840.46 crore, up from Rs 11,861.47 crore in FY22. In a separate statement, Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Group, said: "We are leaders in the transmission and distribution space and have consistently set new industry standards in efficiency, performance, and asset development. Adani Transmission is well positioned to deliver exponential growth, and we are working towards fulfilling our nation's massive electricity needs and strengthening our position as a world class utility."



MFI sector portfolio up 21% in FY'23

Portfolio size of the microfinance institutions increased by 21.3 per cent to Rs 3.51 lakh crore in the 2022-23 financial year, an industry body said on Tuesday. The portfolio of all microlenders was Rs 2.89 lakh crore by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal. The number of loan accounts in the MFI industry increased to 1,363 lakhs in the last financial year from 1,239 lakhs in the previous year, posting a 10 per cent growth, it said. RBI-recognised self-regulatory organisation, Sa-Dhan ED and CEO Jiji Mammen said the overall growth suggests that the industry has come out of the Covid blues and is now on the growth path. The new regulatory norms have also created "a level-playing field" as reflected in the growth of portfolios of non-banking finance companies and NBFC-MFIs, he said. The total disbursements of all the MFI lenders in the last financial year stood at Rs 3, 19,948 crore, registering a 26 per cent growth from Rs 2,53,966 crore of advances in the previous year, the association said.



Dredging Corporation of India eyes over Rs 1,300-crore turnover

Dredging Corporation of India Ltd (DCI) is targeting a 12 per cent growth to hit the turnover of more than Rs 1,300 crore in the ongoing financial year, MD & CEO S Divakar said. To achieve the goal, the company is looking to participate in new dredging tenders and also planning to enter new markets, Divakar told PTI. "Our turnover was at Rs 1,164 crore in FY22-23. It is the highest ever turnover since inception of the company. Going forward, we are now targeting the new milestone of over Rs 1,300 crore in the ongoing financial year," he said. When asked about the factors that would contribute to the company's growth, the CEO said the scope of dredging activity in the country is expected to grow significantly in the months to come as government's focus is on deepening and widening navigational channels of major ports, and developing the inland waterways for improving the intra & inter EXIM trade.



Nayara Energy sells petrol, diesel at Re 1 less than PSUs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner bp plc of the UK, Nayara Energy - the nation's largest private fuel retailer - has started selling petrol and diesel at Re 1 less than the fuel sold by state-owned retailers, officials said. While state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) continue to hold prices despite a drop in international rates, private fuel retailers have started passing on the benefit to consumers. "To further stimulate domestic consumption and cater to local customers better, we have introduced a Re 1 discount in our retail outlets until the end of June 2023," a spokesperson for Nayara Energy said. "We believe in being a strong partner to India's energy needs and will continue to serve the country's consumption demand."

RBI's balance sheet grows 2.5% to Rs 63.45 lakh cr

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The size of the Reserve Bank's balance sheet increased by 2.5 per cent for the year ended on March 31 to about Rs 63.45 lakh crore on higher income, as per the central bank's annual report released on Tuesday. The balance sheet of the RBI plays a critical role in the functioning of the country's economy, largely reflecting the activities carried out in pursuance of its currency issue function as well as monetary policy and reserve management objectives. "The size of the balance sheet increased by Rs 1,54,453.97 crore, i.e., 2.50 per cent from Rs 61,90,302.27 crore as on March 31, 2022 to Rs 63,44,756.24 crore as on March 31, 2023," the report said. While income for the year increased by 47.06 per cent, the expenditure increased by 14.05 per cent. The year ended with an overall surplus of Rs 87,416.22



crore as against Rs 30,307.45 crore in the previous year, resulting in an increase of 188.43 per cent. The RBI transfers the surplus as dividend to the central government. "The increase on the asset side was due to rise in foreign investments, gold, and loans and advances by 2.31 per cent, 15.30 per cent and 38.33 per cent, respectively," the RBI said. On the liability side, the expansion was due to increase in notes issued, revaluation accounts and other liabilities by

7.81 per cent, 20.50 per cent and 79.07 per cent, respectively. RBI further said domestic assets constituted 27.69 per cent while the foreign currency assets and gold (including gold deposit and gold held in India) constituted 72.31 per cent of total assets as on March 31, 2023 as against 28.22 per cent and 71.78 per cent, respectively, as on March 31, 2022.

India's growth momentum to continue

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said that India's growth momentum is likely to continue in 2023-24 even as it made a case for pushing structural reforms to deal with the geopolitical developments and also to achieve sustained growth in the medium-term. The Reserve Bank's annual report flagged slowing global growth, protracted geopolitical tensions and a possible upsurge in financial market volatility as possible downside risks to growth. The report notes that volatility has ebbed in global financial markets and risks to financial stability from the failure of banks in some advanced economies (AEs) in March 2023 have eased. Resolute policy actions have stemmed the tide of confidence runs for now. "Amidst strong global headwinds, the Indian economy is expected to have recorded a growth of 7.0 per cent in real GDP in 2022-23," it said. A sustained recovery in discretionary spending, particularly in contact intensive services, restoration of consumer confidence, high festival season spending after two consecutive years of COVID-19 induced isolation and the government's thrust on capex provided impetus to the growth momentum.

India extends US\$ 1 bn credit line to Sri Lanka

PNS ■ COLOMBO

India on Tuesday extended its USD 1 billion credit line to Sri Lanka by another year to help the island nation hit hard by an unprecedented economic crisis procure much-needed food, medicine and other essential items.

An agreement was signed between the State Bank of India (SBI) and the Sri Lankan government for USD 1 billion credit facility in March last year. India extended the credit line to Sri Lanka at the height of the country's economic crisis.

"India reaffirms its commitment to the people of Sri Lanka. The Amendment Agreement signed in presence of Hon. Minister @ShehanSema today will enable Sri Lanka to use the USD 1 billion Indian credit facility for the procurement of medicine, food, and other essentials for one more year," the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka tweeted. "Beyond the original duration, that is, till March 2024. The facility was extended by



India through @TheOfficialSBI in response to a specific request from GOSL and forms a part of the multi-pronged assistance of USD 4 billion provided by India last year," it said. Since last year, the credit facility has been used for urgent procurement of fuel, medicine, food items and industrial raw materials, as per the requirements and priorities of Sri Lanka. India extended multi-pronged assistance of about USD 4 billion to Sri Lanka last year, through multiple credit lines and currency support, in line with India's Neighbourhood First policy. India's continued support to Sri Lanka is a testament to

"our abiding commitment to stand with the government and the people of Sri Lanka towards early economic stabilisation and recovery," the Indian High Commission said. Sri Lanka was hit by an unprecedented financial crisis in 2022, the worst since its independence from Britain in 1948, due to a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves, sparking political turmoil in the country which led to the ouster of the all-powerful Rajapaksa family. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka announced on Tuesday that it has commenced the preliminary work to resume the abandoned Japan-funded Light Rail Transit (LRT) project.

Sensex rises 123 pts, Nifty closes above 18,600

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 123 points while Nifty closed above the 18,600 level in their fourth straight day of gains on Tuesday helped by FII inflows and firm Asian markets. Gains in financial, banking, capital goods and industrial shares helped the key indices close in the green in a range bound trade. Selling in select metal, IT and oil and gas shares restricted gains in key indices. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 122.75 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 62,969.13. During the day, it jumped 189.74 points or 0.30 per cent



to 63,036.12. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 35.20 points or 0.19 per cent to end at 18,633.85. Stock markets have been on the rise since Thursday last week. Sensex advanced by 1,195 points or 2 per cent while Nifty rose by 348 points or 2.26 per cent in the four-day rally. "The domestic market continued its rally as recent Q4 results indicated improvement

in demand. Further, expectations of a normal monsoon and a drop in international commodity prices supported the rise in the margin profile," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Hotels to cigarette conglomerate ITC was the biggest Sensex gainer, rising by 2.31 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, HCL Technologies, Wipro, UltraTech Cement, Maruti and Infosys were among the major gainers. On the other hand, Tech Mahindra fell the most by 1.27 per cent among Sensex shares.

P-notes investment hits 4-month high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investment in the Indian capital markets through participatory notes has seen an upward trend in the past two months, with the number reaching Rs 95,911 crore in April-end, primarily driven by the country's robust economic growth. This was the highest level since November 2022, when investment through the route stood at Rs 96,292 crore. Participatory notes (P-notes) are issued by registered Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly.

Darjeeling tea industry hit by lower yield

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Planters of Darjeeling, the premium tea belt of the country, are worried by the twin blows of falling productivity and low price realisation in their export markets. Depressed economic conditions in traditional markets such as western Europe and Japan have led to reduced prices being offered, industry bodies said on Tuesday. Production volumes of the 87-odd Darjeeling tea gardens, which used to be in the region of more than 8 million kilograms per year, have plummeted to 6.5-7 million kilograms, primarily due to old bushes, climate change and pest attacks, planters said. "The Darjeeling tea indus-



try is in ICU. The cost of production has increased, while due to the unfavourable climate, the crop is declining. Exports, which had been the mainstay of the premium tea, are also declining owing to the depressed economic conditions of western Europe and Japan coupled with stagnant unit price realisations," Indian Tea Exporters Association chairman

Anshuman Kanoria said. Many gardens in Darjeeling are on the verge of closure as operations cannot be sustained, he said, adding that the association had been trying to sensitise the Tea Board on the burning issue. "The Darjeeling tea industry has been affected by factors, which are not within its control. The industry cannot survive without government

assistance by way of a one-time subsidy to be paid to the tea planters of the region and also funding for promotional activities," he said. Kanoria also explained that the one-time subsidy is required to keep the industry afloat and prevent sales of gardens to real estate players as the Darjeeling tea industry has "suffered greatly due to free imports from Nepal under the friendship treaty". Indian Tea Exporters' Association has suggested the introduction of a minimum import price on tea shipped from Nepal to prevent dumping, he said. Indian Tea Association secretary general Arijit Raha said, "Both production and price realisations have fallen in Darjeeling".

Tata Technologies to hire 1,000 women engineers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global engineering and product development digital services firm Tata Technologies Ltd on Tuesday said it aims to hire over 1,000 women engineers in 2023-24 as part of its move to promote gender diversity across its workforce. The company has launched its gender diversity-focused hiring campaign while encouraging women to join it for engineering a better world, Tata Technologies said in a state-

ment. Through its 'RAINBOW' programme, the company said it has focused interventions on onboarding more women and parallelly creating support frameworks for them to succeed. Under it, there will be focused efforts towards attracting and onboarding diverse talent pool, it said adding, "The company aims to hire 1000 (plus) women engineers in FY24, to strengthen its gender diversity ratio further and has identified specific opportunities for women."

Prachanda eyeing long-term power trade

PNS ■ KATHMANDU

Ahead of his visit to India, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" has said that he would raise long-term power trade issue with New Delhi, hoping that this "bottleneck" will be sorted out and ensure that the Himalayan nation will be a favourable market for its surplus energy. Prachanda, along with a high-level delegation, will travel to India on Wednesday on a four-day official visit for talks with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and other leaders to further strengthen the age-old, multifaceted and cor-



dial ties. This will be the 68-year-old

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) leader's first bilateral visit abroad after assuming office in December 2022. "There are some understandings relating to energy with India, which is of long-term interest to Nepal," the Prime Minister pointed out. "We will raise some issues relating to long-term power trade with India during my visit," Prachanda told Nepal's National News Agency (RSS), according to the government daily Gorkhapatra. This is what the Nepalese people have been seeking for many years, Prachanda said. "It is our realisation that if we

can't find out the proper market for energy after our production starts, then big investments won't come," said the Prime Minister. "I think this bottleneck will be sorted out during my visit," he said adding "We expect that Nepal will get a favourable market." Nepal on Sunday decided to allow India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) Limited to develop a second hydropower project in the country. At present SJVN is developing a 900-MW Arun -III hydroelectric project, a run-of-river located on the Arun River in Eastern Nepal, scheduled to be completed in 2024.

Notes in circulation rose in value, volume

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The value and volume of banknotes in circulation increased by 7.8 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively, during 2022-23 as compared with 9.9 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively, in 2021-22, revealed the RBI annual report released on Tuesday. In value terms, the share of Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 banknotes together accounted for 87.9 per cent of the total value of banknotes in circulation as on March 31, 2023, as compared to 87.1 per cent a year ago. The Reserve Bank has announced withdrawal of Rs 2,000 notes, and holders of the highest value currency have been given time till September 30 to exchange or deposit them. "In volume terms, Rs 500 denomination constituted the highest share at 37.9 per cent, followed by Rs 10 denomination banknotes which constituted 19.2 per cent of the total banknotes in circulation as on March 31, 2023," said the report. There were 5,16,338 lakh pieces of Rs 500 denomination notes totalling Rs 25,81,690 crore at end-



March 2023. The number of Rs 500 notes at end-March 2022 were 4,55,468 lakh. The report also said there were 4,55,468 lakh pieces of Rs 2,000 notes amounting to Rs 3,62,220 crore at end-March. In volume terms, the Rs 2,000 notes in circulation declined to 1.3 per cent of total currency in circulation at end-March 2023 compared to 1.6 per cent in the year-ago period. In value terms, it too declined to 10.8 per cent from 13.8 per cent at end-March 2022. Presently, the banknotes in circulation comprise those of denominations of Rs 2, Rs 5, Rs 10, Rs 20, Rs 50, Rs 100, Rs 200, Rs 500 and Rs 2,000. Coins in circulation comprise those of 50 paise and Rs 1, Rs 2, Rs 5, Rs 10 and Rs 20 denominations.

CRITICAL TRANSACTIONS DURING CATASTROPHIC EVENTS

RBI working on light weight, portable payment system

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India is working on a light weight and portable payment system, a "bunker equivalent in payment systems", that can be used for critical transactions during catastrophic events like natural calamities and war. The proposed Light weight and Portable Payment System (LPSS) will be independent of conventional


technologies and can be operated from anywhere by a bare minimum staff, according to the central bank. Existing conventional payment systems like RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement), NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer) and UPI (Unified Payments Interface) are designed to handle large volumes while ensuring sustained availability. These systems are depen-



dent on complex wired networks backed by advanced IT infrastructure. However, catastrophic

events like natural calamities and war have the potential to render these payment systems temporarily unavailable by disrupting the underlying information and communication infrastructure, RBI said in its latest annual report released on Tuesday. "Therefore, it is prudent to be prepared to face such extreme and volatile situations," it said. Keeping this objective in mind, RBI has conceptu-

alised the LPSS that will be independent of conventional technologies and can be operated from anywhere by a bare minimum staff. "It is expected to operate on minimalistic hardware and software and would be made active only on a need basis. It would process transactions that are critical to ensure stability of the economy such as government and market related transactions," RBI said.



Abhilash Thapliyal: Cannes has become a marketing place for celebrities now

Anurag Kashyap's *Kennedy* had recently received a seven-minutes standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival. And so, *The Pioneer* interacts with actor Abhilash Thapliyal, who'll be next seen in the film, sharing his experience of being at the Cannes.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Actor Abhilash Thapliyal, who's starring in *Kennedy* — yes, the same movie that received a resounding response at the Cannes Film Festival this year — tells us exclusively how he wants to make it big in the industry, but only and only via resonating with audiences through his craft.

The inside sources tell us that our interviewee, despite trying everything, merely caught the attention of his director. Accordingly, what are we here for? For us, actors like Abhilash are still sustaining success and making an impact. Unexpectedly, for the actor, it was the very first time walking any red carpet in his life since hailing from Uttarakhand, and this seemed like a final flourish for him, going international. "The only thing I hope for after receiving a seven-minute standing ovation at The Grand Lumiere Theatre is for my success to be a long call. When I was shooting for *Kennedy*, I had no idea that the film was going to go international. Neither did I have the idea that I'd be making a red carpet debut in my entire life! And then my red carpet debut will be a grand affair. So now, I never want to disappear from the big screens."

So, as we all know, movies are a platform everyone wants to be associated with. The industry comes with a lot of perks. Therefore, "My director, Anurag Kashyap, has not just made violent movies; he has also made a film like *Manmarziyaan*. His genre of movies is just like his changing moods! Now, what you want to remember. Anurag Kashyap for is totally your call. But all-inclusive, I will call Anurag Kashyap a noir director only. I am still very obscure in this industry and don't have a choice of scripts. My inclination is only to work hard to be seen as a prominent artist, that's all."

Talking about the film screened at the international film festival, Abhilash Thapliyal said, "After a resounding success at the international festival, I cannot still set my standards higher because that will be unfair to how I function as a person. I didn't have any ulterior motives with any of my movies. Most probably, the directors see the giallo quality in me, but I claim it to be my personal innocence. By default, I am a very virtuous man! And my approach is also very pure this way."

Giving us supernumerary information about the film festival, he imparts, "This specific film festival is way too magnificent. As far as I remember, the first time it was held was for artistic achievements, but I have no idea how the times have changed. I had never been invited to a film festival ever in my life! But what I could see was that this place was actually becoming an international marketing place for our stars. My thought process tells me that it should be more about the rendezvous of films and less about fashion, but it's going in the opposite track. Cannes has the biggest theater there! Inside the theater, there are certain guidelines on how you have to dress appropriately, it's a formal affair as compared to what's happening outside. Even your feet should be covered! As soon as I entered the theater, I could see a black-and-white atmosphere. What else I observed when I came back to India was how the media was hardly talking about the films that were screened there, most of the limelight was taken by the actresses and what they wore. Nobody discussed Martin Scorsese's film in detail! I don't understand this obsession with fashion by our media?"

He continued, "There are many directors and producers that come there so that their ambition for storytelling is recognised. Even I got confined in this media discussion! But because I am from Uttarakhand, I played smart and took the statement pieces from my native state in anticipation of identification that I am an Indian, specifically from a state called Uttarakhand. I took it into my stride! And in fact, the art form from my birthplace is actually dying — so this was a moment of recall. We were not so successful in drawing eyeballs with the cinema that was being screened there, the media was discussing the worth of the necklace piece worn by Miss Diva Universe. As it's been discussed, it's really true that biggies actually book the ticket, walk the red carpet, and then leave without even watching the film inside the theater. That's so uncool! You are wasting space. Each to its own — at least I wasn't there for a fashion parade. Fashion should be an extension of this festival, not the primary focus!"

Coming to an end, we hear, "My challenges in professional life were a little lesser in comparison to my personal life. The professional life has always been kind to me, but simultaneously, while doing all these movies, something else was going on in my personal life that took a toll on me. For example, when I was shooting for *TVF Aspirants*, I lost my father! Every day, my father was going through chemotherapy, and I had to make a career for myself as well. Immediately after that, my mother had to go through a major heart surgery, so my battles were like these. But all is well now."

Bringing in the religious hostility through his idealistic mind

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Aman Sachdeva, the director and writer known for his art, reflected through his films and not to forget that he is a national award winner has his latest movie opium on board — his next masterpiece keeping his legacy up to the mark.

So in an exclusive interview with the filmmaker, who is weaving the themes of religion and faith throughout this film's five distinct realms, said, "I wrote a part of this anthology feature film which was inspired by some personal events. It took place a few years ago and then one thing led to the other. This was when my uncle passed away and I travelled with my brother in law who happens to be a Muslim for the last rites. Upon reaching, we had a strange task at hand, to look for cow dung for a ritual. So, we roamed the streets looking for dung because that was one thing that was not available for sale in any of the shops. And, this film happened."

Opium is truly a collection of intriguing stories that explore human emotions associated with religion. So he continued, "The emotions come from the interrelationships of the characters and the protagonists. The theme of religion is not really in the face. These are just human stories which may have a connection to the religious angle directly or indirectly."

Just as people wish the philosophical progression of the universe to be, his stories also eventually move from dystopia to utopia. Besides, "Each story has its own atmosphere, like in Vinay Pathak's story, it's set in a quaint Christian neighbourhood in the suburbs of Mumbai. In the story where Sharib Hashmi plays an artist, the film is set in a dystopian world where everyone wears a book mask. This probably is the most atmospheric film since we worked on the theme of this world in a very minute way. We had ourselves asking questions like does this world have electricity? What mode of transport do they use? Is there any traffic noise or just plain dead hum in the background? In a more utopian story, it is set in a beautiful Kumaon hill station. Then, another one is a tense — one night story where two women take refuge at a place where a contemptuous man has his own plans to take revenge from them. Or the other one in which a fresh off the boat young girl is tested by the city. As the stories progress from dystopian to utopian worlds, the themes of those worlds change but we tried to keep each film in a highly cinematic world regardless of the theme."

A great deal of emotion and sincerity is put into the examination of anger, retaliation, irritation, prejudice, and even friendship! The movie has garnered both critical acclaim and a devoted audience because of its beautifully written storyline. The premiere is expected to be a star-studded occasion because it has already generated hype and accolades at film festivals. The film premiered at 35th Tokyo international film festival where it was nominated for Best Film in the Asian Future Award. In this context, the director says, "The audience make the film festivals, so world over you can see the most successful film festivals are where the audiences are, for the lack of word, cinephiles. We had three housefull screenings in Tokyo IFF and audiences accepted the film so much that some people came to re-watch the film in the following screenings. And then in IFF Kerala, we had a houseful screening at 9:30 am, audiences cheered and applauded at the end of the film. We received three nominations at the New York Indian International film festival where the most of the audiences were locals and Indians living abroad who were very accepting of the theme and philosophy of the film. So, it's the audiences and film enthusiasts that make the film festivals and not the red carpet glamour."

The religious hostility that contemporary Indians have been experiencing for some time is finally explained by Sachdeva, and while his last piece may seem idealistic in some ways, it actually has a lot to say about how we develop into selfish adults.



In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, director-writer Aman Sachdeva discusses his intriguing stories that he brought to us through *Opium*, and having premiered at 35th Tokyo international film festival.

Eliminate excessive heat with right walls & floor

When it comes to creating a comfortable and clean indoor environment, the right choice of tiles for walls and floors plays a crucial role. Not only can tiles enhance the aesthetics of your space, but they can also help eliminate excessive heat, resulting in a cooler atmosphere. Minal Somany, brand custodian at Somany Ceramics brings to us the impact of heat-resistant tiles on temperature control and delves into the benefits of utilizing advanced tech tiles that reduce room temperature to keep your interiors cool and pristine. Read along!

The quest for cooler interiors

In our pursuit of comfortable living, excessive heat poses a significant challenge, particularly in regions with scorching summers. Enter heat-resistant tiles, a game-changer in maintaining cooler indoor temperatures. These innovative tiles, such as the one we'll discuss, boasts the ability to reflect up to 75% of sunlight. By doing so, they effectively reduce the room temperature, offering you a respite from the sweltering heat outside.

Energy savings made easy

By employing heat-resistant tiles like the ones designed for roofs and sun-facing sides, you can go beyond mere temperature control and realize substantial energy savings. The reduced room temperature translates to a diminished reliance on air conditioning, thereby helping you curtail energy bills. Whether it's your roof, pavement, courtyard, balcony, or any other sun-exposed area, the incorporation of these tiles can significantly contribute to beating the heat inside your home.

Nullifying the Urban Heat Island Effect

These heat insulating tiles repel excessive heat and help minimise the Urban Heat Island Effect (UHIE) which is mainly caused due to the high concentration of buildings and man-made infrastructure, alongside dense population and other human activities. These factors lead to exceedingly high temperatures in cities and urban areas. The heat repellent tiles help the interiors to stay cool and thus help homeowners tackle the UHIE rather comprehensively.

Leveraging innovation and technology



The temperature shield technology in tiles, offers an innovative solution, providing a protective layer that safeguards tiles from unprecedented rise in temperatures. This technology acts as a shield, extending the efficiency of your homes while also maintaining the aesthetic appeal even in the face of harsh weather conditions during summer.

Protection against high heat conduction

Some of the better tile brands out there offer tiles that protect buildings from the damages inflicted by high heat conduction. Cracks, deformation and other structural mishaps can occur due to extreme heat, and this is where some innovative tiles in the market distinguish themselves from others. Besides the protection, these tiles are also environment friendly, and thus can be the X factor in the pledge for your carbon neutral and energy efficient home.

By incorporating heat-resistant tiles, you can effectively beat the heat and save on energy costs and support environment sustainability. So, make an informed decision and embrace the power of innovative tiles to create a cool and pristine haven within your home.

Jadeja proved fairy tales exist in sport: Fleming

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Stephen Fleming doesn't believe in fairy tales in sport but Ravindra Jadeja's near-improbable heist that took Chennai Super Kings to its fifth IPL trophy might come closest to it.

With 13 needed to win in the final over against Gujarat Titans, CSK managed only three runs off the first four balls before Jadeja smashed Mohit Sharma for a six and a four off the last two deliveries to literally snatch the Cup from Gujarat's grasp.

"They say there are no fairy tales in the sport, but it was a pretty good one today. It has been a bit difficult 18 months where, as the captaincy was difficult, the injury was difficult, it took a bit of time from out of the game for him to come back into and be reintegrated into the Test side, and then re-integrate into CSK," Fleming told the media after Chennai defeated Gujarat Titans in the IPL final here.

In fact, Fleming had in his mind conceded defeat before final two deliveries were bowled by Mohit and the Jadeja turned it all.

"We have lost finals on the last ball which is an absolute heartache. I was gearing up myself for another heartache when Jaddu hit one for six and there could have been more heartache or more joy, I was not sure.

"But when I saw the ball go down, finally there was pure joy. This competition takes you to emotional levels that you cannot imagine," the Kiwi added.

Fleming was all praise for Jadeja's firepower.

"He plays a great role with the ball, but we have got so much fire power, that some ways we use him down the order, but something has to give. MS (Dhoni) has been very supportive and proactive in getting him up there and today he repaid that faith," Fleming added.

The former New Zealand skipper explained Jadeja's shot selection.

"The six, I think, in particular of the ball which was pretty close to being perfect, was defining, and then left-handed drive to the fine leg. It was a great way to finish it. I could-



n't be more happy for him. There has been some frustration at times, but he is our gun player, he is a No 1 ranked player and today he delivered," Fleming added.

The CSK coach said his side was poor in the field in the first half, but kept getting better and confident as the rain-affected match panned out.

"215... I thought it was an excellent score but the rain came and we

had to change the momentum. We felt with the moisture around on the pitch, it was gettable. It was going to take a lot of batting.

"The start was really important because we were still shell-shocked from the fielding. The first four or six overs started to give us the belief and once we got a little bit of taste for it, it is that type of ground where it is very hard to defend, so we knew we

had a chance. It was going to be high octane all the way through," Fleming added.

Fleming praised Gujarat Titans bowlers Mohammad Shami and Mohit Sharma for taking the contest into the final ball of the match.

"The last couple of overs were very tight. Shami and Sharma bowled well, Mohit Sharma in particular has been very good," he said.

Cricket has always been a game of fine margins, believes Fleming, who has been CSK coach for a decade and half now.

"I think I said it a couple of days ago that this tournament is being defined by fine margins. I think the last couple of balls summed that up — if you just missed a yorker or go down the leg side.

"We have talked about that all the

Only you could do a miracle: Srinivasan tells Dhoni

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The thrilling last ball win by Chennai Super Kings in the IPL final against Gujarat Titans "is a miracle" and only the legend Mahendra Singh Dhoni could pull off such a show, noted industrialist and India Cements Vice Chairman N Srinivasan said on Tuesday.

Chennai-based India Cements Ltd is the principal sponsor of the Indian Premier League team Chennai Super Kings.

Srinivasan spoke to the CSK captain on Tuesday morning and congratulated him and his team for the 'great victory'.

Srinivasan's message to Dhoni was exclusively shared with PTI.

"Fantastic captain. You have done a miracle. Only you can do it. We are proud of the boys and the team," Srinivasan told Dhoni.

He advised Dhoni to take rest following the back-to-back match schedule over the past few days, and invited him to visit Chennai along with the team to celebrate the victory.

"This season has been one where the fans have demonstrated how much they love M S Dhoni. So do we," Srinivasan, who was overwhelmed by the affection shown by CSK fans, said.

way through, that if you can just get on the right side of those moments, then we can stay in and it was one of those days," Fleming said.

PRaise for RAHANE

Fleming heaped praise on senior India batter Ajinkya Rahane, who turned out to be one of the success stories for the CSK side with an incredibly successful season with the bat. What changed was Rahane's philosophy of not trying to be an anchor batter.

"My understanding is that we got rid of the tag of being the guy you bat around or bat through. I think that maybe hung over his head a little bit too much and didn't allow him to be the player that he can be.

"And once that tag was gone, when I turned up halfway through the preseason training, I saw a guy who was in magnificent form," Fleming said.

Fleming said that Rahane didn't feature in their initial plan.

"He wasn't in our initial thoughts, but the game in Mumbai was really defining. It was one of our best wins in the tournament and he was the big

catalyst behind it, so he cemented that No. 3 spot.

"He has been unwavering the whole way through he's been nothing but positive, his nets have been positive. Anytime he's been caught on the boundary or out playing a big shot, we've just reinforced how good he's playing. So a little bit of belief and just sheer ability — he's been a wonderful player for us this year," he said.

'RAYUDU WOULD LEAVE A BIG HOLE'

The former New Zealand captain said Ambati Rayudu, who announced his retirement after this IPL final, will leave a big hole in their side.

"Ambati Rayudu has been an absolute legend. I rate him so highly as a batter and those three balls against Mohit Sharma today proved against one of the most in-form bowlers... to hit him for 6, 4 and 6 was sheer class.

"Rayudu will leave a hole, there is no doubt about it, but the game keeps moving. Doesn't it? We expected that for him to go out like that was pretty emotional within the group and for him as well," Fleming said.

It will be a big challenge for India to come out of T20 mould and play WTC final: Gavaskar



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar feels emerging from the IPL T20 mode will be the biggest challenge for the Indian players when they take on Australia in the World Test Championship (WTC) final against Australia next week.

Rohit Sharma's India will play the WTC final at The Oval from June 7 with a majority of the players having come through the rigours of IPL, which concluded on Monday with Chennai Super Kings lifting the trophy for a record-equalling fifth time.

"The biggest test will be the fact that just about everybody will be coming out of a T20 for-

mat, and Test cricket is a longer format. So, I think that's going to be the big challenge," said Gavaskar on Star Sports on Tuesday.

He added that among all the India players only veteran batter Cheteshwar Pujara was well acclimatised to the longer format as he has been playing county cricket.

"They (India) have only Cheteshwar Pujara who has been playing in the English County Championship, so he will be the only guy who has played the longer format in these conditions, so that's going to be the big challenge for them."

On Ajinkya Rahane, who after a long form slump has come back strongly in the IPL and helped CSK win the title this season, Gavaskar said the 34-year-old's experience of English conditions will be beneficial to the side.

"He's got a lot of experience having played in England, having scored runs in England. So, yes, I think he is going to be crucial down at number 5. And yes, I do believe he has a point to prove. I still feel he has got plenty of cricket left in him, and this is a wonderful opportunity for him."

Hard thing would be to work hard for nine months and try to play another IPL: Dhoni



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Chennai Super Kings' triumphant captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has not yet ruled out playing in the IPL next year but said his body will have to hold up to feature in yet another season.

Under the 41-year-old Dhoni's leadership, CSK won a record-equalling fifth IPL title with a five-wicket victory over Gujarat Titans in the summit

clash here on Monday.

"Circumstantially, this is the best time to announce my retirement. But the amount of love I have received all over, the easy thing would be to walk away from here, but the harder thing would be to work hard for nine months and try to play another IPL," Dhoni said after the final.

Dhoni has been the cynosure of all eyes ever since the Indian Premier League began this year and in a fitting end to

the finale, the captain finished with a record-leveling fifth trophy. His fans from across the country went to the venues in large numbers to cheer for him, chanting his name wherever CSK have played this season.

"It would be a gift from me, won't be easy on the body. You do get emotional, the first game at CSK everyone was chanting my name. My eyes were full of water, I needed to take some time off in the dugout.

"I realised I need to enjoy this. I think they love me for what I am, I don't try to portray something I'm not. Just keep it

simple," Dhoni said. Speaking about the final, Dhoni said, "Every trophy is special, but what is special about IPL is every crunch game you need to be ready. There were lapses today, the bowling department didn't work, but it was the batting department that took the

my fifth title in front of my home crowd. I'm from Gujarat, and it's a special feeling. This crowd has been amazing. They were waiting for rain to stop till late night, I'd like to say a big congratulations to the CSK fans who came to support us."

On his six and four off the last two balls, Jadeja said, "I was just thinking I need to swing hard, as much as I can. Where the ball will go, I was not thinking about that, just looking to swing hard."

"I was backing myself and looking to hit straight, because I know Mohit can bowl those slower balls."

GT failed to defend their title but Pandya said he would not have asked more from the team.

pressure off them today. "I do get frustrated, it is human but I try to step into their shoes, every individual deals with pressure differently. Ajinkya (Rahane) and a few others are experienced, so you don't worry. If anyone is confused, then can always ask."

Destiny had this written for him: Hardik on Dhoni leading CSK to fifth IPL title

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Titans skipper Hardik Pandya paid rich tributes to his mentor and rival captain MS Dhoni, saying "destiny had this written for him" to lead Chennai Super Kings to a record-equalling fifth IPL title in what could be his last season in the lucrative league.

CSK beat GT by five wickets in a thrilling rain-affected summit showdown with Ravindra Jadeja smashing a six and a four off the last two balls to chase down a revised target of 171 in 15 overs here on Monday.

"I'm very happy for him (Dhoni). Destiny had this written for him," Pandya said after

the heartbreaking loss.

"If I had to lose, I don't mind losing to him. Good things happen to good people and he's been one of the best people I know. God has been kind, God has been kind to me as well but today was his night," added the India white-ball all-rounder who led GT to title triumph in 2022.

Dhoni himself has not yet ruled out playing in the IPL next year but said for that to happen, his body will have to hold up.

Jadeja, who remained not out on 15 off just six balls, dedicated the title win to his skipper Dhoni. "I would like to dedicate this win to a special member of the CSK side, MS Dhoni," Jadeja said.

"Feels amazing, winning

Satwik-Chirag pair achieves career-best ranking



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty gained a place to achieve a career-best ranking of world number 4 in the latest BWF rankings issued on Tuesday. The Satwik-Chirag pair, which claimed the Commonwealth Games gold medal and French Open Super 750 crown last year and won the Swiss Open Super 300 title this season, now has 74,651 points from 12 tournaments.

Fresh for his maiden BWF World Tour title at Malaysia Masters last week, HS Prannoy jumped one place to regain the world number 8 ranking, while Kidambi Srikanth climbed three positions to get his place back in the top 20. He is 20th. Lakshya Sen, however, slipped a place to world no. 23 after an early exit from the Malaysia Masters. In women's singles, double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu remained static at 13th spot, while Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also stayed at the 15th position in women's doubles.

Sameer, Kiran, Ashmita enter main draw of Thailand Open

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Indian shuttlers Sameer Verma, Kiran George and Ashmita Chaliha notched up straight-game wins over their respective opponents in the qualifying round to progress to the main draw of the singles event at the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament here on Tuesday.

On a comeback trail, former world number 11 Sameer, who won the Slovenia Open recently, beat Malaysia's Yeoh Seng Zoe 21-12, 21-17 after getting two walkovers — Indonesia's Christian Adinata and Spain's Luis Enrique Penalver in the previous rounds.

The 28-year-old from Dhar, who had won three titles in 2018, will face Denmark's Magnus

Johannesen in the opening round of the main draw. Kiran, the 2022 Odisha Open winner, outwitted fellow Indian Kartikey Gulshan Kumar 21-14, 21-18 and then defeated Korea's Jeon Hyeok Jin 21-10, 21-14 to make it to the main draw. He will face third seed Chinese Shi Yuqi on Wednesday.

In women's singles, Ashmita Chaliha, who recently topped BAI's selection trials to make it to individual events of the upcoming Asian Games, saw off fellow Indian Unnati Hooda 21-16, 13-21, 21-19 before beating Estonian Kristin Kuuba 21-19, 21-11 in the second match.

The girl from Assam will meet compatriot Malvika Bansod, who was promoted to the main draw.

Hardik could have been valuable addition for India in WTC final: Ponting

PTI ■ DUBAI

Batting legend Ricky Ponting feels that India should have picked Hardik Pandya in their squad for the World Test Championships final against Australia in London, saying his all-round abilities could have turned out to be the deciding factor in the one-off game.

Pandya has not played a Test since 2018 and he has opted sit out of the five-day format due to ongoing fitness concerns.

But Ponting felt Pandya could have played in the winner-takes all clash at The Oval from June 7-11. Primarily because he has bowled in more or less every game in the just-concluded IPL for Gujarat Titans which he captains.

"...I thought about the other day for India in this game is how valuable someone like Hardik Pandya could be in a one-off Test match," Ponting wrote for



the ICC Review.

"I know he is on record saying that the Test match game is probably a little bit hard on his body. But for a one-off game... He's been bowling every game through this IPL and he's bowling quick."

The former Australia captain, also the head coach of Delhi Capitals in the IPL, said Pandya

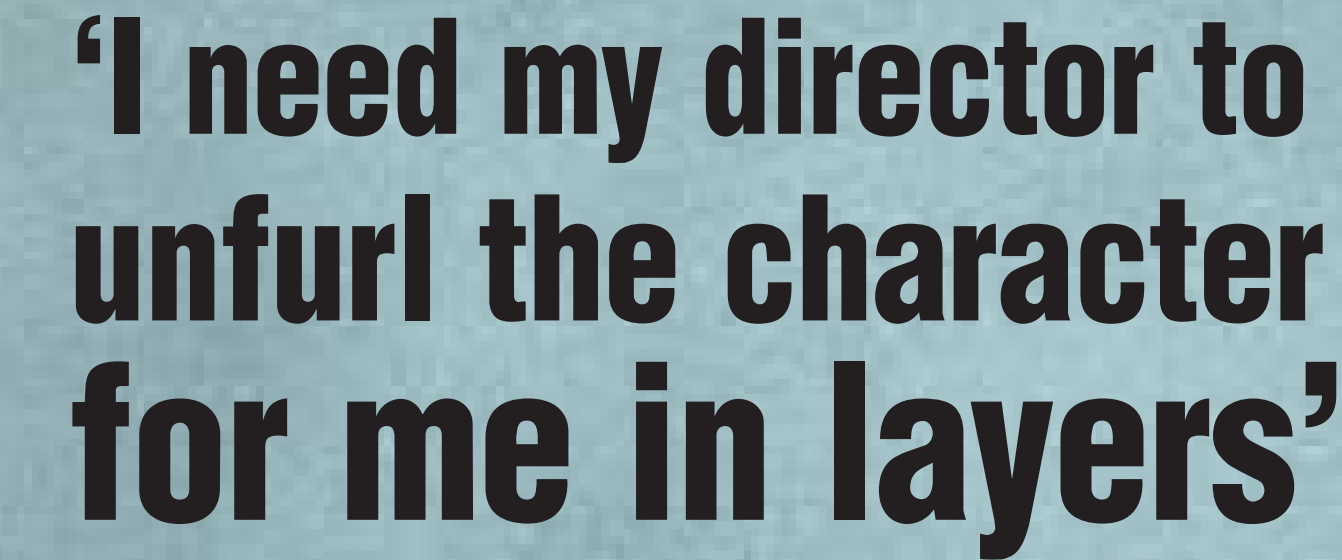
could have been the X-factor for the Indian team in the WTC final beginning on June 7.

"He (Pandya) could be that X-factor there just to pick in a one-off game, come in and see what he can do with bat and ball. He could be the difference between the two teams."

The 29-year-old Pandya has played in 11 Tests till now after making his debut in 2017, scoring 532 runs at an average of 31.29 with one hundred and four fifties. He has taken 17 wickets at an average of 31.05.

In the 74 ODIs he has played so far, Pandya has scored 1584 runs at an average of 33.00 and taken 72 wickets. In the T20is, he has scored 1271 runs from 87 matches and scalped 69 wickets.

Pandya led Gujarat Titans to maiden IPL triumph in 2022 but lost to Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings in this season's final on Monday.



Wamiqa Gabbi, who will soon be starring in the upcoming *Modern Love Chennai*, is one of the incredible talents in the industry. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, the actress discusses becoming a part of the series, acting her roles with such conviction, and more.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Modern love Chennai is one of the better things that's going to churn out lately and we were really astounded to see Wamiqa Gabbi playing one of the lead protagonists in the anthology. Stunned because? Most of the time we have seen the leading lady pulling Punjabi characters to a greater extent. But we are sure she has a connection! And so, bringing you a fresh Tollywood interview with this incredible new talent on board for *Modern Love Chennai*, we take in, "In view of the fact that I could feel the passion between the two characters, I signed this anthology. I was actually contacted for two of the stories in *Modern Love Chennai* but due to some date issues I could only pull one of the episodes. Now you got me right that yes I am a Punjabi by blood but I am doing love stories from Chennai and that's the beauty of being in this entertainment industry."

The flair and the aptitude of the actress takes you through a place where she still doesn't know how

to speak Telugu Tamil or Malayali, yet it's her sheer hard work that she plays all of these roles with so much conviction. She continued to speak to us, "I never really understand my characters in the first to the second meetings, I need my director to unfold the character for me in layers. After that I surrender! In just one episode there are so many theories revolving around it. Once upon a time, I was a demented girl too just as my character in *Modern Love Chennai*. So this bewilderment led me to outspread my character in this episode. Until the mid-shoot, I couldn't figure out my character sketch because of so many theories surrounding her."

There was an untold story where Wamiqa confides with the media that even though she is from Punjab—she had her few bad experiences in the Punjabi industry too. And then when she came to the Hindi industry there also she was consecutively giving auditions for six years but never anything really lucked out for her. But the actress is not sorry about these incidents! Instead, now with *Modern Love Chennai* in her kitty, “I promised my director that I am going to learn Tamil this year so that I can enjoy my Tamil characters even more with so much of genuineness that I would like to bring on the table. The character has created a stir in our lives (she laughs) Hysterically, this character troubled me a lot on a personal note too! But a streaming giant like Prime Video has come like a blessing in disguise for me — they are giving me my most beautiful projects that I can take pride in and add those in my filmography. Even the artwork on the sets of modern love chennai was so overwhelming for an artist to perform! Generally, I don’t see the monitor but after every shot my instinct and excitement both were persuading me to go watch myself. Being a native of Punjab state, I never had the idea that I’ll be tapping success in the Tamil industry too.”

PERFECT MIX OF LOOKS,
SAFETY & NATURE CARE

Advait couldn't have been more off the mark. At this Saturday's brunch, he was boasting to his Paso Doble class buddies they would miserably fail to find themselves an exquisite India-made car that was consummate, leave alone in convincing him that the virtues of solid safety, sleek design and care for the environment could be married together into one four-wheeler.

Soon after, the friends moodily took off and started checking various car showrooms. They didn't have to roam around much before a radiant KIA EV6 entranced Advait and his gang. The good thing was that the premium sporty electric vehicle handily met his pretty rigorous and specific demands, too: An avid trekker on most weekends and during his biannual vacations, the top honcho liked to zoom off along with his partner to faraway sylvan surroundings. He was quite zealous about his individualism as well as possessions making a style statement without disturbing nature.

The EV6 was unlike any other electric vehicle Advant had seen before. It had a unique design (for example, viewing it from the front and back projected it as a different entity) with a sporty stance. But of course, based on KIA's new design philosophy, 'Opposite United', the EV6 left a distinct impression on every onlooker's mind.

Look apart, the car successfully neutralises range anxiety with an ARAI-certified, whopping 708 km/charge which was perfect for Advait's outings. Another important superior feature is EV6's fast-charging capability. It comes with a long-range 77.4 kWh battery pack with 800-volt ultra-fast charging capability; a 10-80 per cent charge taking barely 18 minutes with a 350-kW charger, making it perfect for long drives.

The car's powerful all-electric motor effortlessly churns out 605 Nm of torque. Its low centre of gravity makes EV6 a sporty handling experience, powering the vehicle to 0-100 in just 5.4 seconds. The EV6 also has the latest generation of KIA's Smart Regenerative Braking System that recuperates kinetic energy to



KIA EV6 ENCOMPASSES SOLID SAFETY, A SLEEK DESIGN AND CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. ITS UNIQUE DESIGN, BASED ON 'OPPOSITE UNITED' PHILOSOPHY, AND AN ARAI-CERTIFIED JAW-DROPPING 708 KM/CHARGE RANGE IS BOLSTERED BY ULTRA-FAST CHARGING CAPABILITY AND A HOST OF ADVANCED SAFETY FEATURES

maximise driving range and efficiency. It comes equipped with four regenerative braking levels, where-in 'i-PEDAL' driving mode allows the car to harvest the maximum amount of energy from brakes and enables the driver to bring the vehicle to a gentle halt without needing to push the brake pedal.

KIA EV6 is one of the safest EVs available in India, with eight airbags all-wheel disc brakes, ABS, ESC, HAC, MCBA, BAS, VSM, ESS, front and rear parking sensors, besides the ISOFIX child anchor. It also has advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) such as Forward Collision Avoidance Assist (FCA) for car, pedestrian, cyclist, and

junction turning, Lane Keep Assist (LKA), Blind-spot Collision Avoidance Assist (BCAA), Rear-cross Traffic Avoidance Assist (RCTA), Safe Exit Assist (SEA), Lane Follow Assist (LFA), Blind Spot Detection (BSD), Driver Attention Warning (DAW), and Smart Cruise Control (SCC) with Stop & Go Functionality.

Advait couldn't have been happier at being proved wrong. In the bargain, he found everything he wanted but didn't hope to find in an Indian electric vehicle - sporty design, long range, fast charging and advanced safety and driver assistance features. Now he can't wait for his next getaway in his new **KIA EV6!**

